



San Francisco
Theological Seminary

CHIMES

— Winter 2016-17 —



Where You Go, I Will Go

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Dear Friends,

In my sermon at the Opening Convocation in September, I concluded with these words:

“As a community of faith dedicated to the transforming power of education, we need to take seriously Paul’s exhortation that we become ambassadors for Christ. We need to understand that God is making God’s appeal through us. We have the power and possibility to make God’s presence manifest: in our relationships, right here, right now; in our community here, right here, right now; and in the larger community in which we live and to

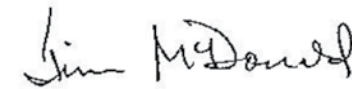
which we belong, right here, right now.

“We live in an increasingly hostile world that seems intent on building walls to separate people one from another. The ministries that are going to make a difference in this world are ministries that foster common action and uncommon community among people and groups that do not know each other, do not understand each other and do not agree with each other. At SFTS I hope we will strive to do just that—to be the ones who bring people together across political, ideological, religious, and cultural divides—people willing to bridge the gap. That’s our high calling.”

As I undertake my responsibilities for the sake of strengthening and securing the future of San Francisco Theological Seminary, I try to keep this larger purpose at the center of my conversations and decisions. It’s easy to get bogged down in the day-to-day of seminary life and institutional maintenance, which are nonetheless important. But what’s at stake is not simply a question of institutional efficacy and community vitality, but the substantive and essential contribution that SFTS is seeking to make to the church and the world.

In this context, we should heed the words of Karl Barth to “clasp the hands in prayer as the beginning of an uprising against the disorder of the world.” That cannot help but lead us—urge and encourage us—to live out the church’s high calling to embody the love of God in Jesus Christ. As you read the stories in this issue of *Chimes*, I hope you will be as inspired as I am by what our students and faculty are doing right here, right now, as well as by the stories of what some of our graduates have been doing out in the world. These are God’s messengers, Christ’s ambassadors. Thanks be to God!

Grace and peace,



Rev. Dr. James L. McDonald
President and Professor of Faith & Public Life

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Moved by God’s love in Jesus Christ, San Francisco Theological Seminary prepares women and men for transformational ministries of justice, peace and healing, which advance the church’s hopeful, loving engagement with the world.

Activity Abounds at the

Center for Innovation in Ministry

By Eva Stimson

Overcoming racial bias, reconciling LGBTQ people and the church, revitalizing worship—these and other urgent needs have sparked a flurry of activity at San Francisco Theological Seminary's Center for Innovation in Ministry.

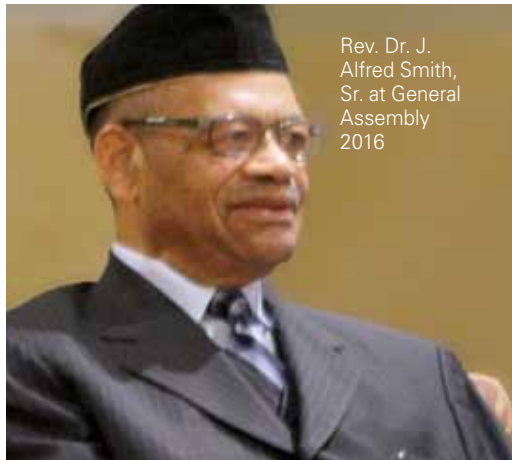
In the two years since its founding, the Center has developed partnerships with churches, community organizations, and other educational institutions to engage with some of today's most pressing issues.

"This is only the beginning," says its Director, Rev. Floyd Thompkins, the "idea man" behind many of the Center's current projects. He and his growing assortment of collaborators and volunteers see the Center as a powerful vehicle for taking Christian values into the world and creating a positive force for change.

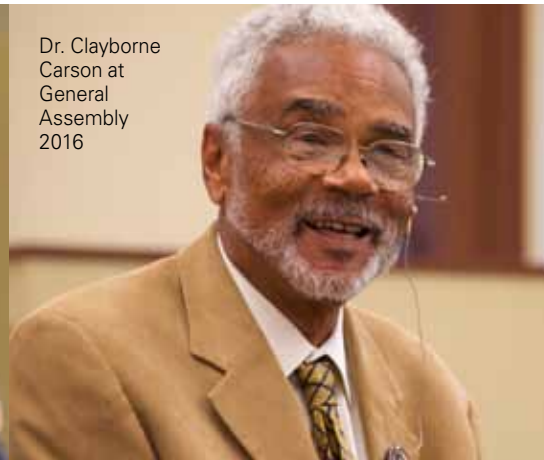


Rev. Floyd Thompkins

More information about the Center for Innovation in Ministry and its projects is available at the Center's recently launched website: innovation.sfts.edu. To donate or learn how to get involved, you may email Thompkins at innovation@sfts.edu.



Rev. Dr. J. Alfred Smith, Sr. at General Assembly 2016



Dr. Clayborne Carson at General Assembly 2016



Rev. Dr. Jane Spahr at General Assembly 2016



Rev. Dr. Eric Elnes at General Assembly 2016

The Center has launched three major initiatives:

1 SMITH-KING PROGRAM

A first-ever partnership between SFTS and Stanford University builds on the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to promote peace and justice. The program will offer online curriculum resources as well as projects that reach beyond the Seminary walls to address social challenges.

The Center is seeking funding for a new fellowship designed to promote the study of King's life from a religious perspective in order to reinvigorate the social justice commitments of congregations. The J. Alfred Smith, Sr. Fellowship—named for the legendary pastor emeritus of Allen Temple Baptist Church in Oakland, CA—will be awarded annually. Fellowship recipients will study how King's theology informed his activism, using the comprehensive collection of King's papers housed at the Martin Luther King Jr. Research and Education Institute on the Stanford campus. They also will lecture at the Seminary and participate in programs of the Center.

Two groundbreaking community projects are already developing:

PROJECT RESPECT:

This broad-based collaborative effort to address racial bias brings together students at the Seminary, researchers at Stanford, churches, community organizations, and local police departments in studying and developing effective responses. It contributes to ground-breaking work by Stanford professors on implicit racism and policing.

"This innovative project takes racism seriously while acknowledging the difficult task of police, who put their lives on the line each day," says Rev. Dr. James McDonald, President of SFTS.

"We're all biased," Thompkins says. "The goal is to find solutions that involve all of us in seeking peace and justice in our communities."

PROJECT TRUST:

This project seeks to bridge the gap between mental health providers and those who need treatment in order to bring compassionate and culturally competent care to marginalized communities. The effort engages pastors—often the most trusted community leaders—in working collaboratively with providers of mental health and medical care.

2 JANE SPAHR RECONCILIATION INITIATIVE

Designed to make the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) a more inclusive community of faith, the Jane Spahr Reconciliation Initiative provides opportunities for people across the denomination to meet and experience gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender/queer Presbyterians as pastors and educators.

"Experience teaches that change happens when real people meet and share their stories and their faith," Thompkins says.

The project is named in honor of Rev. Dr. Jane Spahr, a 2015 Distinguished Alumna of SFTS and an activist on behalf of the LGBTQ community for four decades. Spahr says she hopes the project will "change the myths and stereotypes that keep us from one another by providing opportunities for congregations and church members to meet, hear, and experience LGBTQ people of faith."

Presbyterian minister Bear Ride, who worked for the Southern California program of SFTS in the 1990s, is convener of a steering committee overseeing the project. The committee includes representatives from advocacy groups that have worked for decades for full inclusion of LGBTQ Presbyterians.

3 LIVING LECTIONARY™

With this project, SFTS joins forces with the Convergence Movement, a growing collective of forward-thinking Catholics, evangelicals, mainline Protestants, ethnic and peace churches, and others, in a creative collaboration that could breathe new life and relevance into congregations across the country.

The Living Lectionary builds on work by Rev. Dr. Eric Elnes, pastor of Countryside Community Church (UCC) in Omaha, NE, and author of *The Phoenix Affirmations: A New Vision for the Future of Christianity*. Structured around 12 ecumenically selected themes, the Living Lectionary seeks to unleash the full power of the Scriptures—and of faith communities themselves—to address major challenges of our day.

Congregations using the lectionary are invited to develop and share resources with other users. SFTS will be part of the collaboration, Thompkins says, "as professors bring insights from the cutting edge of biblical criticism, students learn how to apply Scripture to everyday life and the lives of congregations."

Plans are underway for a series of interactive presentations on the three Center projects in March, April, and May 2017, Thompkins says. Pastors, Seminary students, and community residents will have the opportunity to hear and interact with SFTS professors and project leaders. (See Calendar, page 17)

Thompkins believes these projects demonstrate what is "innovative" about the Center for Innovation in Ministry: "There's an academic component and a practical component. There's ministry, academic reflection, community building, and development of leadership skills." We're modeling what Seminary courses should look like in the future," Thompkins says.

To enable a broader base of donors to participate in the Center's projects, the Seminary has created the Alexander Montgomery Foundation, a 501(c)(3) charitable foundation. "We know that many people and corporations are interested in doing good in the world, but don't want their money used for expressly religious purposes," Thompkins says. Since the Center's vision is all-inclusive peace and justice, we can all be in alignment toward mutual goals of compassion and community. ✚



Record-breaking Inquirers Weekend



Inquirer Susan Morris was brought to tears when she happened upon this graduation photo of her father, who graduated in 1976 (lower left, first row, second from left)

This November, the campus was abuzz with a record-breaking 22 new guests for Inquirers Weekend, doubling last year's event and setting a new pace for increased interest in SFTS. Now let's see who enrolls in which program!



"Beer & Theology" with Professor Greg Love in Scott Hall



SFTS staff members Marissa Miller and Kristin Dableo-Martel

"My overall impression was feeling the companionship and peace that exist within the community and energy for social justice."

—Student Inquirer

Alumni Ambassadors Come Together to Boost Enrollment at SFTS

By Eva Stimson

Rev. Ellen Baxter, the new Director of Admissions at San Francisco Theological Seminary, believes SFTS offers what the church needs in these times of turmoil and change. She is making sure the Seminary is not a well-kept secret.

