

EEF - NET

News • Information • Discussions on Ecumenical Learning

Edited by the Education and Ecumenical Formation Team of the World Council of Churches

No. 4/2000



Christian
education
belongs...
to the
whole church

L'éducation chrétienne
est l'affaire de l'Eglise entière

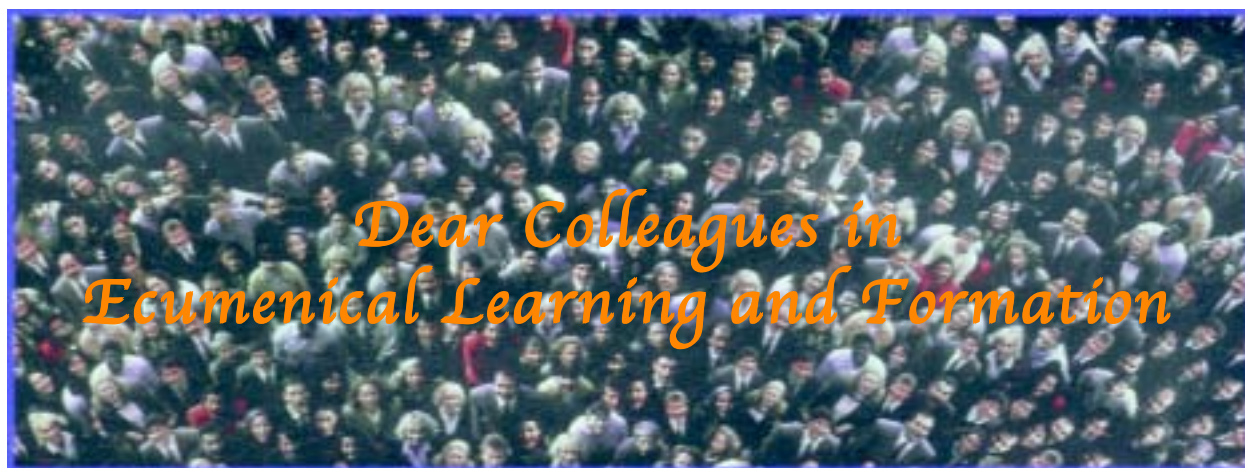
Die christliche Erziehung
erstreckt sich auf die ganze Kirche

La educación cristiana
le pertenece a la iglesia en su totalidad

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The editor has to admit that the first issue of EEF-NET for 2000 comes a month later than planned. In fact, a lot of things have happened since you received the last issue. Among others, the Commission on Education and Ecumenical Formation of the World Council of Churches held its first meeting at Stony Point, New York, USA in March. The findings and a process report of that meeting will be published in the next issue of EEF-NET.

The next issue will also carry some information about the many pilgrimage movements presently underway in Europe. If you know about any from your region, please inform us, with a short description.

This issue is dedicated to the various endeavours educators undertake in the area of non-formal and formal adult education, which promotes ecumenical content. We do hope that the examples we choose might encourage you to get into contact with the authors and try out something similar in your region.

Besides this, we do hope that we encourage a discussion on Family Life Education and Church-related Schools. Both are themes which become not only central issues in the Northern Hemisphere but have been on the agenda of the churches in the South for a long time. EEF would be glad if this publication can help as a forum of exchange for experiences and reflections around changes occurring in this area.

Reports fill another substantial part of this newsletter to you. It shows that the education network is active.

We point as well at the end of the Newsletter to the fact that, with the help of Suecia Mendez from Cuba, we are in the position to offer our Spanish reading network a Spanish version of EEF-NET, 1-3. We would like to hear from you whether you would rather have the Spanish instead of the English version, so that we could take you off the English mailing list and save costs.

Funds are another point we need to mention. We are getting requests from people asking where they could pay for EEF-NET. We appreciate this very much, in particular from organizations which can build the receipt of this publication into their annual budget. Therefore, we are publishing once more the accounts details at the bottom of this page. Please remember when you pay the US\$100 to mention: "for EEF-NET".

This EEF-NET comes during the two Easter celebrations of Christianity and therefore with all the best wishes from the team we greet you with

"Christ is Risen - He is risen indeed"

*For the EEF-Team,
Gert Ruppell*

PS: Our little "Easter Egg" you will find starting with this issue in the form of two posters on Ecumenical Learning.

For transfer to EEF-NET please use the following banks:

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25 Years of Successful Lay Adult Teaching in Theology

This year a very successful model of a theological study course for lay people in Geneva celebrates its twenty-five years of existence. Reason enough to look back on the beginnings, the changes undergone and the results. The latter, in fact, are so convincing that this model deserves to be presented to an international public.

This course is called “Atelier oecuménique de théologie” (AOT) or “Ecumenical workshop of theology”. As will be explained later on, all three elements of this name reflect its structure and manner of working. It was founded in the wake of the general ecumenical enthusiasm of that time by a group of reformed and Catholic Christians, theologians and lay people alike. Twelve courses have been finished and the thirteenth is on its way. It takes place on a basis of two hours a week and stretches over a period of two years or six trimesters. The number of participants has always been of approximately one hundred, so that now about 1100 people have completed this education. The organisation of this course has remained essentially the same for the last twenty-five years with some modifications where experience showed them to be necessary. We will therefore present only the main elements of its working methods.

The course is presently taught by a team of nine teachers: three Catholic priests, three Protestant pastors and one female deacon as well as two lay female theologians, one Catholic and one Protestant. This team elaborates a curriculum with one underlying theme for the two years. An association comprises the former participants and meets each year for the general assemblies. Besides they are regularly invited for afternoons of theological reflections in connection with the actual course and its theme. A committee carries the responsibility for the whole enterprise before the general assembly. The Protestant and the Catholic churches of Geneva support the AOT financially by putting paid salaried theologians at the disposal and by paying a contribution. The finances are supplemented by the participants' fees the amount of which is handled individually and with discretion.

For entry, no diploma is required, but a strong motivation which seems indispensable in order to keep up the engagement for two years i.e. for roughly 60 two-hour courses and six Saturday afternoons. Participation in the AOT requires not only time, but also perseverance and the willingness to take actively part in the theological work and to share the results with others. Therefore, regular attendance is strongly recommended and some personal work is asked for during the two years.

As mentioned before, for each course we choose a new theme that is sufficiently broad and comprising and that accompanies us through the two years. These themes are always dealt with under a biblical, a theological, an ethical and ecclesiological viewpoint. This procedure allows us to make the connection to current events and the participants personal lives. This is how we explain our objectives to prospective participants:

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

An incarnate theology: When we ask the question of God's presence in our personal lives, in our time and in the world we live in, that is secularized and religious at once, we try not to separate our daily lives and our spiritual approach and to confront the obstacles to faith with honesty. Moreover we try to develop the criteria necessary for ethical judgment and by confronting them with the Bible to attack the urgent problems of today, such as joblessness, migration, environmental protection, the right to intervention on humanitarian grounds, the need to resist, the gender relations, genetic engineering and euthanasia.

A pluralistic theology: In order to face today's challenges we need some room for thorough reflection where we have access to modern theological research and where we can share and debate our views while respecting everyone's roots and convictions. We do not propose any ready-made theology. Instead, everyone is invited to take part in our common search and to share his own questions and findings. Thus we learn to elaborate together our theology, a theology that takes into consideration the diversity of viewpoints.

A theology rooted in the Bible: In the event of our course we propose an attentive and innovative regard of the Scriptures. We provide the tools for improving our understanding of these old texts. The Bible constitutes our first and foremost source of an instruction that has not had its final say.

An ecumenical undertaking: We believe that in spite of all its sores the unity of all Christians precedes us and calls upon us to continue our way together. But we are not called to solve the differences between the churches. What „Ecumenical Workshop of Theology,“ means for us is to work on theology while respecting the denominational differences, to discover what is important to the others and to become better aware of our own roots. As we have done during the past twenty-five years we want to add a dimension of hope to our undertaking.

PROCEDURES

All our proceedings are intended to be done in a workshop-fashion. We want to create the space for everyone to enter into the common research. This happens on four different levels:

The Lectures

Usually the lectures are given by two theologians of different denominations. These lectures serve to pass on information, to suggest ways of analysing and finding sense and to initiate attempts at common research. They fit into the programme elaborated by the whole team of teachers. In principle, a paper as well as reading recommendations are given at each session in order to facilitate an individual continuation with the topic in question.

The Groups

Periodically, i.e. at least once a month, group work replaces the general lectures. Each group, usually comprising about ten people, is directed by one of the teachers and by a group coach recruited from the last course. These groups remain unchanged during the two years of the course and they have several functions:

The group makes room for close readings of biblical texts. With only ten people it is much easier to experiment with new methods and to go into detail with various texts while taking note of and understanding individual reactions.

The group also makes room for the so-called personal itineraries of faith, to which we will come back later on. From and in these exchanges topics emerge that the group wants to work on more profoundly.

These group meetings offer the occasion for enriching personal encounters and constitute our main form of theological workshops.

Personal Guidance

Everyone can contact one of the teaching persons for personal guidance. In these talks he or she can discuss the discoveries made or the questions raised in the course of events or broach more personal problems. When inscriptions take place every future participant has an interview with one of the teachers in order to clarify whether the individual expectations and motivations correspond with the programme of the AOT. Besides, some form of personal accompaniment is provided by the group simply by the bonds that are formed in the intense group experiences.

Celebrations of the Word and the Eucharist

The Saturday afternoon meetings always end with some kind of common celebration. During the first year we have word services, and during the second year we share the Eucharist. Thus the meetings acquire a new spiritual dimension.

Pedagogical Work

Within the teaching team we often question our pedagogical methods and our aims. In the pursuit of a workshop like approach we continually search for adequate procedures. At the beginning of the 25 years the AOT has existed we started with lectures in a very academic style. Ever since we have attempted to actively involve the participants themselves by attributing greater importance to the work accomplished in the groups and individually.

We have often wondered about the expectations of the participants. Why should they be motivated to pursue two years of the AOT? Why should they strive for greater knowledge? Is it out of personal interest? Is it to find a sense in life? Is it in order to regain self-confidence and to get some more schooling? Do they prepare themselves for a new engagement in their churches or in society in general? We find that all these reasons are valid. (Einfügen Ergebnisse der Studie)

According to these findings we have tried to suit our pedagogical approach to these varied expectations. Actually we are experimenting with two different strains:

- ◆ the semi-workshops in which some in-depth work can be done during the two-hour lectures.
- ◆ the personal itineraries of faith that allow everyone to recall with the help of the group his very own evolution.

THE SEMI-WORKSHOPS

During the lectures that take place on three out of four meetings the teachers put forward information on a certain topic, put it into perspective and offer solutions all within the framework of the programme elaborated for the trimester. Often a debate of the whole group of about fifty people ensues, a debate not easily directed. The problem is not to let the lectures be perceived as something remote or abstract, in any case without relation to the participants' experiences, but to transform them into an incentive for personal questioning so that they aid the individual in his or her spiritual itinerary. After having experimented with various attempts encouraging active participation we now work with the semi-ateliers. At the beginning, in the middle or at the end of some lectures, chosen accordingly to the topic in question, we gather in small groups and prepare or rediscuss our material. This helps everyone to work actively and closely on the biblical texts and to formulate his own thoughts and opinions. Furthermore, in the ensuing dialogue the relevance to daily life of the participants can immediately be discovered. In this manner discoveries made by the theological work can easily be applied to the problems of life and vice versa.

