

## “A chance to live unity in diversity” – GETI’17 students look to Arusha 2018



GETI’17 students shared greetings and words of wisdom, looking to GETI 2018 in Arusha, Tanzania. ©

Albin Hillert/WCC

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*By Albin Hillert\**

**”Being part of a GETI is an incredible experience. We know that GETI is an acronym for Global Ecumenical Theological Institute, but I would like to call it a celebration of ecumenism, because at a GETI people come from all parts of the world to share their ideas and their experiences. For me, GETI is an opportunity to really live the principle of unity in diversity.”**

As the Global Ecumenical Theological Institute 2017 (GETI’17) drew to a close in Berlin on 31 May, participants rejoiced in a sense of renewed ecumenical energy, and of fellowship across traditions, as they prepare to return to their home contexts.

Fr Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca, director of the World Council of Churches (WCC) Ecumenical Institute and WCC deputy general secretary, shared greetings to the group on behalf of WCC general secretary Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit.

”I am full of admiration and appreciation,” Sauca said, “as it is clear that bringing together a GETI is not an easy task, but one that requires patience, and a willingness to listen.”

“The worldwide ecumenical movement needs you as young theologians,” Sauca added. “So please make sure to bring this knowledge and experience back home to your contexts as much as possible, as we continue as churches to not only stay together, but to move together.”

Rev. Dr Benjamin Simon, one of the initiators behind GETI'17, stressed that the GETI experience has not only been valuable on a personal level, but that "it is a sign that the ecumenical movement is indeed very much alive in our world today, with a lively and active younger generation ready to work as bridge-builders, committed to the ecumenical movement."

As the WCC is organizing a Global Ecumenical Theological Institute in Arusha, Tanzania in March 2018, students from GETI'17 took the opportunity to share greetings and words of wisdom with future GETI participants.



**Anna Petukhova, Russia, Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate)**

"Being part of a GETI is an incredible experience. We know that GETI is an acronym for Global Ecumenical Theological Institute, but I would like to call it a celebration of ecumenism, because at a GETI people come from all parts of the world to share their ideas and their experiences.

Although the programme may seem very heavy at the beginning, the organization, the caring and the sense of community make it all possible, through lectures, in Bible study and in seminars.

I think we could also think of GETI as a different acronym. G for Great, E for Enthusiastic, T for Tolerant, and I for Individual. For me, GETI is an opportunity to really live the principle of unity in diversity."

**Jayabalan Murthy, India, Tamil Evangelical Lutheran Church**

"GETI'17 has been very interesting and inspiring, because we have international students as well as interdenominational students that we can learn from, about the denominations, the doctrines, the practices, as well as the cultures.

People should attend a GETI because they can meet different people, new cultures from other countries, all under one roof. It is not possible to go everywhere, but we can gather all under one roof, to meet and learn from each other."

**Krista Autio, Finland, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland**

"The most important thing in a GETI is to really challenge yourself, to challenge your thinking, challenge your context and to learn from other people's contexts. You can reaffirm your own theological ideas, or you can reform them, and really learn to engage with people in different denominations, find support, find coexistence, and walk together on the same path, to feel the notion of the body of Christ, which is global."

**Godwin Ampony, Ghana, Evangelical Presbyterian Church Ghana**

"GETI is an experience for young theologians who really want to make an impact on this world that we live in, who really want to see the hand of God through people, transforming society.

For GETI 2018 people can expect nothing less than making life much, much better. They should look forward to new experiences of learning, new experiences of being exposed to interdisciplinary subjects, addressing the issues that are most pressing today, and which one country or one nation cannot handle alone.

GETI must be the place for every young theologian to be, to associate, to network, to learn from one another."

**Emese Mihály, Romania, Reformed Church**

"I think the first and the most important thing is that you meet so many people, cultures, amazing personalities, and so many people who believe in the same Christ as I do. And this really is the best experience of my life, meeting all these people who love God as I do."

**Esteban Londoño, Colombia, Colombian Methodist Church**

"GETI is a very good experience for people who are looking for new tendencies of theology, for example, if you are interested in theology and new points of view and new trends in the field of ecumenism and the field of interreligious dialogue, and also in postmodernity. We are living in new times and have new tasks as a church, as Christians, so is it a great experience to meet new people, make friends, and if you are doing a study, you can tell others about your topic, discuss and get new insights about it."



**Zan Yu Ma, China, Chinese Christian Church Hamburg**

"I think GETI is amazing simply because we come from different nations, have different languages, different cultures, but we can still live together. We exchange our theological points of view, and there is no border between us, in spite of our different nationalities."

**Rasmus Ljungberg, Sweden, Salvation Army**

"If there's one thing that I would encourage people to do, it is to spend time together, to talk with each other, to pray with each other, to worship together. The most important thing with a Global Ecumenical Theological Institute is meeting of different persons from different cultures and different church backgrounds."



**Sarah Kaho, France, Assembly of the Living God**

"I wasn't supposed to have been at this GETI this year. But in fact, I have met a lot of people coming from all over and I am very glad to have been part of GETI 2017. What I have learned is that theology has no future without ecumenism. It is not about where you are coming from, but about how you want to be with others.

Without destroying the values that formed you, you can decide to live with people and still keep your values. Ecumenism is not about doing away with your convictions and your values, but on the contrary, to understand your own values and convictions and explaining them to others."

**Josh Kulak, United States of America, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship in the USA**

"A Global Ecumenical Theological Institute is a great ecumenical experience. It's a place for theology students from across the globe and across the Christian theological spectrum to come together, to discuss our common faith, but also our differences, in a spirit of camaraderie and mutual respect. It's a place where we can learn together, grow together and explore our faith together, and hopefully cast a new ecumenical vision for the church, in the hope of a more united future."

**Steve Mike Niyonkuru, Burundi, Roman Catholic Church**

"GETI is a very nice experience to witness what ecumenism really is. It is not only about theology, but about sharing with each other our faith, but also sharing our differences, so that the students who come to this kind of seminary work together as theologians, but also learn about their differences, their diversity. In this way, we students are deeply learning to be a church, and a church of Christ that witnesses the resurrection and all its consequences in everyday life.

GETI is an international experience. Students live together, study together, share experiences, work together, and discover together what they are, true disciples of Christ. This is something that goes beyond denominations, but which opens our minds and souls and hearts to one another. On top of this comes the theological work, on our differences as well as our common ground. It is a unique experience to see the church that reaches all kinds of communities, clans, nations, tribes, according to the Gospel of Jesus Christ himself."

## **Williane Edel, Brazil, Baptist Charismatic Church**

"There are a lot of denominations, and the Christian religion is so plural, so I think we need to know each other and understand our different ways of thinking, of living our faith. I think our future will be much better if we start to understand each other and start engaging in dialogue and exchange.

It has been very inspiring to learn about how many ways there are to study theology, and I think participating in a Global Ecumenical Theological Institute is important for our future. We need to be together, sharing our different points of view and respecting each other."

*\*Albin Hillert is communication officer at the World Council of Churches.*

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