

Divining Nature through the Sciences

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Currents presents the news, people, and progress of the Graduate Theological Union. Published two times a year, *Currents* is distributed to alumni, faculty, students, staff, and friends of the GTU.

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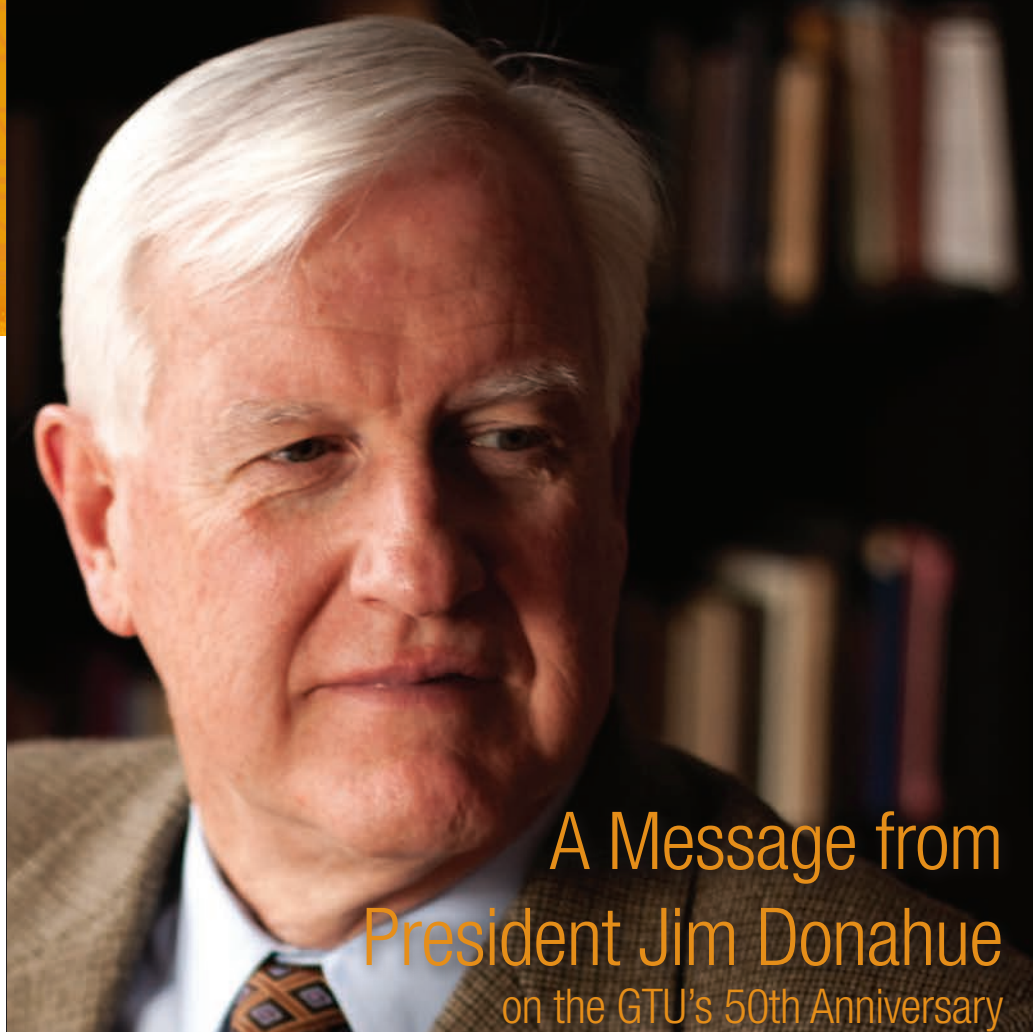
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A Message from President Jim Donahue on the GTU's 50th Anniversary

Certainly ethicists have always asked the normative questions about what is right and good. That hasn't changed since I did my doctoral work at the GTU in the early eighties. Relying on the canonical work of Tillich, the Niebuhrs, Durkheim, Rahner, Weber, Barth, and others for a grand unified theory, we focused on identifying laws, norms, and principles that guide behavior.

