

GTU currents

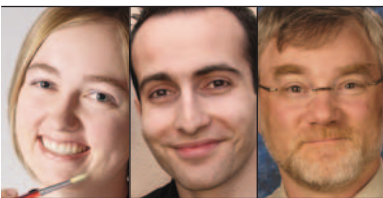
Where religion meets the world

NEWS OF THE GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL UNION

FALL 2008

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“
*These women
are co-creators
with God.*
”

Rebecca Berru Davis
Ph.D. Student

Student Stories

Stitching Hope and Beauty in Pamplona Alta

A stack of colorful *cuadros* — Spanish for “pictures” — sits on Rebecca Berru Davis’ sofa. They are hand-appliquéd and embroidered textile scenes created by a cooperative of women artists in Pamplona Alta, a shantytown outside Lima, Peru. Davis, a third-year Graduate Theological Union doctoral student in the area of Art and Religion, has just returned from her third trip to Pamplona Alta since 2006.

For these *cuadros*, Davis asked the women to sew scenes that expressed their hopes and dreams. One artist sewed pictures of animals — llamas, giraffes, and others — grazing in a lush *botanica* or garden paradise. Another woman sewed a street in her home village, stitching on a red car she could someday rent out to support her retirement. One *cuadro*, a commissioned piece, displays dozens of figures in colorful skirts dancing to celebrate the Feast of the Virgin of Candelaria — trees and tiny flowers blooming in riotous color across the fabric in marked contrast to the harsh, grey, garbage-strewn slum where the women of the collective live.

“All my life I’ve been interested in putting art, faith, and justice together,” says Davis, a former art teacher and museum curator from Billings, Montana.

In what she calls an “attempt to link these three ideas,” she earned master’s degrees in education, religious studies, and art history. Then she found the GTU program in Art and Religion.

“With this project I’m using ethnography as a methodology while linking precepts of liberation theology,” Davis says. “Art, creativity, and beauty for me are connected to faith, poverty, politics, and the life of the women of Pamplona Alta.”

Davis is interested in the art of ordinary people. The Peruvian women carefully unravel threads,

continued on page 5



Rebecca Berru Davis

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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Please send comments and suggestions, alum updates, or address changes to jbrown@gtu.edu.

GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL UNION

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MEMBER SCHOOLS

American Baptist Seminary of the West
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Pacific School of Religion
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*Patriarch Athenagoras Orthodox Institute
Richard S. Dinner Center for Jewish Studies
*School of Applied Theology
Women's Studies in Religion
*GTU Affiliates

Currents is printed on recycled and recyclable paper using soy inks.

GTU in the Community

Bringing GTU, At-Risk Youth Together through Art

Some students, immersed in theory, history, and doctrine, long for the practical. Abigail “Abby” King Kaiser found her way out of the ivory tower last summer by working with Youth Spirit Artworks (YSA) — an interfaith non-profit organization for East Bay homeless and at-risk youth.

During a project with YSA for a class on “liberation art,” King Kaiser, a Pacific School of Religion M.Div. student concentrating in Art and Religion, found herself watching teenagers plan colorful painted murals on street side benches along Berkeley’s litter-strewn Adeline Street. What were they doing? She learned that YSA’s mission is to empower and transform the lives of at-risk youth, and in so doing build community and organize for social change through commercial art job training and communicating helpful information through public art. This year’s project theme is healthy living. The goal of painted messages on public benches such as “Drink H2O” and “Violence is not the key,” is promoting health for body, mind, and community.

YSA’s founder and Executive Director Sally Hindman, modeled YSA after the successful youth commercial arts program in New Orleans, YAYA, which received international recognition for the quality of art created by its youth. Hindman trained in this work with the late Doug Adams, former director of GTU’s Center for the Arts, Religion, and Education (CARE). As a CARE faculty member, she teaches *Saints and Prophets: Liberation Art*.

King Kaiser found YSA’s mission and its programs compelling. She met a youth who told her she had never worked at art before and that in the process she had changed from being very shy to discovering her artistic gifts and sharing them.

While YSA strives to transform youths, King Kaiser, whose own mission is to be a pastor and artist for a congregation, found that just being present at YSA transformed her. “We learn a



photo by Hilary Marckx

Abby King Kaiser



Sally Hindman with YSA artists

lot in graduate school about ministry,” she says. “But in large part, I believe so much of ministry is about presence. Getting involved in a ministry or social organization puts theory to practice.”