Baxter, who earned an M.Div. from SFTS in 2006, remembers her own journey to seminary as a leap of faith, a time when she listened to God's call alongside many other students taking their own leap of faith. Ellen believes the Admissions team offers the initial ministry to a prospective student at SFTS, but it is only the beginning of the support they will experience on the road to graduation.

Baxter believes, "Ultimately, we will bring students to SFTS by trusting that God is in the middle of all we are doing. SFTS' theological roots advocate for social justice, innovative ideas, and inclusivity of all people. These qualities are at the core of our DNA and extremely evident in the talents and passions of our faculty, staff, and student community. For several years, the church has been transitioning into new territories. SFTS has been ahead of this transition all along as an institution believing in the infinite wisdom of a God who calls us all to many forms of ministry."

Ellen Baxter began her new role in August, bringing diverse experiences and new perspectives on ministry. She received her undergraduate degree in humanities from the University of Louisville, with a focus in religious studies and theater. She has worked as a pastor, hospital chaplain, youth director, consultant for community development in homeless ministries, vocational counselor, and corporate counsel for conflict and change resolution. She believes her experience has brought her to this current role.

Admissions and Marketing at SFTS are now combined under the Department of Enrollment Management. The goal is to double enrollment in the next five years, bringing the student body to about 400. The strategy combines relationship



"We will bring students here, by recognizing that God is in the middle of it."

— Rev. Ellen Baxter, new Director of Admissions

building with a systematized approach to recruitment and retention. Dave Behrs, Vice President of Enrollment Management, brings 30 years of experience in implementing systematized and data-driven approaches. It is through his leadership that SFTS has developed this new model for its Enrollment Management team.

Alumni are encouraged to help find people who would benefit from attending SFT. The Enrollment team now includes three alumni ambassadors who are out in the field connecting with congregations, presbyteries, and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s Young Adult Volunteer program. The focus initially will be on the West Coast: Rich Poole in Southern California, Linda Stewart-Kalen in the Pacific Northwest, and Ineda Adesanya in the San Francisco East Bay. Behrs will concentrate on building relationships with colleges and universities across the U.S. to create pipelines for new students.

"The best recruitment strategy is still word of mouth, Behrs says. "Despite all the bells and whistles now available, that hasn't changed." He encourages alumni and friends of the Seminary to spread the word about SFTS to those seeking relevant and innovative approaches to ministry with a focus on spirituality, innovation and social justice. ✚

NEW ALUMNI AMBASSADORS



Rev. Ineda Adesanya (2013 DASD; 2014 M.Div.; 2016 MA) San Francisco East Bay Region



Rev. Linda Stewart-Kalen (1997 M.Div.) Pacific Northwest Region



Rev. Rich Poole (2006 M.Div.) Southern California Region

VISIT US

We have another Inquirers Weekend coming up in February! Do you know of someone who might feel a calling? Please encourage them to visit us at sfts.edu/events

“It was an exciting experience and a meaningful one”

Joint seminar brings women together

By Patricia Corrigan

Just two years after President Jimmy Carter identified violence against women and girls as the number one global human rights abuse, San Francisco Theological Seminary’s Advanced Pastoral Studies (APS) Program, in a joint effort with the Carter Center Human Rights Program Scholars in Action Project, held a seminar in Atlanta on the topic.

The first SFTS course sponsored with an institution other than another seminary, the seminar was offered August 8–12 in partnership with the D.Min. programs at Columbia, McCormick, and Pittsburgh Theological Seminaries.

“It was an exciting experience and a meaningful one,” says Rev. Dr. Teresa Chávez Saucedá, Interim Director of the Advanced Pastoral Studies Program and Assistant Professor of Ministry. The SFTS D.Min. students who attended were Rev. Robin Walker, Teresa Perez Martinez, Rev. Ralph Starling, and Juliet Harris. Alumnae Rev. Sarai Crain-Pope and Rev. Laura Krauss also were at the seminar.

Rev. Dr. Andrea White, a member of the APS adjunct faculty, led the D.Min. and continuing education seminar. Speakers at the seminar, who had expertise in fields ranging from rape to human trafficking to child abuse, shared their operating models. Participants also learned that in response to Carter’s call to action, the Carter Center has created a website linking community groups and advocates working on the issue of violence against women around the world.

Rev. Dr. Virstan Choy, who recently retired as Director of the Advanced Pastoral Studies Program, negotiated the partnership with the Carter Center. “The seeds for a Carter Center-SFTS joint venture were planted at the 2014 annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion in San Diego, when President Carter asked religious communities to address violence against women,” he says.

“When Andrea White, one of our Feminist/Womanist/Mujerista Perspectives program adjunct faculty members, told me that President Carter had met with her just before the speech seeking her help with this initiative as a founding member of his Center’s Scholars in Action, it became clear that what the Carter Center sought was what the SFTS APS program could provide: an already existing ecumenical network of faith community leaders (D.Min. students); a program known for offering practical seminars in social justice ministries; and an emphasis on innovation in developing resources which the Center could use in mobilizing other leaders.”

Chávez Saucedá says SFTS is now reimagining an international feminist track, a priority supported by White, who speaks of violence against women as “the world’s longest war.”

Seminar participants are currently developing projects to address violence against women. Chávez Saucedá adds that next she would like to see the World Council of Churches offer a course in Geneva that would bring together women from around the world interested in developing a feminist-womanist approach to theology. ✚



Rev. Dr. Teresa Chávez Saucedá, Rev. Robin Walker, and Rev. Dr. Andrea White catch up at the Seminary and share memories of the August event



An evolving congregation at Richmond Beacon Light Seventh-Day Adventist Church in Richmond, CA

Tending to a Transforming Church

By Rachel Howard

As a pastor, what do you do when you’re faced with a drastically changing congregation?

This is the question encountered by Rev. Rudy Peters, who decided to seek the answer through San Francisco Theological Seminary’s Executive Leadership program.

Peters is the head pastor at Richmond Beacon Light Seventh-Day Adventist Church in Richmond, CA. Over the church’s 60-year history, membership has been made up almost exclusively of people from the African American community.

But as African American congregants began leaving the city for the suburbs and a Hispanic population began moving in, everyone noticed the transformation taking place within the walls of their church.

Many from the new Hispanic community began appearing in the pews of Beacon Light.

The congregation was now challenged with significant differences in culture, language, and theological understanding.

This led Peters to ask, “How can we be the church that includes people of all nations, kindred, and tongues? And how can we stay in community together, despite these significant differences?”

After a series of experiments, the church currently serves congregants under one roof in two different services: one in English and one in Spanish. And while the process of bringing the two communities together has been slow, there has been significant process.

Some members have begun recommending joint services and social activities, including a joint Thanksgiving celebration. And the real moment of truth came

several months ago, when the Hispanic congregation unanimously rejected a proposal to split off into a separate church.

“The seed has been planted! If we stay engaged and tend it well enough, our vision will eventually come to pass,” Peters says.

He is grateful for the knowledge he gained during his time at SFTS.

“The learning has been so rich,” says Peters. “My studies at SFTS have changed my entire approach to ministry. I’m engaging members in a new way by having them answer theological questions themselves. We discuss issues of justice and oppression, and it’s changing the whole culture of our church.”

He continued, “I’m beginning to see some signs that ultimately we may achieve our goal of having one church. It’s a matter of faith; we’re in a good place.” ✚



Rev. Rudy Peters, Executive Leadership student at SFTS

A Heart for Those Who Experience Isolation

How a South Korean Military Chaplain Decided to Study at SFTS



From the seas of South Korea to sunny San Anselmo, Seungkee Jang enjoys Welcome Week at SFTS



As a South Korean Navy chaplain, Rev. Seungkee Jang prays with a fellow sailor

By Sarah Chivington-Buck

Rev. Seungkee Jang came to San Francisco Theological Seminary after five years as a military chaplain and Methodist pastor in South Korea. His years of ministry brought him into contact with a number of gay and transgender people. The difficulties they faced stirred Jang's compassion and led him to desire more training in pastoral care.

All men in South Korea must serve two years in the military. Those who do not conform to the heterosexual, cisgender norm must keep it hidden or experience isolation, bullying, and even violence.

Jang saw these problems and thought to himself, "I have to do something!" But he felt ill-equipped to help. And he found no opportunities in South Korea to study the issues facing the gay and trans population and how to minister to them. The reputation of SFTS as an open community and a place to study issues regarding sexuality and gender identity reached him all the way in South Korea and brought him to California.

In addition to the gay and trans communities, Jang observed the isolation of another group: religious leaders and their families. Often they feel that they cannot be honest about difficulties in their lives because they may lose the respect of the people they serve or even be fired. One of his friends got a divorce while working in a church and hid it for two years. Jang wanted to help him but was far away and did not know how to best offer support.

"Pastors have serious problems but can't talk about them," he says. "They can't get help."

Each South Korean military unit is assigned a Catholic priest, a Protestant pastor, and a Buddhist monk to serve as chaplains. But Jang found that this did not do much to solve the problem of isolation facing religious leaders. Before his military service, Jang had never met any monks. As he got to know them, he realized, "Oh, they are the same, like me." This led him to desire to study how to minister in interfaith contexts—another reason he chose to study at SFTS.

Jang finds his classes challenging, and he enjoys the warm and caring community at SFTS. He was surprised to find how open people are here about their sexual and gender identities. "This wouldn't happen in Korea," he says. He is happy to be part of a community that is open to anyone and that offers everyone an opportunity to study and to belong. ✚

The reputation of SFTS as an open community and a place to study issues regarding sexuality and gender identity reached him all the way in South Korea and brought him to California.



500-Mile Pilgrimage



"Perfect Preparation" for seminary

By Eva Stimson

It's unusual enough to find a 69-year-old grandmother attending seminary. But it's even more remarkable to learn that she spent part of the past summer hiking the 500-mile Camino de Santiago in Spain.

"Camino really was a spiritual pilgrimage for me," says Denise Diaab, a first-year student in the M.Div. program at San Francisco Theological Seminary. "It was the perfect preparation for seminary."

Completing the route walked by countless pilgrims since the Middle Ages boosted her confidence, Diaab says. As she settled into a rhythm of hiking some 15 miles a day, she learned to set priorities so as not to be overwhelmed by the enormity of her goal.