Today, we find ourselves in a more particularized, diverse, post-modern intellectual world, where we can't assume that one size idea fits all. To engage the complex issues that emerge, contemporary scholars now draw from a broader spectrum of religious traditions and cultures.

This has changed the debate and the participants, making theological scholarship and discussion vastly more interdisciplinary and intercultural. It also distinguishes practice from theory to a greater degree. While the GTU has historically been both theory and praxis-based, we are now more conscious of justice and public policy issues and how our work has concrete relevance today.

The GTU's programs are distinctive because of our commitment to both scholarship and its practical application in a complex, conflict-ridden world. In my 12 years as president, I am still amazed and always proud to hear of student dissertations, such as those on topics ranging from cultivating compassion, to a theological response to U.S. involvement to state-sponsored torture, to a restorative approach to women in prison. I also am both proud and humbled by the excellent work of our distinguished alumni.

In addition to our academic programs, the GTU is a vital contributor to the community, hosting compelling colloquia on special topics, interfaith holiday celebrations, and public lectures by renowned scholars on important issues of the day.

We remain a vital and vibrant global force in interfaith education in a time of extraordinary change and continued economic challenge. We look forward to the next 50 years.

James A. Donahue



Islam from the Public Square to the Academy

With few counterparts, the Center for Islamic Studies (CIS) offers graduate students and scholars, Muslim and those of other faith traditions, the opportunity to pursue the academic study of Islam, within the multireligious context of the GTU, where pluralism, dialogue and inter-religious understanding are the basis of scholarship and service. It also provides a community for Muslim students throughout the consortium regardless of academic interests.

The Center's mission is to build an academic platform to help scholars and students of many faiths understand Islam as a living world religion. "A lot of the work we do at the Center connects to everything that is going on with Islam and Muslims in the public sphere — in media, the arts, politics, law, business, and education," said CIS founding director Munir Jiwa. CIS emphasizes study, dialogue, and interaction with contemporary Jewish, Christian, and Muslim communities, and civic engagement.

In cooperation with GTU member schools, CIS offers introductory and advanced courses in a range of academic disciplines, including interdisciplinary approaches, theories and methods. It also strengthens GTU's ties with the University of California, Berkeley, through conferences, programs, and courses with departments such as African Diaspora Studies, Anthropology, Ethnic Studies, Near Eastern Studies, South and South-

east Asian Studies, Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Center for Race and Gender, School of Journalism, and the iGov Program at the Institute for International Studies. The Center offers a Certificate in Islamic Studies while heavily supporting the Islamic Studies doctoral track. With the generosity of the Henry Luce Foundation, CIS began offering the M.A. in Islamic Studies in the 2010-2011 academic year, graduating its first student in May 2012.

In addition, the Center serves as a liaison with local Muslim communities and study centers, sharing resources in interfaith and intrafaith education and dialogue, and religious leadership. This focus fits well with Rizwan Mawani, a first-year M.A. in Islamic Studies student from Canada. "I want to see if there are ways to understand how to create better dialogue in the Muslim community by looking at intra-Muslim dialogue among and within Muslim communities. GTU is already a model for Christian communities coming together in dialogue, so I thought this would be a great place to see if there are possibilities for models in the Muslim community as well."

Since 2007, CIS has sponsored more than 300 conferences, symposia, workshops, and research projects to foster scholarly exchange across disciplines, to build bridges of understanding across religions and cultures, to promote civic engagement, and to increase better pub-

lic education about Islam and Muslims. Among them, a Carnegie Corporation of New York-sponsored workshop in March 2009, "Who Speaks for Islam? Media and Muslim Networks." More recently, CIS and the Richard S. Dinner Center for Jewish Studies (CJS) sponsored a day of learning focused on the theme of "Hagar in the Jewish and Islamic Traditions," as part of their cooperative *Madrassa-Midra-sha* program which began in 2009.