THE ITINERARIES OF PERSONAL FAITH

We have always aimed to make the participants more aware of their own development and to make the experience of the AOT an enrichment and a source of new impulses for their spiritual lives. Six years ago we came across the concept of the so-called 'life stories' or biographical approach as used in psychological work. We adapted this procedure to our aims, because all theological reflection necessarily takes place within a framework of personal experience. At the source of our own faith we find people, sermons, readings and other events which have influenced our way of speaking of God, of searching for Him, of living His presence or His absence. But other influences as well, such as current fashions of thinking, engagements taken, movements joined or watched have contributed to our identity and have made us the believers or unbelievers that we are. When we remember all this we make new discoveries about ourselves. To do so in a group demands trust and therefore certain rules must be negotiated and observed. These are:

liberty: everyone shares only what he wants to share
personal involvement: all the members of the group

get involved in this procedure, teachers and coaches included

reciprocity and avoidance of judgment: *everybody is entitled to the listening attention of the others, an attention that refrains from judgment*

confidentiality: *nothing is transmitted to the outside*
regularity: *everyone engages himself to attend all group meetings*

evaluation: *the group may plan moments of evaluation and assessment*

Parallel to this process that occupies the last six months of the first year, the teachers and coaches note the big questions that surface repeatedly in order to integrate them into the programme of the second year. This process involves 5 stages.

First stage: Personal Account

As a help for reconstructing one's itinerary some guiding questions are given:

which events, which persons, which encounters and which circumstances do I want to name when I go back to the foundations of my faith and my beliefs?

which currents have carried me in my family, in my church or in society? Where have I resisted? What crises or blows have I experienced? What choices have I made? What decisions have I taken?

How did I come to engage myself in my church or not to do so? To accept or not to accept responsibilities there? To distance myself?

Naturally, these are principally personal questions. Their presentation in the group comprises only what one chooses to communicate and imposes a certain ordering and putting into narrative form of one's own discoveries.

Second stage: Group Sharing

The group offers everyone the possibility to present his account. It reserves 45 minutes for each person. About half of this time is filled up with the account, and the other half is taken up by the group reactions, comments and questions excluding judgement. What is intended is an empathic reception and an echo that helps with further clarification for the person involved. At the end the more general questions touched upon can be retained.

A certain shyness and reticence when preparing and presenting this account is quite normal and frequent. Going back to well-buried memories and sharing a part of them with others may provoke intense emotional reactions. It is therefore

important only to tell as much as one is really prepared to do. In the course of these accounts the group gains in coherence and knowledge of each other. There may be moments of enormous joy.

Third stage: Personal Research

After the first year every participant is asked to work on a personal research project during the summer. The theme is chosen in connection with one essential aspect of his or her account and the results will be presented in the groups as well. The results have shown this procedure to be very fruitful and quite appreciated by the participants themselves (Untersuchung E+G). It is because of the itineraries of personal faith, because of the individual contributions in the group discussions and because of the personal research that the AOT calls itself rightly 'workshop'.

Fourth stage: Presentation in the Group

All the research done is presented to the group during the second year. Form and contents are left to the discretion of the author. Everything remains his property and must not be distributed elsewhere. This fourth stage occupies the group until spring.

Fifth stage: Celebrating

To round things off at the end of the year in June the groups prepare some special presentations to the whole course. The most valuable discoveries or experiences are recollected and made available if possible in one form or the other to the greater public. This usually becomes a happy and festive event.

Thanks to the itineraries of personal faith we have very well understood the fact that everyone has long been a theologian, ever since this person started asking the question of a sense in life. And we have understood that the questions, the answers, the faith, the doubts and the theological methods have their history. The AOT can add to this history, but it is up to everyone individually to continue on his particular way. Everyone is responsible of what he becomes. The other people he comes across, co-participants, teachers and coaches can at best accompany him. Everyone is enabled to discover that his or her actual identity has something to do with this itinerary and that is subject to the ways he decides to be influenced in.



ON THE ECCLESIOLOGICAL LEVEL : OPENINGS

The AOT is not primarily a field of experiment for new pedagogical methods. They are only means, always in need of improvement. The foremost task of the AOT, its primary mission, is to render the biblical message liveable. It encourages everyone to recognize God in the history that precedes us.

An Experience of Eucharistic Hospitality

After the death of a participant of the second course and after the funeral service the AOT saw itself confronted with the question of how to arrange a celebration of the Eucharist from which no one would be excluded because of his denomination. It seemed inconceivable to us to share so much of our faith and our lives and not to be able to share the Lord's supper. After much deliberation and after consultations of the Catholic priests with their bishop a practice of Eucharistic hospitality has been established in total transparency.

As mentioned above these celebrations of Eucharist take place at the end of the Saturday-afternoon meetings during the second year. Taking turns Protestants and Catholic invite the whole course and lead the celebration in accordance with their respective liturgy. This follows only after a theological and biblical preparation that enable everyone to define his own position, to see common biblical denominators and ecclesiastical differences, to put these into perspective and to realize what is important to everyone in his particular practices. This preparation opens the way for a celebration from which no one is excluded and which is forced on no one. And there are always people with either such strong convictions or with such doubts that they do not feel ready to join in a celebration from

which they feel (at least for the moment) remote. Our experience tells us that these are important milestones in itineraries of everyone. We are asked to question our own practices and to discover the wealth of another tradition. How can one deprive Christians of this invaluable experience. The participants themselves carry this question into their churches. Thus, the AOT sets an example that could be a mark on the way to a reconciled future.

A Life in the Church without being a new Church

The AOT wants to find and establish relations between our lives, our search for sense and the living Word that has not had its last say. In its way the AOT has a missionary function: it creates a connection to the living Christ. For quite a number of participants who find themselves removed from their churches the two-year course at the AOT means a period of life in the Church. In this sense all that is done at AOT, i.e. the questioning, the frequent reading of biblical texts, the discussions that result of it, the group work and all one has gone through during these two years take on a communal character: think and lead one's life in God's presence and together. But the AOT has always avoided being a substitute for the churches. The course is limited in time to the two years. After that everyone is called upon to continue on his way, to find his own engagements and to make out the right place for his future integration.

Elisabeth Raiser

Versoix



SEMESTER AT SEA

Humankind's pursuit of knowledge has been intricately linked to ships and the sea. From early civilizations to the modern era, the exploration of distant lands, the exchange of ideas and commodities, and the search for knowledge

have occurred in this manner. The Institute for Shipboard Education exists out of the recognition that, in an increasingly interdependent world, there is a vital need to advance the exchange of knowledge and understanding between cultures. The Institute is defined by its on-going commitment to combine academic excellence with challenging experiential programming in order to remain at the forefront of global education.

Semester at Sea is an academic programme sponsored by the Institute for Shipboard Education and the University of Pittsburgh. This programme offers university students an unusual international and comparative studies experience by offering programmes that incorporate direct contact with people and their cultures. These programmes afford the opportunity to develop cross-cultural understanding of human commonalities and global interdependence, while simultaneously recognizing, defining and respecting individual potentials and cultural diversities. The Institute's approach to international and cultural education provides the framework for a lifetime of learning, concern and commitment to others.

Approximately 600 university students (plus faculty, staff and adult passengers) participate in each voyage. Students undertake academic course work while travelling around the world aboard a ship and studying in ten countries. The 100-day semester includes roughly 55 days of class at sea aboard the S.S. Universe Explorer and 45 days in ports allowing four to six days per port. A typical Autumn itinerary includes Japan, Hong Kong, Vietnam, Malaysia, India, Egypt, Turkey, Croatia, Italy and Morocco. A typical Spring itinerary includes Cuba, Brazil, South Africa, Kenya, India, Malaysia, Vietnam, Hong Kong and Japan. The Field Programme is an integral part of *Semester at Sea*. Field experiences become the "laboratory" component of each course in our liberal arts curriculum. Educational activities are designed to complement classroom instruction, and fieldwork provides 20% of the con-

tact hours for course credit. The Field Programme contains a variety of structured activities to enable students to fulfill academic requirements while accommodating a diverse range of interests, travel experiences, and budgets. Faculty-Directed Practica are designed to meet the specific needs of the course and are led by faculty members drawing on their own international experience.

Field experiences include diverse activities such as homestay opportunities, attendance at an Afro-Brazilian Drum Workshop; meeting university students through welcome receptions, home stays, sports competitions, and lectures/discussions held on nearby campuses; visits which afford time to interact with peers; visits to an African Township or Robben Island in Cape Town, South Africa; volunteering time to interact with orphans in various ports, or experiencing an indigenous group and staying at a longhouse in Vietnam or Malaysia. Students have an opportunity to talk with the street children in Brazil, members of the Congress of South African Writers, leaders of environmental organizations in India, housing authorities in Hong Kong, attend a sufi Dervish Brotherhood Meeting in Turkey, or corporate officials of Toshiba or Sanyo in Japan. Other field activities provide opportunities for travel to places of significant cultural, historical and political interests. Opportunities are provided for visits to the Great Wall in China, the Taj Mahal in India or the Great Pyramids in Egypt. Students learn about wildlife ecological issues, and the life of the Maasai while on safari in Kenya. Studies are made of the flora and fauna of the tropical rain forest destruction while canoeing down the Amazon River. This is just a sampling of the many field activities available during a voyage. These international field experiences, coupled with a stimulating on-board classroom environment, make *Semester at Sea* an exceptional opportunity for learning.

Patricia Nickels
Dalit International Newsletter, Vol. 4 No. 3, October
1999; P.O. Box 932, Waterford, CT 06385, USA



An Ecumenical Adventure

For too long the American branch of the world wide Christian community has seen the Ecumenical Institute at the Château de Bossey as a conference and retreat centre in Switzerland for Europeans, knowing little about it. Then news came in 1997 that an American had been appointed as the director of the Institute, Heidi Hadsell, Ph.D., Dean of McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago and professor of Ethics. An American Presbyterian - and Presbyterians began to take notice. Other Americans began to think about Bossey too, curious to explore what it has to offer.

What would be the best way to organize a visit? Stopping by for dinner? Staying in the Château as Bed and Breakfast guests while touring in Switzerland? Joining a seminar planned by the Institute? Getting thoroughly involved by having a ten day seminar, learning about ecumenism from the leaders of the World Council?

The ten day seminar was chosen by Montclair Presbyterian Church in Oakland, California, and the EcuHostel idea was born. « Ecu » stands for ecumenical, of course, and « Hostel » is a residential programme. Fifteen Presbyterians and one Episcopalian (Anglican) signed up for a pioneering EcuHostel.

For six months in advance, we prepared. We read Hans Ruedi Weber's *Story of Bossey: A Laboratory for Ecumenical Life*, Lewis Mudge, *The Church as Moral Community: Ecclesiology and Ethics in Ecumenical Debate*, and various documents of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. We met regularly for discussions. Then in October 1998 we travelled to Switzerland, to the Château de Bossey, home of the Ecumenical Institute, and began ten unforgettable days of « ecumenical transformation ». Living and meeting in this charming 18th century chateau overlooking Lake Geneva, with towering snowcapped mountains as a back drop, located on 69 acres of productive farm land, was made possible over 50 years ago by a gift from the Rockefeller Family.