"You just do it, step by step, day by day"—a process not unlike working toward a seminary degree, she explains.

She lived out of a backpack, ate simple meals, and slept in hostels, sometimes sharing a room with other pilgrims. "One huge lesson I learned was how little I really need. And it's not this self-sacrificing, martyr-type feeling—I really learned to be content with a lot less than I was accustomed to. That alone made me aware of how incredibly blessed I am."

Hours of solitary walking gave her time for contemplation. "I became more in tune with the still, small voice of God."



She sent daily updates on her journey to an email distribution list and asked people, "How can I pray for you?" Prayer requests came by email throughout her trip.

Diaab had been interested in doing the Camino for about six years but had to postpone her trip twice because of back surgery and family emergencies. "Now I look at those postponements as providential," she says. "It wasn't the right time for me to go."

On May 19, her birthday, Diaab donned hiking boots in southern France and headed across the Pyrenees Mountains toward Spain. She reached her destination, the city of Santiago de Compostela, on June 22.

Solitude and the physical demands of the trip were not major problems. A regular walker, Diaab was in good condition, and she made friends along the way. "People look out for one another," she says. "I never really felt alone."

A bigger test came on day four, when her feet became painfully blistered. Exchanging boots for walking sandals allowed her feet to heal.

Diaab's journey to SFTS began a year ago, when her pastor—at Grace First Presbyterian Church in Long Beach, CA—said something that made her see seminary as a possibility.

"I'd been in church all my life, but there was this yearning to go deeper," she says. "I had many questions about faith and theology."

Now she is in a good place to explore those questions. ✚



"I became more in tune with the still, small voice of God."

—Denise Diaab

A happy moment for Denise upon arriving at town of Santiago de Compostela, the town's cathedral and the finish to her hike



Fitting in **KIKANZA** with **NURI-ROBINS**

By Patricia Corrigan

Rev. Dr. Kikanza Nuri-Robins understands that one of the most important tasks of new pastors is to learn the culture of the church or organization where they work, in order to grasp what is important to the congregation and to adapt their style to their new environment.

People who are not able to do this successfully, she says, end up being unintentional “interims,” moving from one uncomfortable call to another and never quite understanding why things don’t work out.

Nuri-Robins (1999 M.Div./DASD; Ed.D.) is an organizational development consultant who helps clergy and congregations identify what would be a good fit for them. When the fit is not right, she helps them to move on with dignity and deeper understandings.

“Most of us have been outsiders in one setting or another, because we could not decode the culture or because we did not effectively ‘code switch,’ pick up on the acceptable language in use and employ it,” says Nuri-Robins, 66.

“Language is a code, and we speak in different ways to different people. As children, we learn to read cultural codes, what the rules are in any particular environment. Using the codes allows us



to successfully communicate and engage with people,” she says. “As adults, this process becomes difficult if we have to code switch to survive or if we have to wear a mask all the time.”

In her newest book, *Fish Out of Water: Mentoring, Managing, and Self-Monitoring People Who Don't Fit In*, Nuri-Robins and her co-author, Lewis Bundy, address the importance of sharing cultural codes. “Throughout my career, I have been invited to do planning or leadership work, and I end up working with people having trouble fitting in,” Nuri-Robins says. “That is the unifying theme in all my work, and the book reflects how I help people get along with one another and help organizations to be healthier.”

Nuri-Robins’ nontraditional career path evolved from doing what she was drawn to. “Originally I focused on socio-linguistics and then the anthropology of education, because I am interested in language and learning and how those things impact groups,” she says. She has worked as a teacher, a university lecturer, and a desegregation consultant. For the past 30 years, she has consulted with schools and not-for-profit organizations in addition to her service in churches and faith-based organizations of many different traditions.

Based in Los Angeles, Nuri-Robins is a member of the Presbytery of the Pacific. She serves the Seminary on the newly established Alumni Council of the Diploma in the Art of Spiritual Direction (DASD) program, and she recently was elected president of the SFTS Alumni Council. ✚

Combatting Human Trafficking Takes SFTS Alum to Three Continents

By Jerry L. Van Marter

Through three decades of ministry on three continents, Rev. Sarah Stephens (1985 M.Div.) has embodied the maxim that “all global ministry is local and all local ministry is global.” Her career in human rights advocacy and programming—with an emphasis on combatting human trafficking—has taken her from the United States to Geneva, Kosovo, Albania, and Bangladesh. In every place she has served, Stephens says she has experienced “people living in community but feeling connected globally.”



Rev. Sarah Stephens

In 1990, after various post-seminary jobs with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Stephens went to Geneva and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC, now the World Communion of Reformed Churches). There she succeeded Rev. Jill Schaeffer, another SFTS alumna (1984 M.Div.; 2000 Ph.D.). The Berlin Wall had collapsed, and so her portfolio included work with refugee and displaced persons issues.

After four years with WARC, Stephens says, “I was increasingly frustrated by making statements and doing advocacy campaigns without having any real impact on the people who were suffering.” She was hired by the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC), “which was scrambling to put together a response to the Kosovo crisis, which included floods of refugees and displaced persons.”

ICMC assigned Stephens to run its programs in Macedonia, Albania, and Kosovo. “My theological education was invaluable there,” she says, “both in understanding the dynamics of the situation, which had many sectarian aspects, and in helping provide biblical grounding for what we were trying to do in the region.”

In Kosovo, Stephens and her colleagues came to understand the scale of human trafficking in the region. The international presence in Kosovo at the time was “so huge that the issue of trafficking couldn’t be disguised,” she says. “It gave us leverage to go to neighboring countries and press for systematic addressing of the human trafficking problem.”

Next Stephens went to Albania, where she worked for a USAID-funded NGO to create shelters and other social services for survivors of trafficking and to address legal and economic issues affecting them.

“It was an inspiring experience,” Stephens recalls, “working with so many wonderful Albanian colleagues to reduce human trafficking and reduce stigmatizing of those who were trafficked. We learned that human trafficking is much more than sexual exploitation—there are all kinds of trafficked labor—so we were able to educate people and governments that exploitation includes not just women but men, children, really all people.”

After working with a similar program in Bangladesh, Stephens is now back in France, where she consults with agencies and governments around human trafficking and gender-based violence. She participates in a Lutheran Church in Geneva, one in which 41 nationalities are represented and about half the congregation is not Lutheran. ✚



While in Bangladesh as the Chief of Party for the USAID-funded project Actions for Combating Trafficking in Persons program from 2012 to 2014

Joyous Ending to a 30-Year Quest for Ordination

By Eva Stimson

Ever since childhood, Lisa Larges has wanted to be a pastor. “I couldn’t think of anything better than working in a church,” she says. But coming out as a lesbian in her twenties, while she was a student at San Francisco Theological Seminary, delayed her ordination for close to three decades.

On October 30, 2016, a host of joyful friends and family members gathered to celebrate the ordination of Larges, now 53, as Associate Pastor for Congregational Care at Lake Nokomis Presbyterian Church in Minneapolis.

The doorway to ordination finally opened for Larges in 2010, when the 219th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) approved a constitutional change allowing the ordination of gays and lesbians as ministers, elders, and deacons. The measure won approval by presbyteries the following year.

Rev. Scott Clark, Chaplain and Associate Dean of Student Life at SFTS and a close friend of Larges, attended her ordination. Larges is “phenomenally gifted,” he says. “She’s everything you’d want in a church leader.”

From the beginning, Larges faithfully followed the prescribed pathway to ordained ministry in the PC(USA). She earned her M.Div. at SFTS in 1989. A Minneapolis native, she came under care of the Committee on Preparation for Ministry of Twin Cities Presbytery, later transferring to San Francisco Presbytery as a candidate for ordination.

When her ordination was blocked by church courts, Larges remained active in the denomination, exercising ministries that did not require ordination. “I grew up in a church that believed strongly in the priesthood of all believers,” she explains.

Clark says, “She continued serving the church even while the church was saying no.”

Larges became involved in That All May Freely Serve



Above: “Laying of Hands” an emotional moment in ordination
Below: Rev. Lisa Larges performing her first Communion

(TAMFS), an organization founded by SFTS alumna Jane Spahr to advocate for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender persons called to church vocations. Following Spahr’s retirement, Larges served as Director of TAMFS from 2007 to 2012.

Larges, who is blind, has also been involved in advocacy work for people with disabilities. Since moving back to Minneapolis in 2011, she has been an active member of the Lake Nokomis Church, preaching and working with the deacons, among other things.

She feels strongly called to the ministry of congregational care. “That’s what I love doing,” she says, explaining that her new Associate Pastor position was created by the Lake Nokomis congregation “over a long discernment process.”

Larges is grateful for those who supported her throughout her long journey to ordination, including the presbyteries in which she was under care as a candidate. Though their decisions were challenged in church courts, she says, “They were willing to go to bat for me, and that was remarkable. That was so validating and affirming.” ✚



SFTS Alumna Judy Dahl poses with Bishop Olivia Doko (in red) of the Roman Catholic Women Priests and her fellow priests

The Catholic Church she grew up with seemed like a distant memory, she says. But she never desired to leave the church. “The church left me by prohibiting me from pursuing my calling.”

Three years ago, however, a friend handed her a videotape of “Pink Smoke over the Vatican,” a documentary about efforts to open the priesthood to women.

“It was the same calling I’d heard for so long,” Dahl recalls. “... at some point, it comes down to being true to yourself and honoring God’s presence outside yourself.”

The [RCWP] argue that women have served as priests from the earliest days of the church, beginning with Mary Magdalene, and that men monopolized leadership for economic reasons that had nothing to do with scripture. And even as women have taken leadership in virtually every other Christian denomination—not to mention government—the Vatican continues to insist on barring half the world’s population from the priesthood.

Dahl doesn’t know what she will do next. “I’m an old lady,” she says. “It’s not about me. It’s about making the way for others, walking side by side with people trying to make a better world.”

At a time when women around the world are taking their rightful places in churches and business and politics, her mission is to address “one of the last bastions of misogyny on the planet.” And she is ready. ✚

This article has been edited for length. A full version may be found at: sfts.edu/dahlordination
Ross Anderson is a Port Townsend Leader contributor and retired Seattle Times reporter.