And get involved she did. Last summer King Kaiser took on a project with CARE in which she explored the mutual benefits to students, the GTU, and YSA in a

partnership between CARE and YSA. What she proposes in a concept paper is that students in Art and Religion can get valuable practical experience in working with YSA as well as helping YSA staff and youth. “We learn so much, and we have the opportunity to give back. The gift of education is to be shared with others,” she says.

She’s referring not only to a partnership between CARE and YSA, but to potential partnerships between CARE and other organizations. The concept can extend to partnerships between other GTU areas and community organizations. The benefit to GTU? As the place where religion meets the world, these partnerships could fit well with GTU’s vision — preparing students to become leaders nurturing understanding, justice, and peace by pursuing new models for interreligious collaboration in teaching, research, ministry, and service.

King Kaiser ends her concept paper by paraphrasing the parable of the sower. She encourages CARE, YSA, and other community organizations to be, as partnerships, “fertile soil, free of obstacles and ready for cultivation.”

GTU’s Jesuit School Contributes to Launch of New Oakland Cathedral

A thousand years ago, the cathedral was the heart around which all the life of a medieval town revolved. Today the Cathedral of Christ the Light on the shore of Oakland’s Lake Merritt — the first cathedral built in the twenty-first century — is expected to serve more than 600,000 Catholics as “a place of welcome and inclusivity that embraces the diversity of faiths, peoples and cultures,” according to *The Catholic Voice*. As part of its outreach, the cathedral grounds will feature a small “healing garden” for survivors of clergy sexual abuse.

Tom Scirghi, Associate Professor of Liturgy at the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley (JSTB) — a GTU member school — is serving on a liturgy committee planning public worship events at the Cathedral including Lent, Easter, and Christmas observances. “Our committee is working with an awareness of the many constituencies who will celebrate there,” Scirghi says. Jeanette Whitaker, a JSTB student and published composer of church music, who has been involved in auditioning and assembling a choir for the cathedral’s Sept. 25 dedication ceremony, describes the sanctuary’s acoustics, in a space shaped by 768 Douglas fir louvers and the 26 curved fir ribs as “absolutely beautiful.”

New Students

Martial Arts, Spirituality, Interfaith Vision: All of a Piece for New Student

Walk up to a group of incoming Graduate Theological Union students and ask why they chose to study at the GTU. They're bound to tell you one of the chief reasons is the opportunity to study in an interreligious setting and to encounter, come to understand, and learn from the "other." Talk with them a bit and you'll undoubtedly discover that they already bring rich and diverse backgrounds to the GTU. And that they have plans to use their ripening knowledge and practical skills to make a difference in the world.

All are true of Som Pourfarzaneh, who began his doctoral studies and a work-study job this fall with Munir Jiwa, Assistant Professor of Islamic Studies and director of the Center for Islamic Studies. Pourfarzaneh's Ph.D. focus is Muslim Americans' response to the war on terror and religious profiling.

Pourfarzaneh brings to the GTU a Master of Arts in Religious Leadership for Social Change from the GTU's Starr King School for the Ministry, where he focused on

"Our society upholds individualism, but I think we've carried it to the point of exclusion, and we see people as more different than is really true."

Japanese martial arts in the context of spirituality and as a potential medium for social justice. He also brings practical experience in martial arts, which he sees as a "physical embodiment of spirituality." Last year, he opened a martial arts school in San Francisco, where he will continue to teach in the evenings. His overarching goal is to open an interfaith spiritual community center in the Bay Area that is inclusive of many faith and spiritual traditions and that could offer Jewish, Muslim, and Christian services as well as yoga classes and Zen practice sessions — "a place with a wonderful mix of people, ideas, and faith traditions," he says.



Som Pourfarzaneh

"Our society upholds individualism, but I think we've carried it to the point of exclusion, and we see people as more different than is really true. Something I'm learning is we have to express who we are and what our goals are so that others can help us with our goals. Every connection I make is important, a step toward a goal."

Pourfarzaneh, whose parents are from Iran and who was raised Muslim, says he connects deeply with this religion. "Islamic practice feels like home, although I have parts of my spiritual practice that are from other religions, and when I go to another religious faith center, I feel the same basic force," he says.

Dr. Jiwa, who will be supervising Pourfarzaneh's doctoral work this year, says "Som is bringing Muslim sacred texts to life by working in the community and within an interfaith context. We're delighted to have him."

The GTU welcomes Som Pourfarzaneh — a student who does the GTU proud in the aspirations, experience, and vision he brings to his studies and to the world.