The magnificence of the location, the proximity to the offices of the World Council of Churches, the gracious hospitality of the Bossey staff, the interaction with the graduate school that was in session – some 50 students from almost as many countries - the presentations by ecumenists from around the world and the visits to key places, discussions with key leaders of the ecumenical movement, made for an eye-opening, mind-expanding, heart-warming experience.

Lew Mudge, a member of the Montclair congregation and a faculty member at San Francisco Theological Seminary and the Graduate Theological Union, was the glue that held together our various experiences, serving as our travelling theologian, guiding us as we grappled with the concept of God's mission to humanity today. As Lew reminds us, a substantially new ecumenical situation calls for efforts to rethink the whole point and purpose of the calling to human beings to be part of this mission.

Through the various presentations and many private conversations the World Council's history came alive and we felt privy to the major issues that member churches now face. Our field trips to the WCC and WARC, to the Cathedral Saint Pierre and Reformation Wall, provided an anchor for this information. Reality was brought home as friendships blossomed with the global ecumenical sisters and brothers in the graduate school. With them we shared daily worship, Bible study classes, meals and coffee/tea breaks, and when time allowed, we played ping pong and dried dishes after meals together, or watched CNN in the lounge.

Each evening we spent time reflecting on the experiences of the day. Then, at the end of our ten days, we asked ourselves three major questions:

What impressed us?

- The rich environment of Bossey including the stimulation provided by the resident professors, enhanced by the integration of shared events with its excellent graduate students — the place is an ideal 'Petri dish', a model for an ecumenical experience;
- the WCC staff's level of scholarship and commitment to a vision, despite the lengthy and intense struggle for ecumenism among member churches
- the fragility of the WCC in facing the problems of ecumenism, for example, disagreement about the sacrament;
- the attention given to our small EcuHostel by the WCC and Bossey;

- the impressive Lutheran, yet ecumenical, worship service in Geneva on Sunday;
- the influence of culture on one's perspective, reading of reality, and identity;
- the shifting geographical strength of Protestantism - historically European and of the North, now flourishing more in the South.

What is its future?

- the vast scope of both the WCC and WARC, but also the limited boundaries in which both are able to operate;
- the EcuHostel's organization of programme and activities and the sequence, balance and quality, orchestrated by Lars Langhorst, the 1998 resident Vikar at Bossey.



Which questions remain open?

- How will our experiences contribute to transformation? How will they impact our Christian rituals and worship practices?
- How do we get a more workable knowledge of our cultural and religious differences? How can we really be 'the other'?
- Can the WCC survive and be effective? What changes in the WCC structure will facilitate this?
- How can the WCC promote social change?
- Can all four clusters of the WCC work together? For example, if social action divides, how can a realistic faith and order conversation be developed?





- How is culture shaping the ecumenical dialogue?
- How can winning strategies be developed for the WCC's survival?
- How does the reflection and work of the WCC and Bossey reach local congregations?
- Why does the WCC only include Christians? How can dialogue be broadened beyond Christianity, to inter-faith communities? How can theology for such a dialogue be developed?



What more do we want to know?

Where do we go from here?

The tensions to be resolved between the WCC's four clusters;

The Earth Charter and the opportunities it offers churches to promote environmental concerns with a wider commitment in our moral dialogue: religious groups, labour unions, secular groups (NGOs sharing our concerns); the genesis and results of the WCC's global warming petition and plans to act on the results; strategy for action, for follow up? Ways one congregation may move our own Presbyterian structure to develop a strategy for addressing major social issues through congregations?

- ◇ Now that the Reformed family in America includes Lutherans, Presbyterians and Reformed churches, what can we do here at home to search for a mutual social and sacramental agenda?
- ◇ How can we as a congregation work more effectively with local organizations (i.e., OCC: Oakland Coalition of Congregations) to explore cooperative involvement in environmental concerns?

- ◇ How do small confessional groups within the WCC affect other member confessions? For example, does the unity between Lutheran and Reformed churches influence inside conversations between Anglicans or between the many Orthodox?
- ◇ Re WARC: What is the relationship between the Reformed tradition and the WCC's Life and Work programme?
- ◇ In the WCC's structure and programmes, who become advocates for burning issues, such as Human Rights? How? How is a safe place opened for discussion of difficult issues? Can we expect more?
- ◇ How does the WCC make known its position on these issues?

We continue to process and act on this significant experience. Following our time at Bossey, four members of our church family participated in Bossey organized seminars:

1 Orthodox Theology and Spirituality, held in St. Petersburg, Russia,

2 Ethical Frontiers Seminar, (1998 on the environment), offered in cooperation with TEMEC: Theological Education to Meet the Environmental Challenge, and 'Religion and the Arts'.

What next?

The participants of our EcuHostel challenge other ecumenically minded Christians to gather their friends and colleagues for their own pioneering adventures in ecumenism. And, we invite conversations about the questions we pose with others who have been at Bossey, from all parts of the world and from every communion. Contact us, please: (about 1500 words) MPCFamily@aol.com or via John Lindner: RevJBL@aol.com

The Montclair EcuHostel Pioneers



The European Women's College - the Future of an Idea

by Dr. Reinhild Traitler

1. How it all started

In 1992, when I returned to my work at the Protestant Academy Boldern/Switzerland, after an extended study leave, I came back with still vague ideas of how to improve my work in women's continuing education. Women's work had a tradition in Boldern. Indeed, Marga Bührig, a former president of the WCC and director of the academy, had played a pioneering role promoting it. Still, I felt uneasy.

My irritation had less to do with this tradition than with the whole set up of the educational work of an academy. My own loyalty was to longer term processes, to a kind of "deep pedagogy", while academies are concerned about organising and giving visibility to the discourse on important issues in church and society. Women's work consisted largely of short term courses on various issues. Some women participated in dozens of courses, often as a compensation for educational opportunities missed earlier in life. In the end they had probably acquired a lot of competence, but there was no coherence in what they had learned, no framework that would make a whole out of all the jigsaw puzzles.

While I am a firm believer in participatory, dialogical and creative forms of learning, I have also come to realise that our learning processes have been too "extra-curricular", often entirely process oriented, with little vision of where the process should lead us. Time and again I had realised the need for carefully structured learning that would "result" in something. In short, I started to believe in curricula again.

There was soon a group of women, young graduates from Zürich university, who had already begun to look at university pedagogy through feminist eyes, colleagues from the academies and lay training centres who were interested in possibilities for cooperation, representatives from various feminist networks and women simply interested in the idea. It took us two years of debate and struggle, of clarifying ideas and purpose, until finally the European Women's College was born. In 1994 we established it as an association under Swiss law, a step which was necessary but proved to be rather limiting for the European perspective we wanted to develop.

The Swiss economic magazine CASH promptly awarded us four "Oscars" for a courageous project and asked the poignant question "Where will the money come from?" - a question we have been asking ever since.

Still, the European Women's College has been quite successful in the first five years of its existence. In 1995 the first two-year study course began with 37 students. In 1996 the second one followed, and in the spring of 1999 the third one. The study courses come in two "versions" - a Basic Feminist Studies Course, with about one dozen two-day modules a year, and a Compact Feminist Studies Course, with three one-week "compact" modules a year. The curriculum is basically the same, didactics vary slightly, as the two forms lend themselves to different ways of learning.

Nearly 60 students have graduated so far, and experience shows that the EWC has achieved at least some of the goals, it set for itself.

2. Feminism as a Field of Learning

The original preparatory group thought that feminism and the women's movement should be fields rather than objects of learning: Women should learn to look at their own and other women's lives through the eyes of feminist theories and the history of the women's movements, and reformulate social, theological, philosophical and psychological theories concerning "women's being in the world". The goal was and is "empowerment", a praxis oriented approach to developing power of defining what women's lives could and should look like. This vision was packed into a two year-curriculum which begins with biography work and historical studies, proceeds to an in-depth analysis of current feminist theories and then uses the newly acquired hermeneutical tools to look at women's lives with a view to making changes: How must notions of body, sexuality, work, knowledge, power be reshaped so that women can live in dignity, with their human rights respected and the development of their potential welcomed. Judging from the various activities EWC graduates have embarked on, this type of study has indeed been liberating for many of them.

3. The College as a Learning Community

Anglo-Saxon countries base their higher education on college and university, the college being a kind of in-between stage, where general education is deepened and learning in community plays a major role. Whatever the shortcomings of this system (which is practically unknown in continental Europe), its emphasis on community as a field for learning kindled our imagination. The European Women's College gives major attention to the group as an agent for learning. While there is no entry exam (thus taking into account the oftentimes

interrupted educational biographies of women), there is careful screening of applicants: women have to give some evidence, how they will raise money and make available time for the two years' study. Time is often a difficult a factor for women who may have to balance job and family expectations over and above their studies.

The curriculum is quite strict. In addition to modules there are learning groups that meet regularly and deepen the process with complementary readings, discussion and creative work. While there are no exams throughout, attendance and participation are keywords, and the teaching team carefully monitors all students.

This type of organisation furthers the development of a close knit community, with a lot of individual and group interactions, where some mentoring takes place among students themselves, where initiatives thrive, where projects are born, especially around the diploma work, and amazingly often even stay alive.

4. *Citoyenne Européenne*

Courageously we have called the college "European" even though the very year the idea was born, Switzerland voted down entry into the European Economic Area. This meant that, having our office in Switzerland, we were never eligible for EU support.

Still, we stubbornly held on to the European vision and have fully incorporated it into the curriculum. Students, following the short modules course do a Europe practicum between the two years of study, which acquaints them with the reality of women's work in another European country. Students following the compact seminar course have four out of seven modules in various countries of Eastern and Western Europe. The new compact studies course beginning in October 2000 will be a truly European experiment. The course will run parallel in Novi Sad and Zürich. Students in both locations will follow the same curriculum. In the second year they will study together in different locations of Europe. This is quite a daring vision, both in human and in financial terms. We are aware of the deep symbolism to organise the study together with women of Novi Sad, the city whose bridges were destroyed during the NATO war of 1999. We hope it will become an intercultural and interpersonal learning field, where academic work is but part of a wider process in which sensitivity to and understanding of Europe's multicultural realities is trained alongside with creative ways of responding to the challenges of a future together.

The College works with lecturers from various countries, and small branches "antennas" have been established by local women's movements and gender studies centres. These are in Novi Sad and Prague, Brussels

and Vienna, Berlin and Barcelona- cities in east and west, on the way into the future of Europe. By weaving these places, some of them in member countries of the European Union, some of them with a heritage of socialism, into the network of the Women's College, we hope to make a small but real contribution to a European peace order and to shaping women's consciousness of being citizens of a continent, while affirming their identities as women from different cultures and national histories.

5. *Finally: How Do We Keep It Going?*

To tell the truth: We are always in limbo! The EWC is entirely self supporting. There was a little seed money from the WCC Women's Desk some years ago, for the development of the project. And Boldern gave a lot of staff time and various contributions in kind.