Ordination of a Renegade Priest: ‘I Am Ready’

By Ross Anderson

Reprinted with permission from the Port Townsend Leader, ptleader.com

As a devout Catholic schoolgirl in the 1950s, Judy Dahl [2002 D.Div.] was certain that she had been called to become a priest.

She was, of course, dreaming the impossible dream. For centuries, the Catholic Church has insisted that the priesthood is restricted to men.

Last weekend, however, Dahl’s dream was fulfilled when in a solemn and ancient ceremony, she was ordained a priest by nearly 200 friends, neighbors and fellow Catholics.

When formally asked if she was prepared for her mission, she grinned and announced to her congregation: “I am ready. I am so ready!”

Dahl is under no illusions that her ordination will be recognized by the Catholic Church, “probably not in my lifetime,” she says. Nor will any of the other nearly 200 women in the United States and Europe

who have been ordained by Roman Catholic Women Priests (RCWP), an international group of devout Catholics founded on a boat in Germany’s Danube River for the purpose of defying and changing a fundamental church doctrine.

But it’s safe to say that, with or without Vatican recognition, few priests in the U.S. or across the globe have been ordained with the knowledge, experience and credentials Dahl brings to the vocation. Over her long career, she has served as a cloistered nun, earned a doctorate of divinity from a prestigious seminary [San Francisco Theological Seminary], served 30 years as a full-time pastor in the U.S. and abroad, and much, much more.

Meanwhile, she came out as a lesbian. “That led to real upheaval,” she recalls. “My family disowned me.”

“... at some point, it comes down to being true to yourself and honoring God’s presence outside yourself.”

—Judy Dahl, 2002 D.Div

(2014 M.Div.) Rev. Marissa L. Danney was ordained August 28 to a ministry of Chaplaincy and Supervisory



Education at Saint Francis Memorial Hospital in San Francisco. She was ordained by Redwoods Presbytery on behalf of San Francisco Presbytery. The ordination service took place at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Tiburon, CA, where Marissa had recently served as interim youth minister. Danney says she feels called to ministry at Saint Francis "because I fell in love with the staff during my CPE residency, which I completed immediately after graduating from SFTS." She also feels called to ministry with the poor and dispossessed, a population served by the hospital. She looks forward to using her gifts of analysis and her passion for education to support ministers/chaplains in their formation and growth in faith.

(2001 M.Div.) Rev. Sara Ellen McCurdy has been named the temporary bridge pastor at First Presbyterian Church of Redlands (CA). A native of California, McCurdy



received an MA in psychology from California State University at Long Beach and an M.Div. from SFTS in 2001. Before her ordination, she worked in the public and private sectors as a mental health counselor and psychologist. A second-career pastor, McCurdy has served 14 years as an interim and installed pastor at several churches in California, including First Presbyterian Church in Fullerton, Westminster Presbyterian Church in Westlake Village, and First Presbyterian Church in Sherman Oaks. For the past eight years, she served as pastor of Morningside Presbyterian Church in Fullerton.

(1984 D.Min.) Rev. Dr. Stephen P. Kliever is the Director Emeritus of Wallowa Valley Center for Wellness, a



nonprofit agency in Enterprise, OR, that provides mental health, alcohol and drug recovery, and developmental disability programs for Wallowa County. He reports that WVCW, a federally qualified health center, recently opened a new clinical room, where health education and nursing services are offered and primary care services are available five days a week. "We are hoping to become a Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic and continue the movement toward more radical integration," Kliever says. Also, plans are in place to build a new facility that will house full services under one roof. Kliever has been a Presbyterian minister, worked for Medical Teams International—a nonprofit involved in disaster relief and medical development projects—and served

as assistant professor for a decade at Oregon Health and Science University in Portland.

(1986 D.Min.) Sister Catherine Osimo, CSC, Director of



Congregational Archives and Records at Sisters of the Holy Cross in Notre Dame, IN, was honored there July 17 at a jubilee celebration of her 50 years of consecrated life. She spent more than 20 years teaching in secondary schools in California and worked as an assistant headmaster at Villanova Preparatory School in Ojai. She also served as Associate Director of Youth Ministry and Vocations at the Newman Center at Weber State College in Ogden, Utah. For 18 years, she was a pastoral associate and Director of Catechetical Ministry at St. Charles Parish in San Diego, CA, and at Saint William of York Parish in Del Mar, CA. She received a bachelor's degree from Saint Mary's College in Notre Dame, IN, and a master's degree from Mundelein College in Chicago. She pursued doctoral studies at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., and at SFTS.

(1991 M.Div.) Rev. Dr. Sue Coller has been installed as the 20th senior pastor of First Presbyterian Church in



Lincoln, NE, where the focus is "making a difference through community outreach." She came to the church, established in 1869, with more than 25 years of service at churches of various sizes. Coller earned her D.Min. from McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago, her M.Div. from SFTS, and a B.A. in Religion and Archaeology from Boston University. She is a Certified Conflict Mediator, trained through Lombard Mennonite Peace Center. Coller's passion is for helping people live a faith that impacts their lives beyond the church. She finds nature to be a powerful source of inspiration and connection and spends her leisure time kayaking, biking, hiking, and camping. She also enjoys training dogs and has trained her Welsh Springer Spaniel as a therapy dog.

(1999 M.Div.) Rev. Kristen Pikaart, a longtime hospital

chaplain at Rehoboth McKinley Christian Health Care Services in Gallup, NM, is completing a non-residency ordination course with Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, MI. The Christian Reformed Church Synod 2016 has approved Pikaart's candidacy to transition from commissioned pastor to Minister of the Word, and soon she will have a classical ordination. Though her fulltime work is at the hospital, she also serves as an associate pastor at Bethany Christian Reformed Church and preaches often on the Navajo reservation. "In the course of doing ministry in this little, poor corner of the country, I got reconnected with the CRC denomination,"

Pikaart says. "Though my ordination won't change my work, it will give me credentials to do what I am doing." After graduating from SFTS, she worked as a hospital chaplain in the Bay Area and then returned to Gallup, her home town.

(2001 D.Min.) Rev. Dr. Heather P. Wright is executive director of the



Greenwich Center for Hope & Renewal, a counseling and resource center in Greenwich, CT. She oversees programs and personnel and manages partnerships with community leaders and professionals. A certified Emotionally Focused Therapist, Wright offers counseling and also delivers speeches for the Center. Previously, she was a graduate school professor of Counseling and Pastoral Theology. She also co-founded Mars Hill Graduate School in Seattle and maintained a counseling practice in Colorado and Washington. For six years, she directed Greenwich Chaplaincy Services, a nonprofit ministry. A board-certified chaplain, Wright is a member of the American Counseling Association and Spiritual Directors International, and she is a former president of the Greenwich Fellowship of Clergy. A popular public speaker and the author of three books, she also pens a monthly column for a local paper.

(2006 M.Div.) Rev. Elizabeth McCord is the new chaplain and director



of spiritual life at Carroll University in Waukesha, WI. The former Associate Dean for Vocations at SFTS, McCord now provides the Carroll community with a spiritual presence and program leadership. She also is responsible for building and maintaining relationships with congregations and nonprofit organizations through the coordination of campus service programs. "Carroll is a dynamic, vibrant learning community full of opportunities to express and explore faith and spirituality," McCord says. "I look forward to sharing my interests in spiritual practice and service with all of those on campus." Prior to working at SFTS, she served as a clinical pastoral education resident at the John Muir Medical Center in Concord, CA, and worked as a Christian educator at San Geronimo Community Presbyterian Church. In 2012, she was ordained by the Golden Gate Association of the United Church of Christ.

(2012 D.Min.) Rev. Jefferson C. Beeker recently began his new ministry at the Church in Bethesda, a non-denominational church in



Bethesda, MD. "The church stands as a beacon of light for new hope and possibility that through Christ's welcoming, unconditional and inclusive embrace, we can all experience a deep and meaningful relationship with Spirit/God as well as with one another," Beeker says. Previously, he served as minister of evangelism and membership development at First Christian Church in North Hollywood, CA. Prior to being called to the ministry, Beeker worked in the entertainment industry in Washington, D.C., New York, and Los Angeles. He grew up in Washington, D.C., in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and is delighted to live once again in his hometown. "To me, it is one of the most thrilling cities I have ever lived in." He adds, "Growing up gay, I never thought a life in ministry would be possible."✚

For more details and how to sign up, go to sfts.edu/events

DASD Alumni Reunion
JANUARY 19-21

A Weekend with John Phillip Newell: Earth-Honoring Celtic Spirituality
JANUARY 20-22

SFTS Luncheon at APCE (Association of Presbyterian Church Educators) Denver, Colorado
JANUARY 27

"The History of the Son of God" with SFTS Professor Chris Ocker
FOUR SUNDAYS IN FEBRUARY

Book Signing with Dr. Martha Taylor
FEBRUARY 23

Inquirers Weekend
FEBRUARY 23-25

Center for Innovation in Ministry "The Growing Edge: Teaching and Preaching the Bible—Past, Present, Future"
FEBRUARY 27

Center for Innovation in Ministry "Interconnectivity: Where Do We Go from Here?"
MARCH 20

Lenten Devotions
MARCH 1-APRIL 13

Center for Innovation in Ministry "Restoring Justice: Creative Leadership in Addressing Policing"
APRIL 24

Baccalaureate
MAY 19

Commencement
MAY 20

Where You Go, I Will Go

Rev. Yolanda Norton Brings a Passion for Justice and Community to the Seminary

By Marissa J. Miller

Having started her professional career in children’s policy issues, SFTS’ newest faculty member Rev. Yolanda Norton was drawn to the Seminary based on the intersecting interests of social justice, ministry and scholarship between herself and this institution.

As Assistant Professor of Old Testament at SFTS, Rev. Norton’s class this fall semester encouraged broader discussion around the biblical text including Native American interpretations of Exodus or reading the creation narratives in Genesis through a feminist hermeneutical lens. “I want my students to think more deeply about the text so that they don’t ignore or further marginalize people.”