Students are drawn to CIS because of its academic reputation and the breadth of knowledge of its faculty, particularly Jiwa, an anthropologist focusing on Islam and Muslims in the West and in the media, and Sr. Marianne Farina, C.S.C., Associate Professor of Philosophy and Theology at the Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology. "GTU is a great place to be because of how closely we work with the Center for Jewish Studies, and I've had a great experience with the Dominican School [of Philosophy and Theology] and Sr. Marianne Farina who is so knowledgeable in Islamic Studies," said Sarah Heddon, a second-year M.A. in Islamic Studies student who has connections to Muslim communities on the East Coast of both Kenya and Tanzania. Visiting Scholar Carol Bier has been particularly instrumental in the work of Fateme Montazeri, an Art and Religion doctoral student examining Islamic Romantic Literature and the corresponding miniature paintings.

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A Grand Experiment for Divining Nature

An Interview with Robert J. Russell,
Director of the Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences

Science and Religion have always been thought of as diametric opposites, searching for different truths. One need only think of Galileo and Copernicus. How have these poles been brought closer together?

The statement about science and faith always being in conflict is a myth, as exposed by Ronald Number's book, *Galileo Goes to Jail and Other Myths About Science and Religion*. Many of the founders of modern science were persons of deep religious faith.

Two major works published about 100 years ago¹ propagated the warfare myth to the point of taking over our culture. Of course, we have seen an increase in militant atheism which claims science as supporting it and in reaction some Christians believe this claim and reject science. Fortunately you have the really creative work of organizations like CTNS that promote a responsible dialogue and even the creative mutual interaction between faith and science.

In the past few years, what scientific advances have caught the attention of CTNS?

There has been a lot of work in a variety of fields such as cosmology, evolutionary biology, genetics, anthropology, and neuroscience, that provide rich opportunities for theological reflection. For example, I have explored the possibility of viewing God as acting in the world without breaking

the laws of nature. Quantum mechanics seems to show that nature, at least at the sub-atomic level, is not fully determined by natural processes. And if that is the case, you can think of God acting in and through nature without stopping or disrupting natural causes. That is why I call it NIODA – non-interventionist objective divine action.

How do we think about the tradition of the *Imago Dei*, being created in God's image, in light of the competition between four, five or six dominate hominid species with ours surviving and winning out. In a nutshell, when did the *Imago Dei* come about and why did God choose us and not some other hominid species? Two of my doctoral students are both working on this problem and taking very different views on it.

And then there are recent discoveries in human genetics that influence how we understand the relationship between genetics, behavior, and religious beliefs? For example, how much are our capacities say for altruism or for violence genetically predisposed, that is not determined but at least influenced by our genes, and how much sway do our moral views have over our behavior?

Your new book *Time in Eternity* – will it be your legacy to this field? For all of us non-scientists, what is this book about and how should it impact the way we think?

I hope it will be part of my legacy [smiling]. It's a very technical book but I hope it will have some impact on its theological and as well as its scientific readers. I came to seminary wanting to think about resurrection in light of cosmology, and God's eternity

in relation to the way physics understands time. I hope I've made some progress in probing these issues through writing this book.

What does it mean to have completed the endowment for the Ian G. Barbour Chair?

It is just an outstanding accomplishment, and a fitting tribute to the pioneer of religion and science. It's been a challenge to raise funds in our current economic environment. But we were given a \$400K matching grant from the John Templeton Foundation in 2009 and we completed the match this summer. I think it's amazing that because of the Barbour Chair there will always be a professor teaching science and theology here at the GTU. There are very few chairs like it anywhere. It is particularly important that it is at the interreligious and interdisciplinary environment of the GTU.

How has CTNS benefitted from its relationship to GTU over the years? And vice-versa?

The benefit for CTNS is the unique intellectual, spiritual and cultural environment of the GTU. The GTU is a place where a program like CTNS can flourish because our questions go beyond strictly denominational issues and get at the heart of the science/religion interaction.