But basically, we finance the study courses from tuition fees, we raise scholarships for Eastern European students from such organisations as HEKS, the aid agency of the Swiss Protestant churches, or the EWMD (a European network of women managers), or from private sources. For our meetings and training sessions of the teaching teams or the women from the antennas, we have to go and ask some wealthy women who happen to believe in feminism for support (they are few and far between!). And for our infrastructure we rely on the members of the Swiss association for the EWC, and loads of unpaid voluntary, but highly competent work - a typical women's project. Of course, like all who have a good idea, we have been searching for a benevolent millionaire- to no avail. Thus we continue the work of further developing the college with unpaid work and on a shoestring budget. This is a tremendous handicap- because the young women we would want to involve are in the "family" phase and cannot accept unpaid work at this stage.

Still there is conviction and enthusiasm! And joy that we are building some bridges between women across the continent.

European Women's College

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Elisabeth Raiser and Reinhild Traitter
Treasurer: Erika Bachmann
Secretariat: Martina Müller

The new European Compact Studies Programme will begin in October 2000.

Working languages:

For the first year: Zürich modules German, Novi Sad modules Serbo-Croatian
For the second year: English



1. Educating Educators

Churches, national education systems and other educational organisations place an increasing emphasis on educating those who work as professional or voluntary educators. Whether it is day school or Sunday school, teachers need training for their task. Those who train health workers or farmers require an understanding of adult education processes. For those who lecture in a seminary or university, academic specialism has to be complemented by a knowledge of how to help students learn. The list could be extended indefinitely.

The recognition of the benefit from training or education in the business of learning is something to be welcomed. The class, the seminar or the group all benefit from the involvement of a teacher or other facilitator of learning who is able to use appropriate methods of helping people learn. Some of the work of the Education and Ecumenical Formation team of the WCC involves encouraging and supporting this kind of training and education for educators.

We must recognise, though, that this may create its own problems. The implicit message of such an approach can be that it is the trained enabler of learning who is the initiator of learning, the controller of learning by the selection of methodologies employed and the one who determines the outcomes of learning. We have been reminded of this many times, not least by Paulo Freire. What should be liberating becomes confining because of the “professionalisation” of teaching and learning. This is not professional in the sense of being paid but in the sense of developing a specialist set of knowledge and skills which sets the owner of them apart and gives the owner power.

Perhaps, therefore, we should look for other strategies. If we ask the question “Who are the real educators?”, an answer can be found by reflecting on community and the individual.

2. Real Educators - Learning Community

2.1 A General View

The first real educator is the community. We live in several communities of different sizes, from the global to the intimate personal relationship, simultaneously. It is not just our personal circumstances or our way of living which are shaped by participation in these different communities but ourselves as people. We learn our identity, our values and our beliefs through our interaction with and within these communities. This learning or shaping happens whether we are conscious of it or not.

Communities are more than the sum of the individuals who compose them. Communities have a life and psyche of their own. Sometimes this is substantially different from that of the individuals who make up that community. It is possible for a Christian organisation, a working community made up of well motivated, caring persons, to behave uncaringly towards its staff.

This is an important point to bear in mind as it implies that any strategy which attempts to educate a given community only by targetting the learning of the individuals which comprise it may be doomed to failure. It is the community itself which needs to learn. This is a difficult concept for those who have grown up in the western tradition of the individuation of learning. It may not be so for everyone, although the evidence suggests that indigenous learning cultures, which were often community based, have been swept away by the individualised learning implicit in the schooling model of education.

If we look at what shapes community, context and experiences appear to be most powerful. One way of reading the Exodus story in the Old Testament is to see it as an account of community learning. What is interesting to map is not the physical journey from Egypt to the promised land but the development of a people. The story describes a people learning who they are (from a slave mentality to a faith community), how they should live together (all those regulations which appear so tedious to a modern reader are the product of experience of what makes for the physical, mental and spiritual health for a community) and who God is for them. The story makes clear that all this comes from reflection on what they had learned from common experiences, including the mistakes they made. Even the smallest community of two friends is shaped in a similar way. Shared experiences and how they are dealt with affect the quality of the relationship. There is a “we” story which stands on its own alongside the “I” stories of the individuals. Any attempt at community learning has to take seriously the elements of story, experience and context and the opportunity to reflect together.

What has been said so far suggests that communities do not have to be educated in order to become educators - that is their nature. Where communities may need to learn is to:

- a) recognise what they have learnt - in terms of attitude, behaviour and knowledge
- b) learn from how they have learnt
- c) value what they have learnt - where it relates to their understanding of the good
- d) be open to new learning - especially that which challenges the status quo.

In respect of the latter, it appears that many communities of all kinds fragment because their learning becomes confined and unable to respond creatively to new contexts and experiences or the influx of people with a different story.

Rather than continue this discussion at the more general level, we will consider two areas of community learning of particular interest to readers of EEF-NET - the local congregation and the family.

2.2 The Local Congregation

Any local congregation has a context, a story and a set of experiences. The most significant activity of the local congregation is worship, bringing together a shared experience with an opportunity for reflection. Educators might like to claim that it is their intentional processes and structures (eg Sunday school, confirmation classes, Bible study groups etc) which give participants the language and



concepts of their faith. In fact, it is far more likely to be the regular participation in worship which provides the structure and language of their religious thought. Where worship has no contact points with everyday life, it should come as no surprise that Christianity becomes a "Sundays only" faith which finds it hard to understand the whole of life theologically.

Whenever a congregation undertakes pastoral care and engages in mission and service in its locality, learning takes place. It could be argued that congregations are shaped as communities even in the pain of traumatic events. For some the lesson learned is that for self-

protection the congregation must draw in on itself and develop a defensive attitude. For others, the experience of suffering creates a community with a wider sensitivity and sympathy for others.

Very often the context, story and set of experiences provide the controlling interpretation of the Christian faith and of the particular denomination or tradition to which the congregation belongs. The external observer will tend to interpret the local congregation in the light of knowledge about Christianity and traditions within it. For the person within the congregation, there is more often a generalisation from that specific instance. As a university chaplain, it was always an interesting experience to hear students encountering those who also came from the same tradition. They had presumed that the Anglican or Baptist or Methodist or Reformed or Roman Catholic way was the "way we do it and the way we say it" in their local congregation. To find that this was not necessarily the case was very challenging. It illustrates the power of the community experience to shape an understanding which goes beyond the local context.

When we want people to learn or be nurtured in the faith we cannot just reach for the usual set of formal educational structures and processes. We have to enable the local congregation to embody in the totality of its life, the values it claims. Instead of learning from school and university about curriculum development, we need to learn the arts of community development.

In many cultures, communities have had ways of meeting which enable a collective learning from experience or changes in context. Although there may have been some by-products of decision making this was not the prime objective. Those churches which have had a tradition of congregational meetings have tended to allow them to become business meetings geared to efficient decision making rather than learning opportunities. We hope that the work being undertaken on methodologies by the Education and Ecumenical Formation team will put us back in contact with communal ways of learning we have neglected as well as identifying whatever may be new.

In our search for new or renewed methodologies, we look for communal activities which will enable a local congregation to recognise that they have learned, identify what they have learned and to value it. Many local congregations are activist by nature – in mission and in mutual care but also in their spirituality and worship. Where there is no opportunity for communal reflection, there is no opportunity for communal learning. Congregations need to learn to be as well as to do.

2.3 The Family

The family is a topic about which there are many strongly held positions. This is not the place to enter into the wider discussion about the nature of the family or the threats to family life. However, we can say that the family, in its many different combinations of gender and age, is a basic form of community. Living in family has a profound effect in shaping both children and adults.

In all parts of the world, the family is being disabled as a positive learning community which develops the qualities such as love, mutual acceptance, commitment, service and self-worth. Families have lost confidence as schools and social institutions have claimed rights and expertise in bringing up children. In a similar way, families have often been marginalised in Christian nurture by congregation based learning structures such as the Sunday school.

One of the strengths of the family has been that it is an inter-generational learning community. There is a potential mutuality in learning between the generations. This has been almost lost in schooling where the only inter-generational learning is from the older teacher to the younger student. External pressures have fragmented the lives of many families into a kind of parallel existence for their members, meaning that the home becomes a hotel and interaction is occasional and superficial.

Many successful family life education programmes run by or in association with churches work on the principle of families or, more particularly parents, giving one another mutual support and encouragement - less a process of the expert telling how it should be done than a mutual process of learning from their own experience as well as from broader concepts. A learning community of parents can assist the learning community of each family represented.

This may not go far enough. Family therapists often need to work with the whole family for the well being of individuals within it. This is work from which we may learn. An emphasis in Family Life Education which only relates to parenting may miss a vital element. A similar challenge faces us as that for the local congregation,



how do we enable the whole community of the family to identify, recognise and value what they learn from the very experience of being family?

3. Real Educators - Learning Individuals

Whatever the significance of the community in learning, we cannot ignore the importance of the education of the individual as a learner. Talk of educating individuals to learn may seem rather illogical but it is important. When one looks at the list of competencies students are expected to have acquired at school or college, "learning to learn" does not figure often enough. Yet it may be the most important single thing to learn as with it any other perceived deficiency in learning can be rectified subsequently.

There is an unhelpful understanding around educational institutions and courses that students should be expected to leave as a "finished product" - knowing what needs to be known and being able to do what needs to be done. This thinking may be good for cars or domestic appliances but not for people. Even if the world did not change as rapidly as it now does, it would be demeaning of our humanity to suggest that we are creatures whose behaviour or knowledge can be fixed at any one point of time. This is particularly the case for Christians whose call is to be disciples (learners).

A change in the culture of learning is required in many educational locations, including those in the churches. Learners have to be encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning. Assessment should include an element of self and collective evaluation, even if externally moderated. Where this has been tried, there appears to be no decline in standards but an entirely different attitude to learning. Excellence in learning is desirable but is only meaningful when it is owned by the learner.



Learners need to be freed from the guilt of sometimes not being able to learn. We can only truly learn when we are ready. Readiness is the product of many factors including the need to learn, intellectual, emotional or physical development, stage of life, the prevalent culture of learning and level of curiosity. All too often external constraints such as curricula and systems of testing impose inappropriate and therefore, ineffective, learning.

The information explosion through the world wide web which is quickly or slowly (sometimes not correlating to the economic context) becoming available makes it increasingly imperative that people know how to use information rather than memorising a limited amount of it. It

also brings a challenge to the teacher as the one who knows and controls what needs to be learnt. The significance of an essay, examination paper or thesis will lie in what the student has done with the information in selecting, assessing and using it to develop an argument. Some might argue that this is already the case but one fears that schooling and higher education systems are still in general wedded to information as knowledge.

One concept which could be used to sum up what might be required as an “end product” of any learning process is “reflective practitioner” - whether it is studying maths, training to be a doctor or being a Christian believer. It is about being able to put into practice what has been learned and being able to go on to develop one’s understanding and practice.

The emphasis in much of the educational work of the churches is on the transmission of the tradition – knowing about. This can be as true for the Sunday school or the confirmation/church membership class as for training for ordination. The danger of this emphasis is that the church ends up with its members and clergy having the knowledge resource but not knowing how to use it. Formation and Christian nurture methodologies need, therefore, to contain an equal emphasis on how the individual believer or ordained minister can integrate life experiences, context and tradition to make reflective practitioners of us all.