Stitching Hope and Beauty...

continued from page 1

cut up old clothing, and sew them into new pieces, expressions of culture and beauty. There are stories in the salvaged scraps of cloth — of strikes, violence in the pueblos, or marches for peace. There often is a political thread — many of the older women and their families fled the countryside in the 1970s and 1980s, caught between right-wing government forces fighting left-wing Shining Path guerillas. And the women first stitched *cuadros* after seeing Chilean versions honoring those who disappeared in the 1970s under the Pinochet regime.

Davis has organized several exhibits called “Picturing Paradise,” showcasing the *cuadros* of Pamplona Alta. They’ve hung in the Princeton Theological Seminary’s Erman Gallery, at the University of St. Thomas in Minnesota, the Basilica of Saint Mary in Minneapolis, and at Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church in Pennsylvania. In spring 2009, they’ll be on view at the Dominican School of Philosophy & Theology, a GTU member school.

“Showing the work educates people about the lives of these women and what we hold in common with them,

and promotes sales of the pieces, a significant source of income for the cooperative,” Davis says.

Thanks to her GTU courses, Davis balances a commitment to activism with the idea of justice in her relationship with these Third World women. On her most recent trip to Pamplona Alta, she brought her laptop to show the collective the presentation she gives in First World countries, including a June 2008 international conference on inclusive museums held in the Netherlands. She also gave the women disposable cameras and asked them to photograph images they thought were important to include in her presentations.

“I’m looking for God and finding God right here in Pamplona Alta,” Davis says. “These women highlight the key aspects of what ‘good work’ is all about — community, faith, simplicity, and the ability to create beauty in a powerful way. They are co-creators with God.”

To learn more about Pamplona Alta and purchase *cuadros*, visit www.convida.org.





Donor support of student scholarships helps GTU students meet their goals and meet the world.

Supporting Students through Scholarships

Yoshiko Kakudo Contributes to Homiletics Scholarships

Yoshiko (Yoshi) Kakudo, artist and retired curator of Japanese Art at the San Francisco Asian Art Museum, gifted the GTU \$10,000 for the Father Michael Monshau Scholarship in Homiletics.

Ms. Kakudo is a friend of Father Monshau, a former member of the GTU Core Doctoral Faculty and professor of Homiletics at the Dominican School of Philosophy & Theology. She was curator at the San Francisco Asian Art Museum for more than 30 years, retiring in 1994.

Marge Webb Supports Students in Church Administration

When Margaret Webb chose to establish a scholarship in memory of her cousin and longtime mentor Father Francis L. Markey, she naturally looked to the Graduate Theological Union. “It was a place bubbling with fresh thinking and ideas,” she says. “Father relished freshness of thought, and the GTU had developed a new language to discuss the Catholic Church in breadth and depth. It was a good fit.”

Ms. Webb began working with Father Markey in the mid-1960’s developing one of the first post-Vatican II parishes — Resurrection Parish in Aptos, California. “He was well known as a visionary. He’d been educated in journalism and philosophy, and he believed in challenging the Church hierarchy from within,” she says. Father Markey advocated that women have an equal voice at all levels of Church administration — in parishes, dioceses, and education. As Father Markey’s estate executor, Ms. Webb created a scholarship at the GTU in 2001 for women leaders in the Catholic Church. She contributed more than \$200,000 to provide scholarships for three doctoral students. Her hope is that these women might use their degrees in church administration.

One woman already realizing Ms. Webb’s hope is Patricia Vanni, this year’s Markey Scholarship recipient. She brings her business administration background to the study of effective parish management, and hopes to help parishes develop more efficient business and personnel practices.

*The GTU...
“was a place
bubbling with
fresh thinking
and ideas.”*

Marge Webb

Center for Jewish Studies Turns 40

Koret and Taube Foundations Give \$900,000



DAVID WINSTON
first CJS director and faculty member



CJS FACULTY
from left: Deena Aranoff, Naomi Seidman, Holger M. Zellentin

Forty years ago the Richard S. Dinner Center for Jewish Studies (CJS) opened its doors to students of the Graduate Theological Union. The center provided a place where Christian and Jewish scholars, faculty, and students could meet, learn, and work together.

Today, CJS offers a Ph.D., M.A., and Certificate program, with courses in ancient, rabbinic, medieval, and modern Jewish studies and literature. Combining traditional text study with a dedication to inter-religious conversation, the center immerses its students — Jewish and non-Jewish — in a distinctively Jewish context. Deena Aranoff, assistant professor of Medieval Jewish Studies and acting director of the Center, says, “CJS gives scholars an academic experience unlike any other. Here they learn about Judaism using the same methods used by Jewish scholars for centuries.” CJS also is a vital center for Jewish life in the Bay Area, hosting scholarly lectures, films, and conferences as well as

Jewish holiday programs that are open to the public.