How does God relate to the world in the light of science? What are human origins and destiny in light of evolution and big bang cosmology? What does it mean to be a moral and rational agent in the world given the discoveries of neuroscience and

¹ *History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom* (1896) by Andrew Dickson White and *History of the Conflict between Religion and Science* (1874) by John William Draper



Bob Russell with his 1967 Volvo P1800.

the cognitive sciences? Here at CTNS we seek to respond to these questions by drawing upon the wisdom of the various religious traditions represented at the GTU.

But we've also had a history that extends outside the GTU and brings to the GTU a wider international audience. For example, our "Science and Religion Course Program" had world-wide impact in sponsoring over three hundred new courses in science and religion internationally. Our "Science and the Spiritual Quest" program brought one hundred twenty world class scientists of every world religion into the public arena to present their views on doing science as a spiritual journey as illustrated here. For Paul Davies, a Christian, discovering the laws of nature is a way of reading the mind of God. For Medego Shami, a Muslim, the purpose of science is to take ownership of and care of the world as Allah would. In this and many other ways, we've offered the GTU a connection to a world-wide adventure in science and religion.

So the GTU has been the right place and really the only place for a program like CTNS. We have brought dozens of doctoral students to the GTU and the GTU has provided an ideal environment for their research. At the same time we have taken the GTU's message of ecumenical and interreligious dialogue into the international community of scholars and scientists exploring issues in science and religion. I think it has been an immensely rewarding partnership and I am personally very grateful for it.

Learn more about the work and programs of CTNS by visiting www.ctns.org.

Beyond Saving: A Faithful Look at the Economy

Given the continued prominence of economic recovery in public debate, two students and one alumna discussed with us the economy from a faith based perspective.

Consumerism as a World View

Christina Ellsworth, a M.A. student affiliated with the Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University, came to the GTU to study theology and to expand her awareness of alternatives to consumerism. Her senior thesis was on the integration of faith with what we buy as consumers. Ellsworth's response to the question of "How do we bring hope to a situation of utter hopelessness" pushes beyond the individual point of view to see if there are solutions to consumerism possible at a societal level. This perspective sets the stage for involving others in a process of working towards social change. Instead of passively becoming "the puppets of a puppet master," as Ellsworth put it, we must assert our God-given right to transform the status quo of a consumer society into a vision of the Kingdom of God on earth.

Ellsworth offers that a complete social response is missing from many theological critiques of consumerism. She strives to go beyond the individual approach to achieving salvation by seeing things from a different perspective. As we come to know more about the people who work and earn so little to make our goods so cheaply, it is difficult to remain neutral. The more we understand the truths underlying the exploitation and oppression of others inherent in our consumer society, the more we are called as people of faith to take a stand for just and fair trade.

Capitalism and Family Life

Sean Bisson-Donahue is a M.A. student affiliated with Pacific School of Religion planning to graduate in December 2012. He was raised by parents who were active protesters against the Vietnam War and has participated in many corporate boycotts himself. A large part of Bisson-Donahue's religious practice has been based on a critique of the values of capitalism and has inspired his work in early childhood

education. Bisson-Donahue and his wife are caring for toddlers, who "don't generate capital," which also informs his research.

He is exploring how a growing gap between the rich and the poor challenges cultural values of equity and fairness and changes notions of "family life." The conventional family structure is disappearing because parents are having to work long hours to stay competitive or to work multiple jobs to survive. Young children are left with sur-



Christina Ellsworth



Sean Bisson-Donahue

rogate parents at day care centers, losing important opportunities for family intimacy and security along the way. Bisson-Donahue ruefully reflected on his personal experience when he shared that child care providers were trained to see parents as customers. He also endured criticism from friends when his wife chose to remain at home raising their baby for the first three years, indicating how deeply economic priorities are skewed in favor of work over personal relationships.

Bisson-Donahue's faith-based perspective on the economy has been influenced by the work of Richard Horsley at the University of Massachusetts. In Horsley's view, wealth comes from somewhere and is taken from someone else. It is impossible to amass wealth without impoverishing other people.