4. Conclusion

The challenges set out in this article are to –

- ◇ give confidence to the natural learners, communities and individuals, to recognise, value and utilise what they already do in learning
- ◇ offer alternatives to the dominant formal education models which take a holistic approach to community as a prime entity for learning and return the responsibility for learning to the individual learner
- ◇ discover or renew methodologies which take these seriously.

This is not just the responsibility of the WCC’s Education and Ecumenical Formation team but all who want communities and individuals to be able to know, to do, to be and to relate.

Rev. Simon Oxley

EEF-TEAM

Forum & REPORTS

Who is my neighbour?

That was the question at issue when Asian Christian educators from across that continent came together in Indonesia to create a Christian education agenda which would lead to the development of inclusive communities.

I was privileged to be invited by Christian Conference of Asia to take part as their guest from the World Council of Churches. What struck me from the outset was the fact that the other thirty delegates from all over Asia were living in contexts where people of different faiths lived together in varying degrees of harmony or intolerance which was evident in every aspect of their daily living. Asia is a continent of many faiths – and has been for centuries compared with our European context which has been almost exclusively Christian until recent times.

That fact meant that for those present the idea of ignoring the multi-faith issue in order to concentrate on the Church’s Christian education programme was not an option.

The environment in which education takes place is a significant factor in what is learned. If that environment, be it the home, church or neighbourhood,





is filled with suspicion and intolerance of those of other faiths – that will make as much impression on me as anything I am ‘taught’ about God’s love for all humankind.

So one of the slogans taken up by the conference was from the title of a book ‘Not Without My Neighbour’. This book was a primary focus in Daniel Thiagarajah’s (Sri Lanka) keynote address to the conference. This highlighted the workshop’s aim to address the conviction that Christian education curricula should be steeped in an attitude and approach which encourages the building up of inclusivity.

Hope Antone from the Philippines offered a definition of ecumenism which needed to be embraced by those of us committed to creating strategies which would build inclusive communities: ‘By real ecumenism I mean not just the co-operation of churches and Christian organizations, but the wider goal of working towards a better human community that accepts and embraces all religious groups’.

Hope, together with several others present could reflect on their childhood years when their Christian parents and the adult church community impressed upon them that they should not mix with neighbours of other faiths and could expect punishment if they did – especially if they attended non-Christian worship.

Samson Prabhakar (Bangalore) reflected that for him, as a young boy, there were elements of the Hindu worship of his neighbours which was much more colourful and enjoyable than that in his own church.

An important perception early in the proceedings was that such childhood experiences underlined the need to address the seat of prejudice – adults!

It was widely accepted that for many of us, our attitudes towards other faiths and cultures different from our own is acquired from parents, adult family and neighbourhood (including church) members. Most prejudice is not innate in our childhood, where our peers are more likely to be seen first as potential playmates regardless of difference of appearance or lifestyle which gives rise to curiosity rather than suspicion.

Such observations seemed to be a timely corrective to the conference, that Christian education is as much a task to be engaged in with adults as it is with children. East or West, we have dodged the hard issue of targetting education at adults for too long. Lifelong Learning is a current catchphrase in the British educational world. In Bali it was seen as the basis of discipleship.

In terms of attitudes and prejudice towards those of other faiths, it demonstrated the truth that we, as adults, not only needed to learn real facts about our different neighbours but also unlearn the caricatures and half-truths which have kept us isolated and suspicious for so long.

Much of the tension in this issue of our view of our neighbours surrounds our understanding of our Christian mission. Are we called to be witnesses and also converters – or is the latter the task of the Holy Spirit? We were challenged via Jesus’ encounters with the Syrophenician woman (Mark 7:24-30 & Matt: 15:21-28), the friends of the Roman centurion of great faith and Peter’s encounter with Cornelius to revisit this question.

Jesus acknowledged the centurion’s faith in terms which suggest that he had no sense of a need to speak to the man in person and challenge the adequacy of his particular faith. It was even suggested that in his meeting with the woman of a different faith background, that Jesus was the one who adjusted his view of the foreigner and also acknowledged her faith without attempting to call her to a different faith position.

As an Asia-wide gathering, we were challenged to consider that we are called to witness to our own faith and be faithful to the one in whom we trust. We were also asked to consider whether we ought, like Jesus himself, to acknowledge, understand and respect the faith and faithfulness of those who journey in faith but with different revelations and perceptions of God from ours. Many of us left with a new or renewed commitment to engage in dialogue with all of our neighbours.

That dialogue may, however, not be with a view to conversion, but to a better understanding of each other through a mutual sharing of spiritual conviction.

Before we left, we offered recommendations to international and national councils of churches which reflected the slogan with which we began – not without my neighbour. For me this is best summed up in Recommendation IIb:

We recommend to our respective churches and ourselves the need to contextualize the new knowledge gained in this workshop through... a conscious and concerted effort in providing space for people of other faiths/ ideologies, and those who are different from us to come together for dialogue, interaction, fellowship, worship and common service and action.

The conference has issued a Statement of Concern, Confession and Commitment which has been prepared for use in Asia, but deserves to be heard worldwide.* Many of the sentiments expressed have been offered before – across every continent at different times. The evidence of the new millennium as it unfolds is that it needs to be heard again because, sadly, we still see little sign that as twenty first century adults we have learned very much at all since Jesus first asked, 'Who is my neighbour?'

*Text of the statement is available from: Corazon Tabing-Reyes, Secretary for Women's Concerns/Education, Christian Conference of Asia, Pak Tin Village, Tai Wai, NT, Hong Kong. E-mail: coracca@pacific.net.hk or ccaeduc@pacific.net.hk

Extracts from the Report of the Consultation on Orthodox Theological Education and Ecumenical Themes

Pendeli Monastery, Athens,
Greece, 2-9 February 2000

The following is an excerpt of an important consultation held by the ETE desk of EEF with the Orthodox churches. A full report is to be found in the ETE Journal "Ministerial Formation" April 2000

INTRODUCTION

At the invitation of the World Council of Churches, with the assistance of the Society for Ecumenical Studies and Inter-Orthodox Relations (Thessaloniki, Greece), and the blessing of His Beatitude Christodoulos, Archbishop of Athens and All Greece, 40 delegates met, representing the Oriental Orthodox and Eastern Orthodox Churches, as well as a number of other Christian traditions. Coming from Africa, Asia, former Communist countries in Southeastern and Eastern Europe, the Middle East, North America, and Western Europe, the assembled theological educators provided an inspiring witness to the great diversity of Orthodox Christian educational ministries. His Beatitude underlined the importance of their mission in his initial greeting at the first plenary session, as well as in his introduction of the Consultation.

As a hierarch deeply concerned with proclaiming the Gospel of Salvation in modern society, His Beatitude reminded the group that

"it is wrong to relegate Theological Education to the simple transmission of theoretical knowledge, thereby falling into the pitfall of turning Theology into a philosophical and abstract discipline For Orthodox, Theology is life, life in Christ, life in His Body, life in the Church. It is experiential, not rational or speculative. . . . Theology cannot be viable if it is not rooted in the experience of God, if it is not born in the Church and does not lead one to catharsis, illumination, and theosis. Should this not be the case, then its impact and influence will out

of necessity be weak and sorely limited. And certainly one cannot be a true and genuine teacher of Orthodox Theology if his [or her] life is devoid of this experience."

The discussions focused on "Teaching Orthodox Theology in Particular Educational and Cultural Contexts," "Addressing 'Ecumenical Themes' in Courses and Curricula and Associations," "Ecumenical Themes which deserve more attention from Orthodox Theologians and Faculties," and "Theological Education in Protestant Seminaries."

ISSUES

From the first presentation, theological reflection guided the group in its deliberations. Delegates took as a starting point the understanding that they were acting as members of a deeply-rooted faith community, speaking about and in the presence of the life-giving God, for the glory of God and the salvation of God's people.

Issue One: Restoration of Communion between Eastern and Oriental Churches

The tragic division between the Oriental and Eastern families of Orthodoxy at the Council of Chalcedon continues to be an issue of the most profound importance for the teaching of Orthodox theology... At this moment in the history of the universal Church, the task of theological schools is to convey the positive results of these bilateral dialogues in order to convince the Churches to take the final steps in restoring full sacramental communion.



Issue Two: Self-Identity

Limits of the Church. This line of theological reflection led naturally to very significant issues of Self-Identity. Much theological reflection is needed on how to understand the limits of the Church. Can we continue to speak of the Church using language taken exclusively from canon law while ignoring more inclusive scriptural and liturgical images? Acknowledging that "the Spirit blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do

not know where it comes from or where it goes" (Jn 3:8), Orthodox theologians need to reflect on what dimensions of the faith are core and apostolic and which characteristics are peripheral and cultural. Simply put: what is transcendent truth and what is its temporal expression? This sort of theological inquiry will allow the Orthodox Church to recognize Christ's beloved sheep who belong to other folds (cf. Jn 10:16). Only by removing centuries of exclusivist debris from our own eyes will we be able to recognize others as the children of God that they are. ... We must re-learn how to think of ourselves in positive terms instead of depending on negative characterizations of others.

Inculturation and Diversity. Recent work in the areas of Sociology and Anthropology enables us to deepen our appreciation of the reality of inculturation within the various local churches. With a clearer understanding of what is fundamental to Orthodox Christianity, we will be able to address the issue of how catholicity can be rescued from a dominant culture ... Only by assessing the factors that form modern Orthodox can we begin to think about the impact of theological education on formation of self-identity.

History and Tradition. Similarly, the time is ripe for Orthodox educators at all levels to review how we understand and speak about our past. Our Orthodox Christian history is a rich tapestry of varying colours and textures. Perhaps forgotten champions of the faith need to be remembered. Inspiring women should be held up for all to know. Holy people from marginalized groups can serve to comfort and instruct today's faithful. ... Not every historical figure was perfect and heroic; not every decision was inspired by the Spirit of God, yet the saving Spirit of God is best seen in the contexts of fallen humanity struggling to grow into God's likeness.

The Situation in Post-Communist Europe. An urgent challenge before the ETE is the matter of Orthodox theological education and ministerial formation in post-Communist Europe. ... Attention must be given to the major changes in theological education, namely the status of schools, the intellectual framework of the societies, the democratic states, and civil society.

Issue Three: Relations between Churches

Once Orthodox theological reflection and education has enabled us to see ourselves more clearly, it will be possible to address key Relational Issues.

It is unthinkable that brothers and sisters who share the same Eucharistic Meal can also engage in hateful, hurtful, and sinful actions against one another. The holy Apostle Paul had harsh words for those Christians who insulted the Eucharist by their own shameful factionalism and treatment of one another (cf. 1 Cor 11:17ff).

Support in marginalized areas. Fundamental to the integrity of the Body of Christ is the obligation to support and to help our sisters and brothers struggling to do God's work under difficult conditions. "How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses to help?" (1 Jn 3:17). In spite of overwhelming circumstances, Orthodox education continues to flourish and share the Gospel of Christ to the world.

Presenting the Relationships between Orthodox and other Christian Communities. In every session of the Consultation, members emphasized the importance of phrasing the "ecumenical message" in terms that will speak to and inspire Orthodox



Christians. Similarly, Orthodox theological education needs to be expressed in a way that is accessible to other Christians...