Recognizing its unique offerings, local foundations have lent their support to CJS. In recent years, thanks to grants from the Taube Foundation for Jewish Life and Culture, CJS introduced its annual Beit Midrash — a multi-week intensive group text-study program for members of the community — as well as a continuing education project for educators from local

Jewish schools. Grants from the Koret Foundation provided scholarship support for students in the Center’s M.A. program.

Now thanks to a \$600,000 grant from the Koret Foundation and a \$300,000 grant from the Taube Foundation, the Center for Jewish Studies will continue to offer robust academic and community programs. Happy Birthday to CJS, and may it have many happy returns.

GTU welcomes Arthur Holder back to his job as Dean and Vice President for Academic Affairs and John Dillenberger Professor of Christian Spirituality. Holder returns from sabbatical, during which he worked on editing *Christian Spirituality: The Classics*. The volume will be published by Routledge in fall 2009.

“I am grateful to the GTU for a sabbatical year, and especially to Judith Berling for serving so ably as Acting Dean. It is good to be back at the most exciting place in the world for theological and religious studies!”



Arthur Holder



Working and Giving with Heart

Howard Simon, attorney and corporate executive, has managed to blend two seemingly disparate career tracks into one path, taking the seeds of ethics, compassion, and collaboration he picked up at the Graduate Theological Union and planting them in California's biotechnology industry.

In 1985, Simon simultaneously earned an M.A. in Jewish Studies at the GTU and a law degree at UC Berkeley's Boalt Hall. He was interested in ethics and how religious codes of moral conduct become legal mandates.



Howard Simon

"My GTU experience made me a more effective listener, a better negotiator, and a useful mediator of disputes."

"I looked at seminary as an antidote to law school," he says, "where legal reasoning was considered a higher order of thought. At the GTU, I realized legal reasoning wasn't a higher order, but just another set of intellectual tools. The tools one gets at the GTU are not only worthwhile, but important for structuring one's world and consciousness."

Simon discovered the worth of his GTU education when he started his first job at a prestigious Chicago law firm.

"That first day," he says, "I found myself working on litigation to help battered women get restraining orders and at the same time defending a company so they might walk away from some of the consequences of a toxic chemical spill."

His conscience in turmoil, Simon told his new boss he couldn't "put his values on a shelf." His boss offered a deal: He wouldn't ask Simon to violate legal ethics, and if he worked six months on the toxic spill case and still felt the same, he would be reassigned. Simon accepted and left the case after six months.

"Had I solely gone to law school," says Simon, "I wouldn't have brought that sensibility to my profession or earned the respect of my boss, a highly esteemed litigator."

At the GTU Simon also learned about mediating the deeply held beliefs of others. He recalls studying Hebrew and New Testament texts in a room full of Jews, Jesuits, and Evangelicals — some who accepted a literal interpretation, others an historical one.

“The matrix of these beliefs formed an extraordinarily complex web, says Simon. “Absorbing the welter of traditions and beliefs in that room and trying to learn from each person what informed his or her response was a great experience. That classroom reflects our world, where peace and prosperity depend on understanding and working with, not against, the often unspoken beliefs of other people. My GTU experience made me a more effective listener, a better negotiator, and a useful mediator of disputes.”

Simon’s GTU experience also spurred his more than 20-year commitment to corporate social responsibility. Wherever he has worked, Simon has started corporate philanthropy programs. At Maxygen, a biotechnology company based in Redwood City, California, he organized a team of employee volunteers to plant shade trees in poor neighborhoods and tutor kids at a middle school the company “adopted,” bringing in top scientists to help students understand the basics of biology. And he initiated a program that allowed employees to take four paid days a year to work for a community organization.

At InterMune, a biotechnology company where Simon now serves as senior vice president of Human Resources and Corporate Services, he has led participation in Bike for Breath, a fundraising bicycle ride that involves about half of InterMune’s 150 employees.

“We ask our key partners, such as law firms and suppliers, to join in the effort,” says Simon, who also shares his knowledge of corporate giving at presentations he gives to Silicon Valley business leaders. In this way he says he can help corporate philanthropy cast a wider net, or scatter the seeds he took from the GTU further afield.

Alumna Mary E. Hunt Received the Katzenstein Award for “reliable sense of humor” among other attributes. The Harvard Divinity School Alumni/ae Association honored Dr. Hunt with the 2008 Rabbi Martin Katzenstein Award. Hunt is the co-founder and co-director of the Women’s Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual (WATER) in Silver Spring, Maryland. She is a feminist theologian and a Catholic active in the women-church movement. She earned her Ph.D. from the GTU.

