

## BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

### ECUMENICAL/INTERFAITH/INTERNATIONAL GUESTS

#### **CANON DR. ALYSON BARNETT-COWAN**

Canon Dr. Alyson Barnett-Cowan is the President of the Canadian Council of Church, a forum of 25 member denominations representing 85% of Christians in Canada. Until the end of January 2015, she was the Director for Unity Faith and Order for the Anglican Communion, based in London, England. In this capacity she staffed the Inter-Anglican Commission for Unity Faith and Order, which addresses issues of doctrine and communion life. She was the lead staff for the ecumenical dialogues of the Anglican Communion, including conversations with the Roman Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church, the Oriental Orthodox Churches, the Lutheran World Federation, the Methodist World Council and the World Communion of Reformed Churches.

During the first months of 2015 Alyson served as Interim Secretary General of the Anglican Communion.

Before her appointment to the Anglican Communion Office, Alyson was the Director of the Faith Worship and Ministry Department of the Anglican Church of Canada, where she staffed its theological and ecumenical work. She has been a member of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches and a Vice-President of the Canadian Council of Churches.

Alyson is a Canon of the Diocese of Brandon, where, with her husband Bruce, she was co-president of the Henry Budd College for Ministry in the 1980s. They have 3 adult children and 3 small grandchildren.

Alyson is a graduate of Trinity College, University of Toronto (B.A., M.Div., M.Th.). She has been awarded honorary doctorates by Montreal Diocesan College, Trinity College, Lutheran Seminary in Saskatoon and the Atlantic School of Theology.

#### **DR. GERALD FILSON**

Dr. Gerald Filson has been the Director of Public Affairs, Bahá'í Community of Canada since 1993. He is currently a member of the Baha'i national governing council, the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Canada.

Dr. Filson has degrees in mathematics (Saskatchewan), educational technology (Concordia) and philosophy of education (Toronto). He was the Chair of the Canadian Network on International Human Rights, a coalition of 40 human rights organizations, from 1998–2002, Co-chaired the Mosaic Management Group of VisionTV in the 1990s, was on the Board of Directors of the Couchiching Institute on Public Affairs for six years and Chaired its National Conference in 2006 and 2007. He was the Chair of the Canadian Interfaith Conversation, a national interfaith organization of some 30 organizations, 2012–2016.

Raised in Saskatchewan, Dr. Filson taught school on the Magdalen Islands in Quebec for six years, travelled widely for a number of international projects over the years, including 15 trips to India from 1996 to 2010, and is currently working closely with colleagues in Santiago, Chile in preparation for the Dedication in October, 2016 of the award-winning Baha'i House of Worship in Santiago, Chile. He is married with three children and one grandchild.

#### **THE RT. REV. BÉLA KATÓ**

The Rt. Rev. Béla Kató is Bishop of the Transylvanian District of the Reformed Church in Romania, a position he was elected to in 2013. Bishop Kató is a graduate of the Protestant Theological Institute in Kolozsvár (Cluj), and was ordained in 1981. The seminary is a partner institution of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Among his many accomplishments, Bishop Kató founded the Christian Youth and Diaconal Center and the Rural and Regional Development Foundation. In 2004, he received the Republic of Hungary's Presidential Merit Award, for his many achievements within both the church and society. His colleague describes him as a brilliant mind, who is using his many God-given gifts in the areas of education, health care and community development, for the sake of all God's people.

### **THE REV. TIBOR KISS**

The Rev. Tibor Kiss is Counselor, Department of International Relations of the Transylvanian District of the Reformed Church in Romania. He has held this position since 2012, having served numerous congregations since his ordination in 1986. A graduate of the Protestant Theological Institute in Kolozsvár, he obtained a Master of Divinity at McCormack Theological Seminary in Chicago (1992), and a certificate from Westhill College in Birmingham, UK (2005). He says the words of James inspire him in his work: “Even so faith, if it have not works, is dead in itself”. (James 2:17)

Bishop Kató and the Rev. Kiss warmly received the Moderator of the 141st General Assembly, the Rev. Karen Horst and her delegation, as she visited Romania in September 2015.

### **DR. BERNARD SABELLA**

Dr. Bernard Sabella, recipient of The Dr. E.H. Johnson Memorial Fund 2016 Award for “The Cutting Edge of Mission”, is the Executive Secretary of the Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees (DSPR) in Jerusalem. He is a sociologist, formerly on the faculty of Bethlehem University in Bethlehem. Presently Dr. Sabella, a Catholic and a leading member of the Palestinian Christian community, sits as a Fatah member of the Palestinian Assembly, occupying one of the two seats set aside for Christian representatives. Fluent in several languages including English, he completed graduate work in the United States. He has been gathering statistics on the shrinking population of Palestinian Christians in the Holy Land and is regarded as an authority in his community. DSPR is an agency established by the churches in the years immediately following the creation of the state of Israel to provide services to Palestinian refugees in the West Bank and Gaza, in Jordan and in Lebanon. Its vision is the development of a pluralistic society which guarantees equal opportunities for all its citizens, based on the ideals of justice, equality of rights, opportunities and freedoms. Dr. Sabella speaks to these issues with compelling clarity and authority. His perspective is as a Palestinian and also as a Christian. He is a leader, calling for the resolution of conflict based on Christian values – a respect for justice, opposition to violence and love of enemies. DSPR receives support from *Presbyterians Sharing* and Presbyterian World Service and Development (PWS&D).