Acting for those who have been put down is an ongoing theme in Norton’s studies and passions, which has drawn her specifically to the book of Ruth in the Old Testament. In the chapter that she wrote in *I Found God in Me: A Womanist Biblical Hermeneutics Reader*, Norton argues that the book of Ruth functions to reinforce social power structures. In the story, Ruth, a foreign woman, assimilates and pledges unwavering loyalty to Israel, but

never fully achieves the status she desperately seeks. Ruth is put in dangerous situations, and then simply disappears from the texts. No acknowledgement is given to Ruth’s sacrifice for her newborn son to redeem her mother-in-law Naomi, making her doubly oppressed—not only as an outsider but as a woman.

This interests Norton because of the similarities between Ruth and the stories of Black women who have been marginalized despite being the backbone of their own communities and others. Ruth, as an outsider, props up her mother-in-law, an insider. Norton is particularly intrigued in this aspect of the story and what this means for how Black women have been asked to prop up White and Black communi-

*“Where you go, I will go;
where you lodge, I will lodge;
your people shall be my people,
and your God my God.”*

— Ruth 1:16
Ruth’s vow to her mother-in-law, Naomi

ties, and particularly White women throughout history. She points out that when some think of the Black Lives Matter movement, they don’t necessarily think of Black women’s lives.

In addition to justice and community, travel and cooking are high on the list of what she feels passionate about. She feels that cooking is a spiritual discipline and started cooking for friends most Sundays during her college days at Syracuse University.

She also regularly leads student trips to Israel that often include archaeological digs in historic locations, honoring and studying the context and setting of the Old Testament. But there are other reasons that Israel speaks to Norton, including the social and political aspects happening in that region that should complicate the way we think about the Bible and social justice today.

“As Americans, we tend to have a skewed judgment about how we think about the area. Everything is an extreme there,” comments Norton. She leads these trips specifically so that her students will leave with an uneasiness about what’s happening in the area—in hopes that they will have less of an extreme view of the Israel-Palestine conflict. She also wants to explore how Bible, archaeology, and politics live together even in our modern social orientation. She remarks, “it’s a good place to be, despite its messiness.” ✚

Rev. Yolanda Norton in Jerusalem



Continuity & Change Our Evolving D.Min. Program

Chávez Saucedá has worked for SFTS in the APS Program since 2013, serving as program manager and adjunct faculty and as a consultant providing administrative support to the APS Committee and the updating of a track focusing on Feminist/Womanist/Mujerista Theologies. She also has served as a thesis reader for dissertations and projects in the D.Min. program.

“This is a very dynamic and exciting place to be, in the midst of religious and spiritual leaders grappling with what the future of the church is and what the needs of communities of faith are,” Chávez Saucedá says.

A hospice chaplain, Chávez Saucedá also has worked for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) at the national and local levels in the areas of racial justice, cultural proficiency, and other diversity-related issues. She earned her Ph.D. in religion and society at the Graduate Theological Union and her M.Div. at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary.

Rev. Dr. Jana Childers, Dean of SFTS, reports that the leadership transition, which began in July, has been seamless. “Teresa is a scholar, a pastor, and a great administrator, and she has worked side by side with Virstan for several years,” she says. In addition, Rev. Ruth T. West is moving into the interim APS Program Manager position. “We are fortunate to have two such able colleagues so well positioned to ensure the continuity of this important program,” says Childers.

“As for Virstan—he gave a total of 13 years of his life here in two positions,” Childers says. “He is an administrative genius, and he provided essential resources to the president in the early planning of the Center for Innovation in Ministry.” The Center launched in September 2014.

Choy retired October 1. “Some of my students told me people should not retire until they are in their mid-60s,” Choy says. “They were surprised to learn I am 67.” He notes that he has not retired fully and will teach a seminar this winter.

Childers says Choy will be missed. “I’m just so glad we already have arrangements in place for him to teach from time to time,” she says. ✚



By Patricia Corrigan

Go looking for Rev. Dr. Virstan Choy in his office at San Francisco Theological Seminary and you will learn that Choy has retired after 13 years of faithful instruction, insight and mentorship. Rev. Dr. Teresa Chávez Saucedá is now the interim Director of the Advanced Pastoral Studies (APS) Program and Assistant Professor of Ministry.

Choy stresses that Chávez Saucedá is fully committed to the emphases begun in 2012 and confident about the continuity of the program. “Teresa’s appointment will hopefully reassure potential as well as current students about the spirit and culture of the APS program,” he says. “She is not only familiar with all aspects of it, she embodies the spirit of interracial and cross-cultural community and shared learning inside and outside the classroom.”

Choy adds that Chávez Saucedá also “encourages the ecumenical and interfaith collaboration” that enables students to develop innovative practices and resources for ministry. “And she genuinely appreciates and enjoys relationships with the many adjunct faculty from other theological institutions who enhance our students’ learning.”

Above: Virstan and Teresa share a laugh before the 2016 Convocation at Stewart Chapel

Right: Rev. Ruth T. West, interim APS Program Manager





THE NOEL SYMPOSIUM

Black Religion, Materiality, and the Atlantic World



Front row (l to r): Will Coleman, PhD, Eva S. Hopkins, Amada Noel, Diana Noel, Charles Long, PhD, Aaron Grizzle, The Rev. Dr. Martha C. Taylor. Second row (l to r): Dr. Christopher Ocker, Rachel E. Harding, PhD, Professor Dwight Hopkins, Valerie Miles-Tribble, Dr. Andrea C. White, Raymond Carr, Rev. Dante R. Quick. Not pictured: Clayborne Carson, Dwight Hopkins, MDiv, MPhil, PhD, and Matthew V. Johnson, PhD

“The Noel Symposium was one of the most scholarly, interdisciplinary, and cutting edge gatherings I have participated in for quite some time. It did well to honor the thoughts and life of James and his family. I hope this was the first of many.”

— **Dr. Dwight N. Hopkins, PhD, Professor of Theology, University of Chicago Divinity School**

Top: SFTS faculty Dr. Christopher Ocker and symposium convener Aaron Grizzell

Right: SFTS President Jim McDonald, along with Clayborne Carson of the King Institute at Stanford, and SFTS student Aaron Grizzell

By Patricia Corrigan

The work, the passion—and most certainly the spirit—of the late Rev. Dr. James Noel all infused a two-day academic symposium September 30–October 1 in Scott Hall at San Francisco Theological Seminary.

“It was intense, very intense, with some strong contrasting viewpoints and also interesting integrated viewpoints,” says Dr. Christopher Ocker, Professor of Church History at SFTS.

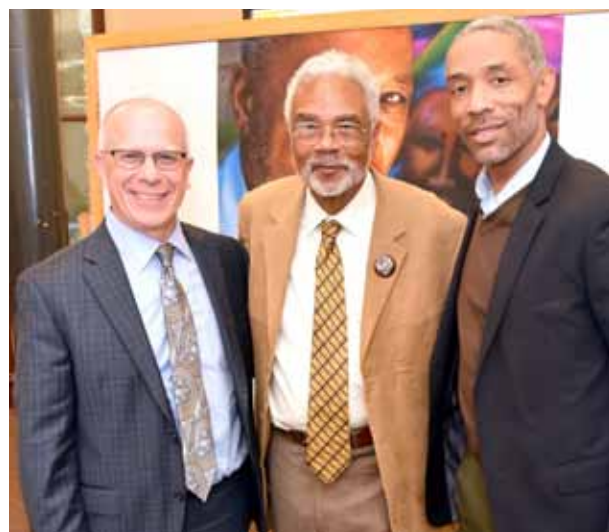
Ocker co-organized the symposium with SFTS student Aaron Grizzell, Executive Director of the NorcalMLK Foundation, who convened the event. It was sponsored by SFTS and the Graduate Theological Union at Berkeley (GTU). More than 150 people attended to hear prominent scholars of Black religion, history, and theology speak about their work and that of Noel, who died in January.

Noel was the H. Eugene Farlough Chair of African American Christianity, Professor of American Religion, and Convener of the Graduate Theological Union’s Black Church/Africana Studies Certificate Program. He spent 28 years on the SFTS campus.

Grizzell notes, “Prior to his passing, Dr. Noel was leading by example by planning a spring 2016 symposium on Black religion and materiality in the Atlantic World. This symposium confirms and signifies the seriousness and leadership with which SFTS has taken up the cause of human rights as a result of the call to engage as elemental the issues of African Americans specifically, and people of African descent in general, beginning with the interrogation of the subject of the Black Atlantic world.”

The symposium was organized to reflect Noel’s academic passions. “James was a scholar who brought together several different areas of interest in a conversation that is quite unusual,” Ocker says. Those areas are:

- African-American religion as the substance of a kind of meta-identity emerging in response to the trauma, degradation, violence, and injustice of enslavement and the long-term impact of slavery on Western societies
- Dr. Charles Long’s phenomenology of the material, which stresses the importance of embodied experience and particularity over time throughout history
- The Atlantic World as the space of historic exchanges involving Black bodies
- Implications of these things for Christianity, society, and African-American and womanist theology and spiritual life



Grizzell sums up the event: “Over two days we engaged in discussion and difficult debate on these central points of focus that informed Dr. Noel’s research. We began and concluded the symposium by being challenged by his mentor, the noted historian of religion Dr. Charles H. Long. And we were enraptured in tearful memory and quiet celebration of our friend in a moment of Holy Spirit-filled comfort in a gracious, divine God as revealed through remembrance of James Noel’s life here with us. I was honored to be a part of celebrating my friend and mentor in such an important way.”

“The work of Dr. Charles Long, which foregrounds the material embodiment of African-American experience, was a particularly strong influence on Noel,” Ocker says. “Long argued that African-American identity precedes and exceeds the Black church.” Theologians Rev. Dr. Dwight Hopkins, Rev. Dr. Matthew Johnson, Rev. Dr. Raymond Carr, and Rev. Dr. Will Coleman “pressed the agenda of Black liberation theology into new directions, alter-

natively global, Christocentric, or syncretistic with African traditions.”