A Common "Ecumenical Vision." Closely related is the pressing need to articulate a common "ecumenical vision." On the one hand, the Orthodox themselves need to reflect on how they envision Christian unity. On the other hand (and necessarily dependent on their own common vision) the Orthodox Churches need to engage other member churches in an honest, forthright, and charitable discussion of how all people who have clothed themselves with Christ (cf. Gal 3:27) can work together toward the fulfillment of Christ's prayer that all may be one as He and the Father are one (cf. Jn 17).

Issue Four: Pressing Concerns

Communicating the Message. As discussed above, making the message of inter-Christian love and unity accessible to all people is imperative. ... Furthermore, in planning their curricula and lessons, all Orthodox educators are strongly encouraged to present material that is naturally conducive to the work of restoring Christian unity.

Women's Issues. Women's issues demand thorough consideration combining intellectual honesty, theological integrity, and pastoral sensitivity. Some issues are of vital importance within the Orthodox Church itself (e.g., the opportunity for all women to pursue theological education without restriction; study and evaluation of the language and images applied to women in liturgical and educational texts; restoration of women to the ordained diaconate, and further recognition of the fact that the call to minister to God's people extends beyond the boundaries of ordained ministry, making full use of God's gifts to persons within the Church (cf. Rom 12) and injustice within the Church must be rectified immediately. Other social issues concerning women (e.g., abuse, denial of full human rights, and freedom to pursue justice) require the Church of God to assume an advocacy role just as Christ defended the woman who was being stoned (cf. Jn 8:1-11). Certain theological issues (e.g., the ordination of women to the presbyterate and episcopacy) may not be of immediate concern to Orthodox Churches, but they undeniably affect relationships with other churches, demanding that the Orthodox address them seriously and fairly.

Orthodox Fundamentalism. Fundamentalism within some Orthodox groups is becoming a significant problem throughout the world.

Proselytism. In many contexts, most notably the former Communist nations and the developing countries, proselytism by fundamentalist Protestant churches and some over-zealous missionaries are robbing the Church of the sheep entrusted to it by Christ (cf. Jn 21:15ff).

Facing Controversial Issues. Finally, in a world daily encountering societal, scientific, and technological change, the Orthodox must not shy away from controversial topics of the modern world in a clear and direct manner. Some of these issues are: secularism, bioethics, globalization, post-modernism, gender and sexuality, status of the family, reproduction issues, politics, drugs, AIDS.

OIKOSNET NEWS - Calendar of Events

2000

May 7-10 NARDA (An Ecumenical Christian Association of Retreat & Renewal Centres & Leaders in N.America) Annual Meeting, Spirit in the Desert Centre, Carefree, Arizona, USA

May 15-17 OIKOSNET Strategic Planning Meeting, Geneva, Switzerland

May 21-28 MEATRC (Middle East Association of Training & Retreat Centres) regional annual meeting, ITSA Centre, Minia, Egypt. Study conference theme "Training Centres Management and Planning for Future"

June 30-July 2 CONOSUR (Southern Cone Network of Centres) Coordination Team meeting, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

July 9-29 CEPACASA (Collaboration for Ecumenical Planning & Action in the Caribbean & S. America) Course for Lay Leadership Training (CLLT), Venezuela

July 30-Aug 4 CEPACASA Gathering, Caracas, Venezuela

July ACISCA (Association of Christian Institutes for Social Concern in Asia) Asian Women's/Men's Synod 2000 in Indonesia or Korea. Contact: Mrs Priscilla R. Atuel, ACISCA Treasurer, Fax: 0063-2-735-1465 e-mail: kkfi@skyinet.net

Sept 5-9 EAALCE (Ecumenical Association of Academies & Laity Centres in Europe) Board, Executive Committee, and Business meetings, Loccum, Germany

Sept 9-13 EAALCE Annual Conference and Global Gathering, Loccum, Germany

Sept 13-15 OIKOSNET Strategic Planning Meeting, Loccum, Germany Quota: 5 participants per

region. Contact: Wolfgang Lenz, EAALCE, Fax: 0049-212-2494-254, e-mail: office@eaalce.de

Oct 3-8 CONOSUR 7th Annual meeting in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Theme: "Spirituality, syncretism and religious diversity". Host: ISER/Assessoria

October ACISCA Directors Consultation, Karachi, Pakistan. Contact: Dr Felix N. Sugirtharaj, Fax: 0091-44-558 2150, e-mail: arpmads@md3.vsnl.net.in

Nov 16-18 EAALCE International Committee, Kirchentag, Frankfurt, Germany

November ACISCA Ecumenical Conference on "Development in the Third Millennium". Hosts: Mr Prawate Khid-arn, Executive Secretary, CCA-D&S, and ACISCA

2001

Mar14-April 12 Global Course for Leadership Training (CLLT) Theme: "To be Instruments for Peace". 1st week: 4 team visits: Syria, Egypt, Lebanon, Palestine. 3-week residential course at Ayia Napa Conference Centre, Cyprus. 30 participants: 4 from each region plus 4 resource people. Contact: Evelyn Appiah, Education & Ecumenical Formation, WCC, Fax: (41-22)710 2312, e-mail: app@wcc-coe.org

CONOSUR Regional CLLT, theme: "Reality and Dreams in the construction of an ecumenical spirituality", Sao Leopoldo, Brazil

NEWS FROM THE REGIONS

AFRICA

ACLCA (Association of Christian Lay Centres in Africa) Women's Pre-Assembly meeting was held at Ramseyer Training Centre, Abetifi, Ghana,



15-20 February, focusing on three areas: family life education, small local industries, and AIDS, with the theme: *African Women: the Light that Shines in Darkness and Confronting the AIDS Pandemic in the New Millennium*. As part of the WCC focus on Africa after the Harare Assembly in 1998, the Laity desk felt strongly that the ACLCA Assembly should focus on two areas – HIV/AIDS and Human

Rights. The WCC Health and Healing desk's regional resource person, Sr Tarisai Zata from Harare, Zimbabwe, organized a two-day workshop on AIDS to create awareness and to prepare participants on their return to integrate the information into their programmes or create new ones. It was recommended that the next Course for Lay Leadership Training (CLLT) organized by ACLCA should concentrate on AIDS.

The Pre-Assembly Youth meeting was also held at Ramseyer Training Centre in Abetifi, 15-20 February, theme: *"Environmental Problems: African Communities' Response"*. It brought together 40 young people from Africa and Europe as a follow-up exchange programme to another youth gathering which had taken place in Germany in 1998. Topics were: Sustainable Development through Renewable Energies, Rural Solar and Biogas Installations, Deforestation in Africa, The Role of Churches and Lay Centres in Renewable Energies, the Disintegration of the Family in Africa due to urbanisation.

ACLCA General Assembly was held 20-27 February at the Presbyterian Women's Centre, Abokobi, Ghana, theme: *Being the Light of the World: Challenges and Hopes of the New Millennium*. 140 participants from member centres in Africa attended. Assembly workshops were held on: Church in Soci-

ety; Justice, Peace and Conflict Resolution; Globalisation and its Effects; Marginalisation; Decline of Moral Values; Land use, Ecology and the Environment.

Mercy Oduoye, in her keynote presentation spoke of contemporary challenges, and being the light. "We remain a people of hope who shout aloud 'we may be troubled but that is not the final word'. We are a people of the Resurrection faith. Every new day and every new born child revives our hope in the God who has named us as God's people. We entered the new millennium fearing that the technology we have created will be the source of the collapse of our human culture. Do we forget that the God who stimulated the creation of this technology is still at work in us to direct its future?"

"So what are our hopes? I do not know about you but as for me the hope for a peaceful and just Africa is my hope.... an engaged church a community of women, and children built on respect and compassion.... for centres that will be centres of moral excellence Dialogue, multi-religious and multi-cultural dialogueCentres that are the conscience of the church on matters of politics, economics and social concerns.... For Centres welcoming senior citizens, children and young people.... Centres with special

engagement to overcome the shrouding of plights of girls in African societies.... Centres



of renewal and re-vitalizing of all that is life-giving in Christianity : Animate the Africa of my hope. And finally my hope that the Christian lay centres will become homes for all who seek the well-being of the individuals and the groups that make up the church in Africa as well as places from where the mission of God in Africa will be continually refreshed by a spring whose source is the Holy Spirit. Let us say Amen – May God help us."

Clement John, from the International Relations team, WCC, spoke on human rights issues. In his report to ENI, Geneva, he said churches will have to use interfaith dialogue as a means to promote peace, understanding, tolerance and respect for diversity of religion and belief. He saw four major issues faced by the lay centres across Africa:

- "The first problem is corruption - in government, in the military, in day-to-day life such as police harassment."

- "It seems that every country represented is facing a crisis situation as far as HIV-AIDS is concerned. It has become a major theological and moral issue, as well as one of survival, because of the lack of drugs and facilities for treatment."

- "The proliferation of small arms, with unemployed youth and soldiers who have deserted engaging in banditry and lawlessness on the highways and in the cities and towns."

- "Finally, the issue of the rise of militant, political Islam. There are fears that what is happening in Nigeria could spread to other countries where there are Muslims and Christians."

Rich Watson and Liz Schuler, from Vesper Society, USA, held a workshop on "Expanding Leadership in the 21st Century: Network 21", to prepare for electronic communication through e-mail and the internet.

ACLCA Executive Committee elections:

Congratulations to the new President of ACLCA, Rev. Felix Maafo, Address: Ramseyer Training Centre, P O Box AT 10, Abetifi, Ghana. Tel: 23381 241 76. Fax: 233 846 22079/233 803 610206 E-mail: rtc@libr.ug.edu.gh; Vice-President: Mrs Martina Kabisama, CCT Conference & Training Centre, P.O. Box 372, Dodoma, Tanzania. Tel: 255 61 321528. Fax: 255 61 324352. E-mail: cct-ctc@maf.org; General Secretary: Rev. Jonah Katoneene, P O Box H122, Hatfield, Harare, Zimbabwe. Tel: 263 4 573 309. Fax: 263 4 573279. E-mail: aclca@africanonline.co.zw

Major resolutions and message of the ACLCA Assembly as well as the names of the ACLCA Executive Committee, Network and National Coordinators, elected at the General Assembly, are available from Rev. Jonah Katoneene. A final report is being prepared.