During today's trying economic times, the Bible's call for economic justice stands out and reminds us of our responsibility to self, to others and to God. Accepting the faith claims of today's candidates for political office has become almost impossible because the claims are based primarily on how people relate to money rather than to each other and to God. Economics has become a metaphysical world operating independently of the needs of individuals and families.

Saving at Wal-Mart

Christy Newton is an ordained minister in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and completed her Ph.D. at the GTU in 2011. Her dissertation, *Saving at Wal-Mart: A Theological Analysis of Relationships in Consumer Culture*, critiques the division of theological beliefs from consumer behaviors and proposes a method to transform the abstract and distorted relationships of consumer culture into more intentional and connected personal relationships using Wal-Mart's material culture as a model.

"Shop for a new way of life at Wal-Mart and save" boasts Wal-Mart's marketing. Wal-Mart has grown into a spiritual destination for today's consumer-based religion which derives its spiritual energy from capitalism. Newton, speaking of her home state of Arkansas, said, "There really is no other place to shop than at Wal-Mart." The choice on where to shop has been eliminated by the growth of the Wal-Mart empire in Arkansas and, increasingly, across the U.S and the world. Wal-Mart, like a Divine agent, directs and maintains the flow of prosperity within a community. The irony, though, is that while Wal-Mart gives to charity, it has largely helped create the need — the *demand* for the charity it *supplies*.

Newton's research outlines how the Wal-Mart way of life comes at a high price to communities. The low cost of Wal-Mart goods has undercut and destroyed numerous local stores and smaller chains unable to compete in a highly biased, neoliberal marketplace which all of us contribute to, whether we are fully conscious of it or not. Not only are cheap goods created by expendable, poorly paid and exploited workers in other countries, but by ordinary people's drive to consume no matter the social cost. This reality places new emphasis and responsibility in the drive to create genuinely "fair trade" relationships. Instead of allowing profits to remain priorities over people, people of faith — especially — must actively exercise our agency in the marketplace. We must strive to challenge and change the overarching neoliberal ideology that entrenches corporate power and privilege and limits who we are as human beings within human communities.

The things we consume at Wal-Mart have an implicit impact on our economic and spiritual livelihoods. Wal-Mart's claim that we are saved by consumption and shopping harms human beings and distorts relationships among people and all aspects of creation.

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Dr. Mahan Mirza, a visiting scholar from Zaytuna College working in Qur'anic Studies and scriptural reasoning, has added another layer of expertise.

CIS students and their work reflect the breadth of Islamic traditions and the myriad of subjects which are often grouped under the umbrella of Islamic Studies. They gravitate toward studies on al-Ghazali, Persian literature, social media, and intrareligious dialogue. Their interests are situated from the U.S. and the West, to East Africa. These students are seasoned travelers and plan to apply their studies to international education, media, public policy, and law, and work with international non-governmental organizations, as well as teaching and research.

An exchange program with the Indonesian Consortium for Religious Studies (ICRS) in Yogyakarta, whose director is GTU Alumnus Bernard Adeney-Risakotta (Ph.D. '82), allows students to study at the partner institution for a semester or longer. This program brought Roma Ulinnuha to CIS to expand his understanding of Islam in the West. Two GTU students have already studied at ICRS.

In addition to Jiwa's leadership, the Center has benefitted from the contributions of doctoral student Som Pourfarzaneh, who also serves as program coordinator and office manager. For Pourfarzaneh, the greatest accomplishment of CIS has been the building of community and a cohort that did not exist before 2007. "It adds that little bit of camaraderie required for the Center to thrive and to be more than just a library or a resource center."

The world desperately needs peace to descend on conflict-ridden areas whether domestic or abroad. The growth of CIS from 2007 to 2012, which will continue through increased support for faculty, visiting scholars, and students, makes it clear that CIS leads the way in educating and preparing its students to serve as knowledgeable scholars and leaders, and courageous ambassadors of peace and religious understanding at a most critical time for humanity.