Ocker reports that womanist theologians Rev. Dr. Andrea White, Rev. Dr. Valerie Miles-Tribble, and Rev. Dr. Martha C. Taylor issued profound criticisms of patriarchal conceptions of ministry. They explained the particular violence of slavery to women and argued for the theological relevance of Black women’s embodiment.

Ocker continues, “Historian Dr. Rachel Harding highlighted the vestigially African forms of spiritual experience that empowered women activists in the struggle for racial justice in America and still empower urban poor practitioners of Candomblé in Brazil today. And historian Dr. Clayborne Carson described the central role played by Coretta Scott King in Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King’s political education at the time of their courtship and throughout his life.”

These scholars are what drew Rev. Ineda Adesanya (MA, M.Div., DASD) to the symposium. “The biggest draw for me was the areas of expertise of the speakers,” she says.

“They are scholars I would like to study and also study with and learn from in my doctoral work.” Adesanya, currently a Ph.D. student at the GTU, is focusing on historical and cultural studies of religion. A former student of Noel’s, Adesanya also appreciated “the gesture in paying tribute to James Noel.”

One moment at the symposium stood out for her. At the end of the event, Carr showed a video of Noel, an expert salsa dancer, dancing with others on a stage at a conference at Pepperdine University.

“It touched the hearts of many of us in the room,” Adesanya says. A moment of silence followed, and then Adesanya began to sing “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” the African American national anthem.

“Everyone joined in,” she says. “It was a culturally appropriate moment to honor Noel, who dedicated his life’s work to the African diaspora.” ✚



Rachel Harding of University of Colorado at Denver presented “Mysticism and Mothering in Black Women’s Social Justice Activism: Brazil/USA”

WEB EXTRA

For a list of speakers, their topics, and additional photos, please visit sfts.edu/noelsymposium

SFTS Trains Lay Pastors in

BIG SKY COUNTRY

By Patricia Corrigan

A good idea on the part of a Presbyterian minister in Great Falls, MT, has led to a successful partnership between San Francisco Theological Seminary and Glacier Presbytery, made up of 18 churches in western Montana. For three years now, SFTS staff and faculty members have traveled four times a year from San Anselmo to Big Sky Country to help train lay pastors.



The program launched in October 2014. Dr. Annette Schellenberg, Associate Professor of Old Testament, taught the first course, and 20 lay pastors attended. Since the launch, topics have included New Testament, church history, Reformed theology, and the theological problem of suffering. Each course consists of five classes on one pastoral subject.

“Rev. Tim Lanham, an SFTS Trustee and pastor at Sunrise Presbyterian Church in Great Falls, initially spoke to us about Glacier Presbytery’s efforts to help lay pastors get what they need,” says Rev. Dr. Jana Childers, Dean of SFTS.

“It was clear this was a strong grassroots effort on the part of the presbytery, so we talked with Marsha Anson, General Presbyter and Stated Clerk, about how we might be able to help. The conversation about a partnership just exploded in the happiest way possible, and the project took off immediately.”

“Most faculty members have taken part at least once, and everyone loves it,” Childers says. “I taught worship and preaching, and everyone I met was extraordinarily gracious and receptive.”

Apparently the feeling is mutual. Each time a faculty or staff member returns from Montana, Childers receives a sincere note from Anson that reports on the success of the course. The notes please Childers, of course, but she says the reward for SFTS is even greater.

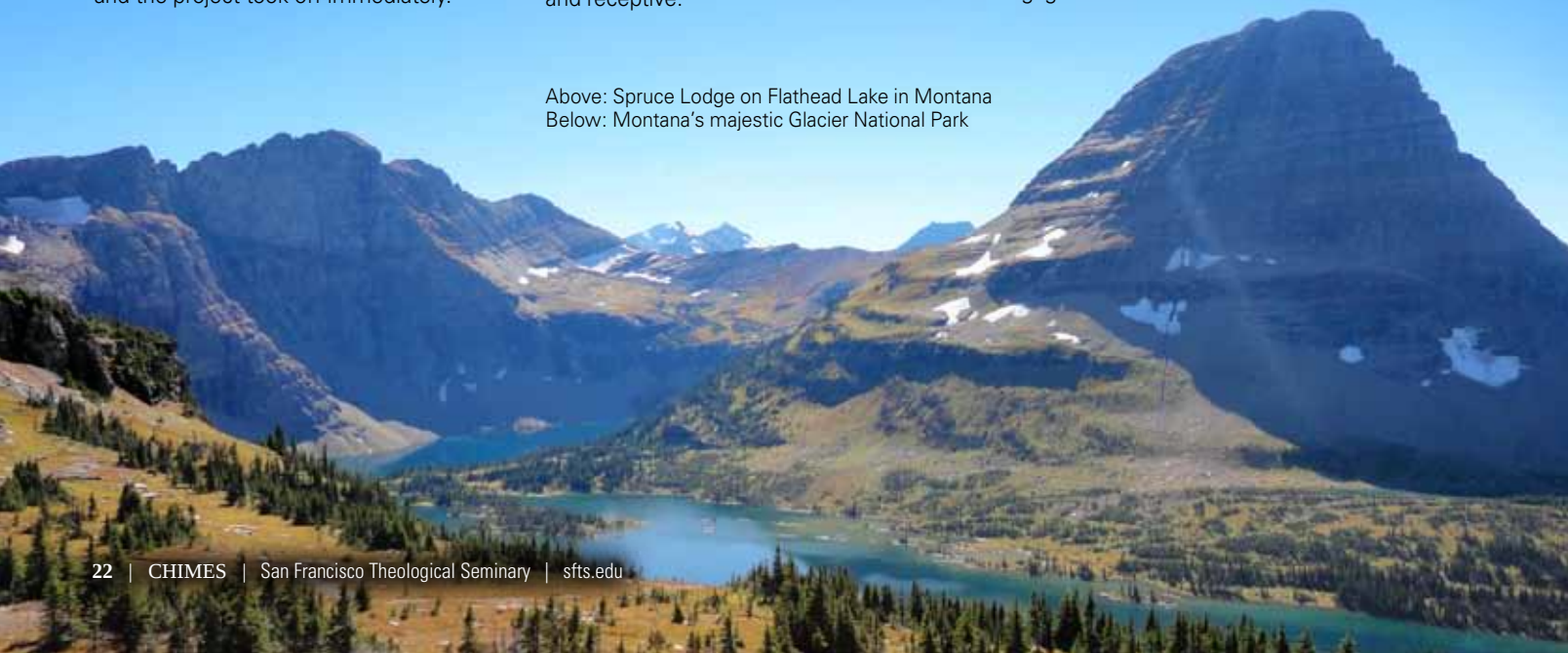
“We are learning as much as we are teaching. We always talk about the relationship between the church and the seminary, and this is the ultimate example of a good conversation. We get to see a different part of the world, a different set of churches, and learn about their needs,” Childers says.

In Montana, many churches are geographically isolated. Theological libraries are few and far between. And religious educational resources aren’t readily accessible for many lay pastors and people who hope to be lay pastors.

Before starting the partnership with SFTS, Glacier Presbytery sent lay pastors to a program in Washington for courses. The partnership with SFTS replaced that program, Childers says, and today, individuals seeking continuing education credits also attend the quarterly courses.

“This partnership with Glacier Presbytery is the kind of program emblematic of what church and seminary can do together,” Childers says. “It’s part of our commitment to reaching out, to be in closer conversation with churches. We are excited about the success of this partnership and eager to engage in others.”

Above: Spruce Lodge on Flathead Lake in Montana
Below: Montana’s majestic Glacier National Park



Rev. Dr. Jon L. Berquist, Visiting Professor of Old Testament, recently worshiped with “gathering-desire,” a community led by Rev. Bentley Stewart (2015 M.Div.) that seeks recognition as a new congregation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). About 20 Disciples students, staff, and friends attended. The community meets weekly on the SFTS campus. He had three articles published, including a chapter on “Prophecy in Persian Yehud” for *Oxford Handbook on the Prophets* and a chapter on the *Book of Hebrews*. Berquist also offered a workshop, “Gathered As One: A Biblical Theology of Church,” at a church conference in Fullerton, CA.



Dr. Elizabeth Liebert, Professor of Spiritual Life, delivered the annual Litzinger Lecture, titled “What in the World Is God Up To? Discernment With Systems,” October 28 at the Wake Forest Baptist Health System in Winston-Salem, NC. On November 10, she presented the GTU Distinguished Faculty Lecture, “Academic Life and Scholarship as Spiritual Practice.” This summer, she represented the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary at their 34th General Chapter, in Cornwall, Ontario, Canada. Future plans include travel to Lesotho, Tasmania, and Melbourne, where Liebert will offer a series of lectures at the Campion Centre.

Rev. Dr. Jana Childers, Dean and Vice-President of Academic Affairs, preached last spring in Fargo, ND; Oakland, CA; Hastings, MN; and Tigard, OR. In June, she joined Rev. Heath Rada, the outgoing Moderator of the PC(USA) General Assembly, to lead the Assembly’s opening worship service. July found her in Raleigh-Durham, NC, preaching at Duke University Chapel. This fall, along with Rev. Dr. Tom Long and Rev. Dr. Anna Carter Florence, Childers delivered the keynote at a conference in Minneapolis sponsored by Luther Seminary. Next, she will travel to Westminster Presbyterian Church in Portland, OR, to preach, lead a church retreat, and spend time with SFTS alums.



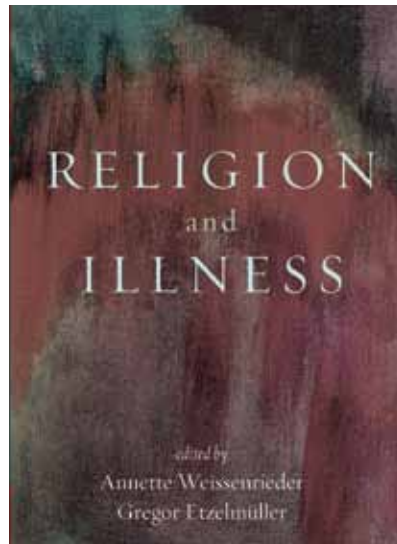
Rev. Dr. Eugene Eung-Chun Park, Professor of New Testament, gave a series of lectures in June on “Reading Luke in the Context of the Roman Empire” at the SFTS-Hanshin Conference in Korea. In August, he presented a paper at the 71st annual conference of the Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas (SNTS) in Montreal, Canada. In October, he lectured on “Cosmology and Eschatology in Judeo-Christian Traditions” at First Presbyterian Church of Burlingame, CA, and presented a paper on “Interlexicality of dikaiosyne in the Myth of Er in Plato’s Republic and in the Parable of Sheep and Goats in Matthew” at the SNTS regional conference in Kottayam, India.