EC Supports DEC Towards Mobilization of Rural Women for Economic and Political Empowerment

The Executive Director, Chief (Dr) Cecilia Asogwa, of the Development Education Centre (DEC), Enugu, Nigeria, has called on women to use the opportunity of participating in self-help groups to develop greater sense of confidence and competence as a first step towards participatory democracy. DEC's programme "Mobilizing the '100'

Women Self-help groups for Economic and Political Empowerment" at the grassroots in fifty communities, in Enugu and Abia States, is being sponsored by the European Commission. Income-generating projects include: micro-credit/loan scheme, setting up of cottage industries such as garri and rice production and processing, as well as political awareness programmes. (DECNews, no. 1)

DECNews is a new magazine, published quarterly, by Development Education Centre. *Address: Information & Documentation Unit of DEC, No. 23 3-5 DEC Avenue, Independence Layout, PO Box 15723, UNEC Post, Enugu, Nigeria. Tel: (042)451000 Fax: 4-42 4584499*

Drug Abuse Education Resource Centre (DAEREC) has produced a booklet "Drugs and Substance Abuse – Facts for Young People". This is a programme of the PCEA Lay Training and Conference Centre, Kikuyu, Kenya. They would be interested in sharing and learning from what other centres are doing in this field. For booklets, information and help contact: *Drug Abuse Education Resource Centre, PCEA Lay Training and Conference Centre, PO Box 213, Kikuyu, Kenya. Tel: 0154 32260*

Institute of Church and Society, Nigeria
new E-mail address: okoro.ics.wscf@skannet.com

ASIA

ACISCA Consultation on Education and the Existence of Indigenous People in Asia – Pacific Region, 27 October-1 November 1999. A statement was prepared and presented:

"We the participants of the ACISCA Consultation on Indigenous People in Asia - Pacific region from Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Japan, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand and the USA, who met in Hsinchu, Taiwan at the Presbyterian Bible College, from October 27 - November 1, 1999, would like to state that we are indeed fortunate to have assembled in a place where Indigenous People live and contribute to the well-being of the community at large.

"We come from different cultural, tribal and ethnic backgrounds in Asia-Pacific region with the sole objective of expressing our solidarity among ourselves and with others so as to become the voice of the voiceless in the 21st Century.

"In all humility, we would like to state the following for evolving a better tomorrow for all in the Third Millennium:
"i) We are all created in the image of God. All are endowed with gifts for the sustainability of life on this planet, Earth. Exploitation, manipulation and marginalization of a weaker section of the society are gross violations of human dignity and respect. To care for the least, the last and lost is a divine mandate.

"ii) We believe that the Indigenous People in Asia - Pacific region have the following three major concerns which constitute the very basis for the restoration of their self-confidence, human dignity and creativity.

"a) Right to land and human settlement

b) Right to self-determination

c) Right to culture, language and education.

"iii) a) We also believe that we are alienated from the main stream of life due to the lack of recognition of our right to live as human beings with full honour and dignity.

"b) We also think that we are being alienated from the main stream of life on account of prejudice towards our life-style and cultural heritage. Moreover, lack of proper communication between the dominant and Indigenous cultures, defective mission paradigms, lack of sensitivity and indifference to justice issues have contributed to the marginalization of the Indigenous People all over the world.

"Therefore, we call upon the churches, lay centres, NGOs, civil and human rights organizations and the countries of the world particularly in Asia take note of the following concerns:

"i) The spirituality of the Indigenous People towards the Mother Earth be given due recognition for a sustainable livelihood in the 21st Century.

"ii) The ethnic studies be given proper emphasis in the academic disciplines of the universities in Asia.

"iii) The traditional art forms, music, folklore, health practices etc., treasured in the old traditions be preserved for prosperity.

"iv) The internal displacement of the Indigenous People due to ethnic conflicts, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, dam construction be viewed seriously and remedial measures have to be taken without any neglect of time.

"v) Child marriage among the Indigenous People particularly in India and Pakistan be discouraged through education and other methods of campaign against such evil practices.

"vi) Documentation of various art forms, music, folk stories be done and be used as educational tools for the preservation of the legacy of Indigenous culture.

"vii) Legal advocacy for the protection of the rights of the Indigenous People be established through the human rights forums in Asia.

"viii) Consultation on the concerns of the Indigenous Peoples across geographical barriers be held periodically so as to assess the context of each community in Asia.

"ix) The UN-charter for the Rights of the Indigenous People be formulated with a human face taking into consideration all the basic issues of human rights for other people.

"x) A common strategy be initiated by the inter-religious groups in the countries of Asia for giving more visibility to Indigenous People's unity and solidarity.

"The participants are grateful to the organizers of the Consultation: Education and Ecumenical Formation Laity Concerns Desk and Justice, Peace and Creation team at the World Council of Churches (WCC), Association of Christian Institutes for Social Concern in Asia (ACISCA), Taiwan World Vision and particularly Aboriginal Work Committee of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (PCT) for their generous hospitality and wisdom in choosing a country like Taiwan where a plethora of 12 regional tribes exist in its social milieu. We are indeed pleased to have received an invitation from the Ainu Community in Japan to host a consultation on the Indigenous People during the year 2000 as a gesture of goodwill and a sign of meaningful response to the consultation in Taiwan."

The Ecumenical Christian Centre (ECC), Bangalore, India

The Centre was established in 1963 by the late Rev. Dr M.A. Thomas. Its prime message is that humankind is one, irrespective of colour, creed or sex. In its objectives, ECC has educational, social, religious and cultural concerns. The vision of the unity of humankind/creation is the basic philosophy of the centre. The focus of the programme is empowerment of the people holding an ecumenical vision and enabling the enablers at various levels of church and society.

The Indian School of Ecumenical Theology (ISET) is a programme unit of ECC, for people belonging to different churches, states/countries and religions.

Publications include *EEC News* and *Theology for our Times*. Board and lodging facilities available. For more information contact: Rev. Dr M.J. Joseph, Ecumenical Christian Centre, PO Box no. 11, Whitefield P.O., Bangalore 560066, India. Fax: 91-80-8452652 E-mail: eccentre@mailcity.com Website: www.varge.demon.co.uk/ecc

EUROPE

EAALCE Online News (EON)

The Ecumenical Association of Academies and Laity Centres in Europe (EAALCE) now has EON on the website: <http://www.eaalce.org/eonarchives/index.htm> For those who do not have access to the web but would like copies, please write to: EAALCE, PO Box 10 11 85, D-42657 Solingen, Germany. E-mail: wolfgang.lenz@eaalce.de

Dialogue as a Method (Kerk en Wereld, Driebergen, Netherlands) (EON no. 4). After a multi-year dialogue project which involved the SHELL corporation, the Dutch member centre Kerk en Wereld in Driebergen summarized the methodological experiences in an exciting paper "Dialogue as a Method".

Being a People: Reflections on the Concept of the 'Laity' by Rowan Williams (Mark Gibbs Lecture 1999). (EON no. 5) This exploratory material is available for internal discussion.

(For more resource material see the WCC publication: *A Letter from Christ to the World*, an exploration of the role of the laity in the church today, edited by Nicholas Apostola)

NORTH AMERICA

LAOS Ministries, Ontario, Canada

Laos Ministries seeks to serve the Church of Jesus Christ by providing teaching and learning experiences for the Whole People of God (Laos Theou) in order to build up the priesthood of all believers.

Operation and activities, Laos Ministries can provide:

- Leadership in workshops, retreats, seminars
- Preaching, teaching, speaking engagements
- Congregational consultations, analysis studies or conflict management
- Interim ministry and assistance to interim ministers/moderators
- Facilitation of experiential and skills learning

The prime focus is for Christian laity – church members and adherents, leaders and elders. Their

goal is to seek opportunities to equip adults of Presbyterian and other churches, or ecumenical groupings, for leadership and ministry of service, both within the church structure and in the world of daily life and work, "to prepare God's people for works of service". For further information contact: *Rev. Dr Robert Spencer, Teaching Elder and Director, Laos Ministries, 28 Kipling Ave. Guelph, Ontario, Canada, N1H 8C2 Tel: (519)822 4015 Fax: (519)822 4587 E-mail: robertcspencer@sympatico.ca*

En'owkin Centre

Located in Penticton, British Columbia, Canada the Centre was established in 1981 by the Okanagan Tribal Council to record, preserve, enhance and continue First Nations cultures through education. Drawing on a diversity of First Nations peoples from all across Turtle Island, the En'owkin Centre fosters a creative atmosphere in which First Nations' teachers, staff, and students work towards developing new forms of artistic and cultural expression. Services include: Youth programmes, En'owkin reading series, Theytus Books Ltd. For further information contact: *En'owkin Centre, 257 Brunswick Street, Penticton, B.C. V2A 5P9, Canada*

New address: Vesper Society

22351 City Centre Drive, Suite 100, Hayward, CA 94541, USA Tel: (510)885-1774 Fax: (510)885-1887 E-mail: info@vesper.org internet: www.vesper.org

LATIN AMERICA

CONOSUR (Southern Cone Network of Centres): Rev. German Zijlstra has been appointed Executive Secretary, (part-time). From 1st March, he will also be working part-time in a pastoral team of the Reformed Church in Argentina, in the south of Buenos Aires city. German and his wife, Doris, are now based in Buenos Aires - we wish them well in their new ministry. Address: *Ricardo Rojas 576, 1980 – Brandsen, Buenos Aires, Argentina E-mail: german-zijlstra@hotmail.com*

As an ecumenical network of centres CONOSUR topics include spirituality, world peace, tolerance, non-violence, pluralism, democracy and citizenship, world ethics, civil society. They are searching to work with networks of organizations that cooperate with these themes.

Last December CONOSUR's coordination team met in Santiago, Chile to review the regional situation, to take note and to look for ways to implement decisions taken during the last encounter of Centres, carried out in Cochabamba, Bolivia, in August 24-29, 1999.

Decisions taken were:

- * to go beyond the annual meetings
- * to give more visibility to the network in our own centres
- * importance of the lay spirituality
- * to designate an executive secretary for 4 renewable years
- * to elaborate an electronic bulletin quarterly to include information from the centres and their special situations, exchange programmes, meetings of the coordinating team, publications, etc.
- * to highlight the legislative role of the assemblies

CONOSUR will invite Vesper Society representatives to participate in the next encounter of Centres, in Rio de Janeiro, next October, to introduce Network21 and the possibilities that are offered globally and regionally. A communications workshop for some representatives of the Centres, is planned immediately after the encounter.

Some of the strategic priorities that should be emphasized, are:

- * to carry out more contacts and exchanges with other regions, so that the Latin American reality will become known
- * to organize volunteer programmes
- * to work on following topics: spirituality, world peace, tolerance, overcoming violence, pluralism, democracy, citizenship, values, history
- * to take a more aggressive role, presenting projects on these themes and to promote the work in the network among organizations that cooperate in these issues
- * to define the relationship of some centres with the network and to establish more contact with new centres in Paraguay, Argentina, Chile, Brazil, etc.

It was decided to update the directory of the network, to publish it and also put it on the Internet, integrating it with the other regional associations of OIKOSNET.

The next meeting of the coordinating team will be June 30 to July 2 2000, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

The Exchange Programmes between the regional centres continue.

Week of Bible Studies, a course was organized by **Centro Ecumenico Diego de Medellin**, in Santiago, Chile (October 1999). A Seminar on "Ministry and Role of Women in the diverse Christian traditions" was organized by Centro Emmanuel, CIPFE and CLAI, in Colonia Valdense, Uruguay (October 1999). Internship with HIV/AIDS patients, programme was organized by CIPFE and FRANSIDA, in Montevideo, Uruguay (December 1999). A course on "Other 500 years" (of the Brazilian conquerors) was organized by CECA, in Sao Leopoldo, Brazil (January 2000). Two people from ISER/Assessoröa, Rio de Janeiro, participated. A course in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, will be held in July, organized by ISER/Assessoröa. A Seminar on "Spirituality and gender", will take place 24-27 July, organized by Centro Emmanuel and CLAI, in Colonia Valdense, Uruguay.