Transcending Word and Deed: Religious Art

Though much of our religious traditions are recorded and communicated through text or action, art has been a long-standing avenue for expression and instruction of things concerning the soul.

The Flora Lamson Hewlett Library is hosting a special exhibit in honor of the 50th Anniversary of the GTU. *Imaging Religion*, which opens October 1 and runs through January 31, 2013, will feature visual and textual expressions characterizing beliefs from various religious traditions. Included in the display are Orthodox icons; Catholic paintings, prints, and vestments; Protestant prints; Islamic and Buddhist calligraphy; Jewish scrolls; and printed material, statues and objects from these and other traditions.

Works by contemporary artists Haji Noor Deen, Mi Guang Jiang, Ron Nakasone, He Qi, Alfonso Castillo, Corita Kent, Angelica Vasquez Cruz, and Virginia and Louis Naranjo are part of the exhibition.

The GTU has a rich history of actively embracing artistic expressions of the divine. Doug Adams, Professor of Christianity and the Arts at Pacific School of Religion (PSR), was a pioneering scholar in the field. Believing in the power and ambiguity of art to help formulate healthy, inclusive religious communities, Adams founded the Center for the Arts, Religion and Education (CARE) 25 years ago as an affiliate of the GTU. Today, CARE supplements the academics offerings of the consortium by offering classes and lectures, in addition to serving as a resource to the community and congregations. CARE's newest centerpiece is the Doug Adams Gallery, a modern art space in the Badè Museum of Biblical Archeology at PSR.

Currently, CARE is seeking submissions for a juried show and auction in conjunction with the GTU's 50th Anniversary Gala. Original artwork for consideration may be of a variety of mediums but must represent interfaith spirituality reflective of the mission and scope of the GTU. For more submission information, visit <http://bit.ly/S3xw14>.

Artwork on page: Early 16th century Jain parchment from Kalpasutra, Western India, depicting Arishtanemi riding to the bridal pavilion and deciding to leave the world after seeing the lambs to be slaughtered for his wedding feast.



Rookie Card Beyond Value

Josefina J. Card, Ph.D., who prefers to go by J.J., first learned of the GTU from her friend, Judy Larsen who serves on the Board of Trustees as the representative for the Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary. Larsen approached Card to see if she would accept a nomination to the GTU Board of Trustees. Moved by the interfaith and multireligious mission of the GTU, Card agreed. In her first year as a Trustee, she has seen in action her belief that there are many roads to God, and that the GTU clearly helps articulate those roads.

In her professional life, Card is Founder and President of Sociometrics Corporation. She is an expert at translating behavioral and social health research findings into products and services for use by researchers and practitioners alike. Her fields of expertise are HIV/AIDS and teen pregnancy prevention. She is also an expert at evaluation research, training, and strategic plan development.

She is excited about the impact the GTU has in a complex, globalized culture. While fully aware of the challenges, she is reassured by the passion and intelligence she has seen on the Board. "I see my role as a Board member to foster sustainability, help all member constituents, and implement best practices all while highlighting what is unique about the GTU. I am glad to provide my time, talent, and treasure to further its mission."

Announcing Our Alum of the Year

Rev. Kristin Johnston Largen (Ph.D. '02), Associate Professor of Systematic Theology, Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg (PA), has been selected at the GTU's Alumna of the Year for 2012 and will be honored during the Alumni Reception at AAR/SBL (see back cover for details). Largen was selected in recognition of her pioneering work in interreligious dialogue and comparative theology. In announcing the selection, Dean Arthur Holder said, "As we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the GTU, it is appropriate to honor a graduate whose scholarship is firmly rooted in her own Lutheran tradition while reaching out to make connections with people of other faiths, especially Buddhists and Hindus."

She received a 2011-2012 Lilly Theological Research Grant for *Seeking God among Our Neighbors: Toward an Interfaith Systematic Theology*. As part of her research, Largen traveled to Israel, Turkey, India, and Japan, which she chronicled on her blog: happy.lutheran.blogspot.com.