Rev. David Ezekiel, Ford Fellow in Evangelism and Congregational Leadership, recently has been active at the national level of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), serving on the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board. He participated in long-range planning with the board’s executive committee, and he chairs a committee reviewing the role of print as a communication strategy. Ezekiel also attended a meeting of the Presbyterian Investment and Loan Program, of which he is a board member, and the PC(USA) General Assembly in Portland, OR. As the transitional executive for the Synod of the Rocky Mountains, he resourced the Synod Assembly and convened and engaged presbytery leaders in mission strategy conversations.



Rev. Dr. Annette Weissenrieder, Professor of New Testament, is the editor of *Borders: Terminologies, Ideologies, and Performances*, published in August. In this volume, she notes, “an international group of archaeologists, classicists, historians, and biblical scholars investigate diverse terms, performances, and qualities of borders and ideologies of boundaries in antiquity. The primary focus is on physical borders and border zones

of political organizations as well as of sanctuaries and houses, and on borderlines that can be experienced in demarcations and their relevance for religious life.” Inspiration for the book was the 2013 Muilenburg-Koenig Seminar, an international, interdisciplinary workshop held at SFTS. Additionally, Weissenrieder has completed another book, released in November, *Religion and Illness*, touted as a cross-disciplinary scholarly compendium on religion and illness that is invaluable as a resource for all interested in a more integrative approach towards medicine at the intersection of health and the holy, body and spirit, healing and theology.



Dr. Wendy Farley, Professor of Christian Spirituality, is delighted with her new position and is loving the West Coast. She taught a five-week compassion training for faculty, staff, and students. Also, she is completing a manuscript, tentatively titled *A Treasure in Cracked Pots: Conversations on Scripture and Theology*, due to the publisher in February. She says this is a “deeply personal project,” capturing a dialogue between her father, Edward Farley, and Jack Forstman, a beloved professor, that took place as they both neared death. Next March, Farley will be a keynote speaker for the Society for Continental Philosophy and Theology conference in Greenville, SC.



BEN WEIR 1923-2016

From Prisoner to PC(USA) Moderator

Appreciation for SFTS Alumnus and Former Professor Ben Weir

By **Jerry L. Van Marter**

Early in 1984, on a Saturday morning, Rev. Ben Weir strolled into Fruitvale Presbyterian Church in Oakland, California—where I was serving as pastor—to take part in our men’s fellowship breakfast. Whenever he and his wife, Carol, were on “furlough” from their work as Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) mission workers in Beirut, Lebanon, Ben would frequently show up at Fruitvale. It was no big deal—just a much-loved missionary who we didn’t get to see often enough.

Ben loved to talk about life and work in Lebanon, and we ate it up. Our little congregation was proud to count Ben and Carol as part of our community. We delighted in hearing firsthand about their ministry and supporting it as much as we could.

Two months later—on May 8, 1984—Ben Weir was kidnapped off the streets of Beirut. For the next 16 months, he was held in captivity—much of it in solitary confinement—by Islamic Jihad, one of the warring factions in the Middle East. Ben’s ordeal agonized the global Christian community, and it felt particularly excruciating to the folk at Fruitvale Church. He was one of ours!

Carol took the lead—along with their four children—in efforts to secure Ben’s release. There were seemingly endless rounds of meetings with U.S. government officials. But perhaps the most effective effort—and one joined by Fruitvale—was a campaign to send one million postcards to the President pleading that more be done to free Ben and five other hostages.

In the book *Hostage Bound, Hostage Free*, Ben described his captivity: “I used to recall as many different hymns as I could... I set up a calendar in my head, using holes in the wall and, later,

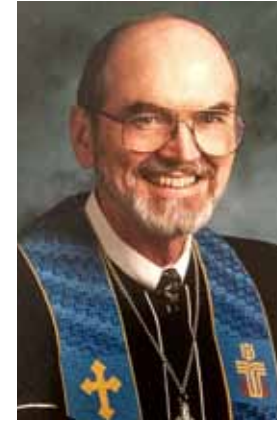
ceramic tiles on the floor. For the first 35 days I had nothing to read until a guard finally brought me a New Testament in Arabic. That was a great, great boon to me... I had a sense that... I was the Lord’s prisoner—to use the New Testament phrase. That gave me a sense of purpose and dignity.”

Ben was released September 14, 1985. The following June, he was elected moderator of the 198th General Assembly of the PC(USA). Reluctant to occupy the spotlight, he determined that it could be an effective pulpit from which to preach his life’s message of justice, peace, forgiveness, and reconciliation.

And that fall, during a rare break in his moderatorial duties, Ben again strolled into Fruitvale Church for the men’s fellowship breakfast.

Ben Weir died October 14, 2016, at 92. We will miss his ever-hopeful, beautiful light. ✚

Professor Emeritus and VP of SFTS SoCal Campus



Rev. Dr. Jack Bartlett Rogers died July 12, 2016. He was born January 23, 1934, in Lincoln, NE. After college, he served on a Christian mission that built a conference center in Alexandria, Egypt. Rogers was ordained as a teaching elder in 1959 by the former United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. after graduating with his M.Div. from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, where he then earned his Th.M. in 1964. He earned a Th.D. in 1967 from the Free University of Amsterdam while serving as pastor of the Pilgrim Fellowship, an English-speaking congregation in the Netherlands. In 1989, he earned a D.D. from Westminster College. Rogers held leadership roles at Westminster College in New Wilmington, PA; the Office

of Theology and Worship of the PC(USA) in Louisville, KY; and Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, CA. From 1990 to 2000, Rogers taught theology at SFTS, where he also served as the first vice president of a southern branch of the Seminary’s campus located in Pasadena, CA. Named moderator of the 213th General Assembly of the PC(USA), Rogers played an important role in the debate over ordination of gays and lesbians. A prolific author, he also was recognized with the Excellence in Theological Education award at the 221st General Assembly. He is survived by Sharon Rogers, his wife of 59 years; his three sons, Matthew (Yvonne), John (Chi Nguyen), and Toby; three grandchildren; and a sister. ✚

Professor Emeritus and Director of Advanced Pastoral Studies



1954 (B.Div.) Rev. Dr. John Sidney Hadsell died May 3, 2016. He was born October 29, 1921, in Berkeley, CA. He attended the University of California at Berkeley and SFTS. He earned his doctorate in education at Teachers College at Columbia University. During World War II, Hadsell served aboard the USS Washington. He later worked as an executive with the Boy Scouts of America, served as Presbyterian campus minister at San Francisco State

University and at Westminster House, and served as a pastor and teacher in Hawaii, Ohio, Georgia, and South Korea. Hadsell became Director of the Advanced Pastoral Studies program at SFTS in 1970, helping to establish the D.Min. degree as a leading program. He further developed its international component, forging partnerships with churches and theological institutions in Korea and Australia. Hadsell also was a co-ordinator of the Master of Arts program in Education for Human Values, later known as the MA in Values. He was named a Distinguished Alumnus of SFTS in 1997. After retiring in 1987, Hadsell co-authored *San Francisco Theological Seminary: The Shaping of a Western School of the Church, 1871–1998*, which was published in 1999. A longtime member of Montclair Presbyterian Church in Oakland, CA, he was preceded in death by Virginia T. Hadsell, his wife of 65 years, and his daughter Sydney Hadsell Farivar. He is survived by his daughter Heidi Hadsell and four grandchildren. ✚

1955 (B.Div.), 1969 (STD)



Rev. Dr. Charles Richard “Dick” Mitchell died October 14, 2016. He was born July 24, 1926, in Richmond, CA. Mitchell began his distinguished military career in 1944 as a private in the U.S. Army and was a combat infantry paratrooper during World War II. After the war, he graduated from the University of California, Berkeley,

and earned degrees from SFTS. He then completed a seven-year post-graduate program with a triple doctorate in theology, sociology, and psychology. Ordained to the ministry in 1955, he was associate pastor of Westminster Presbyterian Church in Ontario, CA, until 2011. He served for 30 years as a chaplain in the U.S. Air Force, receiving more than 30 awards and decorations. Mitchell also was in private practice as a marriage and family counselor for more than four decades. He is survived by his wife, Claudette; four daughters, Ann Martin, Jane Mitchell, Tracie Cornelison, and Michelle Menes; eight grandchildren, and eight great-grandchildren.

1964 (Th.M.), 1981 (D.Min.)



Rev. Dr. James C. Upshaw II died October 18, 2016. He was born November 11, 1924, in Covington, GA. He served in the Navy during World War II and while in the service, he graduated from the University of Miami. He then attended Princeton Theological Seminary and was ordained in 1950. He went on to earn his M.Th. and D.Min. at

SFTS. In his career, Upshaw served as pastor of three congregations in northern California. He spent a decade at Walnut Creek Presbyterian Church. Then he was called to Christ Presbyterian Church in Terra Linda in San Rafael, where he served for 17 years. He retired from El Dorado Federated Church in Placerville, where he served as Pastor Emeritus until his death. He is survived by Gwen, his wife of 67 years; daughters Mary (John Endres) Upshaw, Susanne (Lindy) Heidt and Anne Upshaw; son James C. (Cynthia) Upshaw, III; 10 grandchildren, and 11 great-grandchildren.

1945 (B.Div.)

Rev. Charles Philip Schiller died November 12, 2015. He was born October 15, 1929, in Oakland, CA, and spent his childhood years in San Rafael. He graduated from Whitworth University in 1951 on the same day that he married Shirley Ann Gilson, his devoted partner in ministry and adventure. He attended SFTS and accepted his first pastorate in Salmon, Idaho. Schiller later served many Presbyterian congregations in Washington State. He enjoyed salmon fishing, going on cruises with friends, and traveling the world. In retirement, Schiller volunteered at Allenmore Hospital for 10 years. He is survived by his wife and their four children, Steve, Sandy Smith (Andy), Tom (Elena Knight), and Susan Engels (Martin); eight grandchildren, two great-granddaughters, and a sister.