The 7th CONOSUR Encounter of Centres, will be held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 3-8 October, hosted by ISER/Assessoröa. Theme: "*Spirituality, syncretism and religious diversity*".

CONOSUR publishes an electronic Bulletin quarterly. Regional centres are encouraged to share information of their programmes and activities.

MIDDLE EAST

A Middle East Association of Training and Retreat Centres (MEATRC) training seminar was held in Egypt, 21 January to 5 February, attended by 28 participants from 18 training centres in Egypt. The training for trainers covered basis for training and learning; trainers skills and behaviour; methods; audiovisuals for training and learning. More training programmes are planned to take place this year in Lebanon, Syria and Palestine.

Tantur Ecumenical Institute, Jerusalem

Founded by Pope Paul VI after his trip to the Holy Land in 1964, Tantur ("hilltop" in Arabic) is an ecumenical study centre located in Jerusalem on the way to Bethlehem, that is, strategically located between Israel and Palestine. Both Israelis and Palestinians find a place where they are welcome and feel safe. Opened in 1971, the Institute has welcomed over 3,500 Orthodox, Protestant, Anglican and Roman Catholic participants.

Basic goals and functions are: to assist Christian reflection; to search for Christian unity and inter-church harmony; to explore relationships

between Christians and peoples of other faiths, especially Jews and Muslims. Promotion of interconfessional and intercultural dialogue through advance study and research is a primary concern. Programmes are of 2, or 3-6 months sessions, and also a yearly stay is recommended.



Facilities include a large lecture hall and seminar rooms, with audio-visual and translation equipment, an extensive library; 50 double rooms with bathrooms, and a few family apartments.

In 1994, Tantur participated in the meeting held with a view to forming the now existing Middle East Network of Lay Centres (MEATRC). Contact was not kept up but it is hoped that this link will now be revived. For further information please contact: *Fr Michael McGarry, Rector, Tantur Ecumenical Institute, P.O. Box 19556, 91194 Jerusalem. Tel: (972) 2 6760 911 Fax: (972) 2 6760 914 E-mail: tantur@netvision.net.il Website: www.come.to/tantur*

Forum of Interculture Dialogue

This centre was previously the Community Based Rehabilitation Centre. The Centre aims to use dialogue and the principles of equality, tolerance, pluralism and democracy to support an environment that is instrumental in promoting understanding and healthy interaction between Christians and Muslims as well as between the various economic, social and cultural groupings of society. Programmes include: Religion and culture; Egyptian dialogue; Muslim-Christian dialogue; Civil society. Two conference rooms and a library are available. Accommodation is in hotels.

Contact address: *Forum of Interculture Dialogue, Block no. 1331 Dr Ahmed Zaki St., El Nozha Elgedida, Cairo, Egypt. Tel: 00202 297 5901/2/3 Fax: 00202 297 5876 E-mail: andreazaki@ceoss.org.eg*

Talaat Harb Training Centre

In response to growing unemployment in the early 1990s, the Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services (CEOSS) established the Talaat Harb Training Centre in 1994. It started as a Business Management Skills Training Programme but soon expanded to include training and capacity

building programmes for individuals, small business owners, trainers, private industries, non-governmental organizations and governmental entities. It aims at promoting sustainable and equitable social transformation through the enhancement of human resources and organizational development. Through training and technical assistance it supports human resource development; organizational capacity building; formulation of social policy and advocacy. Social development is fostered through development studies and the evaluation of current development interventions. Training programmes include: communication skills, team building, conflict resolution, leadership skills, fundraising, training of trainers, technical skills training in health, agriculture, environment, economics and education. Facilities provided: Training rooms with audio-visual tools and equipment; accommodation and transportation for groups.

Address: *Talaat Harb Training Centre, Administration Office, 13 Merit Basha St., Tahrir Square (opposite the Egyptian Museum), Cairo, Egypt Tel: (202) 576 0926 Fax: (202) 578 0249 E-mail: thc@ceoss.org.eg*

FROM OTHER CORNERS OF THE EDUCATION NETWORKS

ONE WORLD WEEK

One World Week (OWW), established in 1978, is a development education programme bringing local people together to act on and raise awareness of global issues. With the support of a small staff, local activists throughout the UK and around the world are building a movement of globally aware and active citizens, and making an impact on decision-makers. In 1999 over 6,000 people took part, reaching millions around the world.

Voices from the South

“We must plan as if we cannot fail”
Ashanti proverb

In 1999 One World Week embarked on delivering the ‘Voices from the South’ project with eight groups. The project is building on its achievements in the first year and appreciates the challenges that the participants took on to make the project successful. The United Kingdom has woken up to *diversity* as a positive ingredient in its population. The term “Southern” is used to describe groups and individuals in civil society with origins from developing countries. This project taps on their visions and perspectives to enrich our understanding of how we engage development awareness work in OWW.

LIVING IN THE NET-

News from the Education Networks

What is the OWW and Voices from the South project?

The aim is to open One World Week to more richness and diversity of perspectives from the South, to find new ways of working in partnership on this shared task.

This means a training project, in which eight local OWW groups will each work with a Southern Mentor to plan and run OWW 2000. Training will be provided, as will a small budget for organizing events in October 2000. They are looking for eight groups, in different parts of the country, to take part in the project (please see 'what you will need' below). But they also hope to make the benefits of the project available to everyone involved in OWW, through a series of conferences and newsletters in 2000.

Interested in taking part?

You will need:

The desire to learn about Southern perspectives in development, learn from and work with a Southern Mentor, and share these learnings through organizing events for OWW in October 2000.

A group of people with a track record of working on development awareness locally. One or more will need to have direct experience of organizing OWW. An existing OWW planning group would be ideal, though a different kind of group (say a World Development Movement Group, a Link Group, Youth Group or a Local Agenda 21 Group) are welcome. A new group – one put together for this purpose might also be considered, if the members have the needed experience and contacts in the community.

A commitment to working together from February to December 2000, and preferably for a second year as well.

The capacity to support two local OWW volunteers (the 'mentees') for this period as they work with the Southern mentor.

The commitment to find, and work creatively with, a Southern mentor throughout One World Week 2000.

Support and training will be provided as part of the project on the last two points

What is in it for your Group?

A chance to see the world from new perspectives – Southern perspectives!

The opportunity to reach new people – in particular Southerners and members of minority communities in your area.

- ♦ A chance to develop your group's range of skills in education, campaigning and publicity via an established and tested process.
- ♦ An opportunity through your experiences and feedback, to increase our collective understanding of what we are trying to do in OWW and in development awareness.
- ♦ A modest budget will be available to those who take part in the project to support the planning of OWW events for October 2000. (£500-£1000 grant)

Mentors will also be provided with a monthly stipend. (to be agreed at introduction conference)

How will the project work?

February – March 2000

Identify groups to take part. Introduction conference will be held in *(February 11/12)

April-May 2000

Induction: Groups would be expected to have found a Southern mentor. Time to get to the nuts and bolt of the project and its workings *(April 14)

June-July 2000

Deepening our Relationships: Training away day (I) to explore how the groups are progressing. Building trust and generally working together in development awareness. *(June 16/17)

August-October 2000

Preparing and delivering One World Week events: Training away day (II) to sharpen the tools for delivering Southern-inspired events in your area in OWW. *(August 18/19)

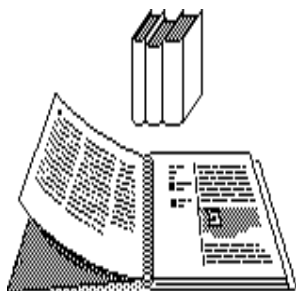
November-December 2000

Evaluating our efforts! *(December 8)
*provisional dates for away day sessions

Want to know more?

Contact Helen Garforth or Kwasi A. Boateng, One World Week, P O Box 2555 Reading, Berkshire RG1 4X, England. Tel: 0118 939 4933,
e-mail: oneworldweek@gn.acp.org, web: <http://www.gn.org/oneworldweek/>

If you are interested in taking part, send information about your group: how many people are involved? What are their interests? How long have you been meeting together? What kind of activities you are involved in. What interests you about this project?



REPORTS ON BOOKS PUBLICATIONS AND NEWS



EQUIPPING THE LAITY FOR SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION - A Resource Manual for Courses on Leadership in Lay Training, Association of Christian Lay Centres in Africa (ACLCA), Asempa Publishers, Christian Council of Ghana. ACLCA commends this resource manual for use by the lay centres in Africa and in the whole global family of OIKOSNET, as well as churches, ecumenical organisations and networks, involved in Lay Training, Ecumenical Learning and Leadership Training.

Available from: ACLCA, P.O. Box H 122, Hatfield, Harare, Zimbabwe.

HISTORY AND HOPES OF CLLTS, edited by Dr Mithra G. Augustine.

History and key learnings from CLLTs from 1968-1998. Introduction to the scope of the laity ministry across the world and the training programmes (CLLTs) equipping lay men and women of the Church for this ministry, and to the global fellowship (OIKOSNET) committed to strengthening and advancing in societies, through its varied programme thrusts, the ecumenical movement beyond all barriers and boundaries towards one world and one humanity. Copies available from Evelyn Appiah, Education & Ecumenical Formation.

EDUCATION & ECUMENICAL FORMATION TEAM ANNUAL ACTIVITIES FOLDER is now available from Education & Ecumenical Formation.

EMPOWERING LAY LEADERSHIP - A Manual on Ecumenical Learning for Courses in Lay Leadership Training (CLLT), by Evelyn Appiah and Gert Ruppell. Available from Education & Ecumenical Formation.

The European Youth NETWORK ENYA has called for:

THE MILLENNIUM OF YOUTH IN SOLIDARITY WITH THE CHURCHES!?!?!?

Details can be found on their web page.

The German organisation "Action Reconciliation Services for Peace" (ARSP) will arrange an ecumenical pilgrimage in Poland, the Czech Republic and Germany. ARSP is a volunteer organisation which is interested in confronting the era of national socialism in German history. Beginning on 11 July 2000 in Sumperk/Czech Rep. we want to go on our pilgrimage via Krzeszow/Poland, Herrnhut/Germany and finish at Nossen, near Dresden/Germany on 6 August. The whole pilgrimage will be undertaken on foot and we are invited by different Catholic and Protestant congregations and convents on the way. We are interested in crossing borders and getting to know our different national and denominational backgrounds. Our pilgrimage will be characterized by an easy lifestyle. Participation:

who? All young persons from the age of 18 years are invited.

when? The whole distance: 11 July – 6 August 2000, in 3 stages; it is also possible to join us just for one week.

They would like to find international participants and contacts. If you know of people who would be interested in the pilgrimage, or for further information, please contact: Maria Wolgast, ARSP, Wallstr.10a, 31134 Hildesheim. Tel.0048(0)5121/102491. E-mail: mwol0005@rz.uni-hildesheim.de.

The General Secretary of the Christian Churches Educational Association in Kenya, Rev. Luckio Otieno has retired and his position has been taken for an interim period by Mr. Nyagrowa Peter Kasuku.

NOTE: EEF-NET is available in English and Spanish. If you would prefer to receive the Spanish version, please let us know.

Education & Ecumenical Formation



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