Muslims and the Excluded Middle

At a September 17 event, GTU President James Donahue and CIS Director Munir Jiwa spoke against the violence perpetuated in Libya and Egypt, actions which spawned protests around the world, following the circulation of a 14-minute movie trailer maligning the Prophet Muhammad. They addressed a full-house alongside of Hatem Bazian, UC Berkeley and Zaytuna College; Zaid Shakir, Zaytuna College; and Hamza Yusuf Hanson, Zaytuna College. Hanson is also a doctoral student at the GTU.

The event, "Between Militarism and Extremism: The Excluded Middle," was organized by Zaytuna College and co-sponsored by GTU's Center for Islamic Studies and UC Berkeley. In addition to the capacity crowd inside of Zaytuna's new building located on Holy Hill (2401 Le Conte Avenue), almost 5,000 watched the panel live through streaming video. Watch the recorded panel: <http://bit.ly/US0bef>.

Researching Religion and End-of-Life Decision Making

GTU received a \$5,000 grant to conduct a research survey of religious thought related to end-of-life healthcare and, specifically, theological perspectives on withholding nutrients for terminally ill patients. The donor worked in retirement communities and faced these decisions on a daily basis. Lisa Fullam, Assistant Professor of Moral Theology at the Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University directed the project and will make it available to the public in the Spring. Look for more information in the next issue of *Currents*.

Our 50 Year Journey

Ecumenical and interreligious cooperation isn't easy now and it wasn't easy 50 years ago when visionaries sought to offer a cooperative Th.D. Participants came with different ideas of how to execute the plan. Eventually, the GTU emerged, doubling in size through the addition of schools in only a few years time. Opportunities grew exponentially through the centers and relationships with affiliates.

Explore more of the GTU story by visiting www.gtu.edu/50.



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Fall 2012 Currents Newsletter

GTU

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Imaging Religion

An Exhibition in Honor of the 50th Anniversary of the GTU
October 1—January 31, 2013 Flora Lamson Hewlett Library, 2400 Ridge Road, Berkeley

Religion and the Upcoming Presidential Election

An exploration the Christian, Mormon, Muslim and Jewish perspectives on the upcoming election and the role of religion in American politics. Speakers: **JAMES DONAHUE, DANIEL ITZKOVITZ, ZAHRA BILLOO, ROBERT REES, AND MARIANNE FARINA, C.S.C.**
Registration required - register online <http://bit.ly/Rj4HB4>.
October 18, 7:00 PM Chapel of the Great Commission*

Distinguished Faculty Lecture

Black Religion in the Atlantic World During the Age of Revolution: Excavating the 'Sublime' by **JAMES NOEL**, San Francisco Theological Seminary. Respondent: **NAOMI SEIDMAN**, Center for Jewish Studies.
Reception to follow in the Badè Museum.
November 8, 7:00 pm Chapel of the Great Commission*

Alumni Reception at AAR/SBL

Join us as we honor our 2012 Alumna of the Year **KRISTIN JOHNSTON LARGEN** (Ph.D. '02). RSVP by Nov. 9 to alumni@gtu.edu, 510/649-2422. Not open to the public.
November 17, 8:00 pm Monroe Room, Palmer House Hilton Hotel, 17 East Monroe Street, Chicago

Center for Islamic Studies 5th Anniversary Celebration

This festive occasion will highlight the accomplishments over the past five years, especially those of the students.
December 5 Location TBD

Representations of Jews and Muslims in the Media

Day of Learning sponsored by the Center for Islamic Studies and Center for Jewish Studies.
February, 2013 Date and Location TBD

50th Anniversary Gala

A Celebration in Honor of the 50th Anniversary of the GTU, including dinner, art auction, entertainment. Tickets \$250, on sale soon.
February 28, 2013 St. Regis San Francisco, 125 Third Street, San Francisco

*Chapel of the Great Commission, Pacific School of Religion, 1798 Scenic Avenue, Berkeley

All events are free and open to the public, unless noted.
Visit www.gtu.edu/events for more information.