Union in Berkeley, CA. He was ordained to a ministry of higher education by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Known as an Old Testament scholar and specialist in biblical law, Patrick first taught at Missouri School of Religion and the University of Missouri-Columbia and then for more than 30 years at Drake University in Des Moines. His work took him to England, Israel, South Africa, Germany, and Zimbabwe. He was a longtime member of Glen Echo Christian Church in Des Moines. He is survived by Mary Patrick, his wife of 54 years; his son, Jeremy; two grandchildren, and four sisters.

1955 (MA)

Clara Marie Bickford Heer died August 14, 2015. She was born March 6, 1930, in China, the daughter of Presbyterian missionaries. She graduated from Occidental College in Los Angeles and then earned her MA in Christian education. Heer served as Director of Children's Ministries at Garden Grove (CA) Presbyterian Church and later, as Director of Christian Education at First Presbyterian Church in Santa Ana. She also was interim Director of Membership Care and Head of Staff at St. Andrew Presbyterian Church in Aptos, CA. Clara taught the Stephen Ministry program, was active in Presbyterian Women (PW), led Bible study groups, and served as a deacon at Pasadena Presbyterian Church. She is survived by her husband of 60 years, Rev. Dr. Ray W. Heer; her three daughters, Grace Lynne Heer, Carol Beth (Kevin) Holsinger, and Gloria (James) Lane; two grandchildren, a sister, and a brother.

1958 (B.Div.)

Rev. Charles R. Harper died May 25, 2016. He was born in Brazil in 1933, the child of Presbyterian missionaries. He was ordained to the ministry following studies in theology and international affairs at the College of Wooster in Ohio, SFTS, and the University of California. During the 1960s, Harper became a United Presbyterian fraternal worker in France, where he worked with Algerian immigrants and helped smuggle out of Portugal about 60 African students who were under threat from the secret police. Later, as Director of the John Knox International Reformed Centre in Geneva, he aided church leaders who were persecuted in Mozambique, Angola, and Cape Verde. From 1973 to 1992, he served as Director of the Latin American Human Rights Resource Office of the World Council of Churches. Harper was the recipient of presidential awards from Chile in 2011 and Argentina in 2014 for his dedication to the defense, protection, and restoration of human rights in those countries.



1958 (B.Div.), 1967 (Th.D.)

Rev. Dr. Robert Willis died September 16, 2015. He was born July 26, 1930, in Scottsbluff, NE. He served in the Korean War in the Counter Intelligence Corps. Willis graduated from Occidental College in Los Angeles and earned his doctoral degree from SFTS. For 34 years, he taught religion and philosophy courses at Hamline University in St. Paul, MN, where he served as Professor Emeritus

after his retirement. An active member of the Macalester Plymouth United Church in St. Paul, Willis enjoyed jazz music, attended St. Paul Chamber Orchestra concerts, wrote poetry, traveled frequently, loved the North Shore, read enthusiastically, and enjoyed time spent with family and friends. He is survived by Elaine A. Willis, his loving wife of 64 years; sons, Mark (Charolette), David (Penny), and Paul (Jeanne); daughter Kate (Jeanette); and four grandchildren.

1974 (M.Div.), 1977 (St.D.)

Jae-Eun Kim died recently at her home in Seoul, South Korea. Remembered as an outstanding student and scholar, she also earned her B.Th. from Methodist Theological Seminary in Seoul and a Th.M. from the University of Seoul.

1980 (M.A.)

Pamela J. Steiding (Brown) died September 6, 2016 in Atlanta. She entered SFTS with an English degree to become a therapist and spiritual guide. From her Unitarian father, she brought passion for independent theology that energized professors and their classes. Called beyond the pulpit, she embraced 10 years of Jungian analysis and earned a mental health counseling license. With her husband, Norman, she settled in Daytona Beach, FL, to teach, counsel, and raise their daughter. Her work began with adolescents and women in reentry and reached several thousand individuals and multigenerational families until it diminished due to cancer after 2005. SFTS shines in her final dream: She stands inside a white church, flooded with golden light, and filled with kind people of color. Her mentor, Rev. Dr. James Noel, is there, as are Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Jesus, and her father. Though unsure if she or James is taller, since she's attained adulthood, she is supposed to conduct the Easter Sunday service: It's Resurrection Day.



— *Written with love by her husband, Norman Brown*

Bishop Richard Keith Thompson died July 16, 2016. He was born in Kannapolis, NC. He was a graduate of Livingstone College and Hood Theological Seminary, both in Salisbury, NC. He did further study at SFTS, Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C., and St. Paul School of Theology in Kansas City, MO. He served for 20 years as pastor of Trinity A.M.E. Zion Church in Washington, D.C., and was elected bishop in 1992. Thompson served as the presiding bishop of the Alabama-Florida Episcopal District through 2004 and then served through 2012 as the presiding bishop of the Eastern North Carolina Episcopal District. At the time of his death, Thompson was the presiding bishop of Mid-Atlantic II Episcopal District. He is survived by his wife of 48 years, Georgia McNair Thompson; his two children, Kerri Thompson Tillett (Keith) and Richard Keith; four grandchildren, and a brother.



TRUSTEE

Rev. Harry Norman Roddick died May 9, 2016. He was born August 10, 1934, in San Francisco. He began his career at Seventh Avenue Presbyterian Church in San Francisco. During his 50-plus years as an ordained Presbyterian minister, Roddick was dedicated to many causes and involved in multiple church and community programs. With his talent for storytelling and his ability to bring the Bible to life, Roddick crafted inspirational and insightful sermons. In retirement, he was appointed a Trustee at SFTS. At the time of his death, he was Pastor Emeritus of Westminster Presbyterian Church in DeKalb, IL. He was preceded in death by his wife of 35 years, Kay Cochran Roddick. He is survived by his daughters, Cynthia (William) Woods, Kirsten (James) Morris, and Kimberly (Matt) Volk; four stepchildren, Rob (Maria) Helmick, John (Cindy) Helmick, Suzanne (Jeff) Book, and Stephanie (Tom) Ormsby; 19 grandchildren, and a brother.



FRIENDS OF THE SEMINARY

Martha Belle Rowles Green died March 31, 2015. She was born December 11, 1917, on a farm near Bremen, Ohio, where she grew up. As a young adult in Columbus, she met and married her husband, Dr. Thomas W. Green Jr., in 1942. She was a faithful member of the Presbyterian Church. At Walnut Creek (CA) Presbyterian Church, she served for 45 years in various groups, including Presbyterian Women Bible Study and Sewing Circle, the Women's Association, Church Women United, and the San Francisco Theological Seminary Auxiliary. She valued her family, friends, and relationships and often shared her beautiful arts and crafts. She was predeceased by her husband, Thomas, who died in 2009 after 67 years of marriage. She is survived by five children, Nancy Seibert, Marcia Green, Sandra Russell, Robert Green, and John Green; 11 grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

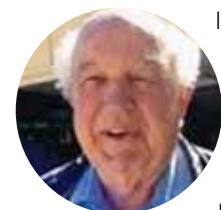


Marilyn Loughary Kok died July 28, 2015. She was born February 22, 1934, in Omak, WA. Shortly after her graduation from high school, she married Alvin Kok, whom she met in Eugene, OR. In 1955, the couple moved to Albany, OR. She valued education and returned to college after the age of 40, earning a B.S. and two master's degrees. For several years, she taught English as a Second Language at Linn Benton Community College in Albany. She enjoyed traveling with the family, reading, sewing, quilting, and cross-stitching. She also was a strong advocate of women's issues and facilitated several women's groups, book clubs, and social gatherings. Her daughter Karen preceded her in death. She is survived by Alvin, her husband of 62 years; children, Cynthia Kok (Bruce Webb), Molly Kok (Stephen Brees), Michael Kok (Janet), and Ann Kok (Todd Carlson); seven grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren. ✝



1951 (B.Div.)

Rev. Travis Hyatt died June 9, 2016. He was born May 4, 1924, in rural Colorado. He served as a paratrooper in World War II, attended Occidental College in Los Angeles, and then enrolled at SFTS. Hyatt's first church was in Chama, NM. In 1954, he moved to Canoga Park, CA, where he organized the First Presbyterian Church of Canoga Park. He later served in Roswell, NM; Ukiah, CA; and San Jose, CA. There, Hyatt helped start the Outreach Paratransit Service, founded the Lake Cunningham Sailing Program, and was active in the Santa Clara County Council of Churches. Hyatt was preceded in death by his daughter Susan. He is survived by Joy Hyatt, his wife of 66 years; his daughters Lynn (Doyle) Sausser and Luana (Armando) Reveles; his son, Badru; five grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren.



1954 (B.Div.)

Rev. Stanley Noble Jones died October 30, 2015. He was born December 31, 1929, in Pasadena, CA. In 1951, he entered SFTS, the first step in his 61 years of pastoral service. His first church was First Presbyterian Church in Florence, AZ, where he also served as Protestant chaplain at the Arizona State Prison. Jones later served parishes in Placentia and Granada Hills in California. In 1972, he was named Director of Seminary Ministries for Faith at Work, based in Columbia, MD. In 1991, he moved to Fountain Hills, AZ, where he served as interim pastor of several congregations and, most recently, as parish associate at Fountain Hills Presbyterian Church. Before his death, he completed his book *The Treasure Is In The People*. His son, Stephen, preceded him in death. He is survived by Louise Jones, his wife of 65 years; his daughters Sharon (Anthony) Drake, Lorraine (Randy) Cain, and Lynda (Paul) Rogers; seven grandchildren, and one great-grandson.



1954 (B. Div.), 1971 (Th.D.)

Rev. Dr. Dale Patrick died July 27, 2015. He was born October 2, 1938, in Eugene, OR. Patrick earned degrees from Drew University School of Theology in Madison, NJ, and the Graduate Theological



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