The Katzenstein Award recognizes a Harvard Divinity School graduate who demonstrates “a passionate and helpful interest in the lives of other people, an informed and realistic faithfulness, an embodiment of the idea that love is not so much a way of feeling as a way of acting, and a reliable sense of humor.”

The Katzenstein Award recognizes Hunt for her work on women’s issues and human rights in Argentina and for her work as author, lecturer, and advisor to several organizations. Her book *Fierce Tenderness: A Feminist Theology of Friendship*, earned the 1990 Crossroad Women’s Studies Prize. Her articles have appeared in the *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, *The Witness*, and *Open Hands*. She advises the Women’s Ordination Conference and serves on the advisory boards of the Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Religious Archives Network, the Society for Christian Ethics, and the American Academy of Religion.

GTU graduates meet the world, teaching Religious Studies, Judaism, Homiletics

WHITNEY BAUMAN, Systematic & Philosophical Theology: Assistant Professor of Religious Studies, Florida International University, Miami, FL

JULIA WATTS BELSER, Joint Doctoral Degree in Jewish Studies: Assistant Professor of Judaism, Missouri State University, Springfield, MO

DEBRA MUMFORD, Homiletics: Frank H. Caldwell Assistant Professor of Homiletics, Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY

Alumna Jenny Plane-Te Paa Makes *London Daily Telegraph's* 'Power List'



Dr. Te Paa, Principal of Te Rau Kahikatea at the College of St. John the Evangelist in Auckland, New Zealand, was named 20th among the *London Daily Telegraph's* 50 most influential Anglicans. She

is the first and only Maori woman with a Ph.D. in Theology, which she earned at the GTU in 2001.

"When I realized that people regarded this list as indicating real influence within the global Communion, that is when I felt a profound sense of humility," Te Paa says.

The *Telegraph* called her "an influential voice in Anglican liberal circles," for her outspokenness in condemning homophobia, and her claim that the obsession of the church with trying to determine who should be allowed

to remain within its fold distracted it from the suffering in the world.

Te Paa has written widely on identity politics — particularly on race and ethnicity within theological education. She holds several positions in international organizations including the Anglican Peace and Justice Network, the Inter-Anglican Theological Doctrinal Commission, and the Commission on Theological Education for the Anglican Communion established in 2003 by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Note: 2nd on the *Telegraph's* 50 most influential Anglicans list was **KATHARINE JEFFERTS SCHORI**, Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church of the U.S., who earned an M.Div. and D.D. from GTU's member school Church Divinity School of the Pacific.

To learn what more of our graduates are doing, visit www.gtualumni.net/alumjobs.

Faculty News

A new book by GTU Emerita Professor of Historical Theology

MARGARET R. MILES

*Bodies in Society:
Essays on Christianity
in Contemporary Culture*
Cascade Books, 2008
Miles finds that Christianity,
critically appropriated, provides
ideas and methods for thinking
concretely about life in North
American society.

**TED PETERS, professor of
Systematic Theology at the
GTU and Pacific Lutheran
Theological Seminary, was
named the Martin E. Marty
Professor of Religion and the
Academy** at St. Olaf College in
Northfield, Minnesota. Martin
Marty is a renowned observer and
historiographer of 19th and 20th
century American Religion.

Peters — ethicist, author, and
scholar focusing on the interplay
between theology and science —
will teach, sponsor colloquia and
dialogues with faculty and students,
and lead a faculty seminar at St. Olaf
during the 2009 calendar year.

Peters is the author, co-author, or
editor of more than a dozen books,
including *The Stem Cell Debate*;
and *Can You Believe in God and
Evolution?: A Guide for the
Perplexed*. He is the editor of
Dialog: A Journal of Theology, and
co-editor of *Theology and Science*,
the scholarly journal of the Center
for Theology and the Natural
Sciences in Berkeley.

For more news about GTU alumni
and faculty, visit
www.gtu.edu/news-events.

Introducing Q & A with Jim Donahue

Caring for Our Planet

Top scientists have warned that global warming is caused by human activity and is a growing threat to the environment and to society.

Are we ethically bound to be good stewards of the planet?

To pose a question
about ethics to
President Donahue,
email *Currents* Editor

Joanne Brown:

jbrown@gtu.edu

or fax: 510-649-1417

or write:

Graduate Theological Union
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Berkeley, CA 94709

What we believe about the world, its origins, human nature, persons, societies, our future and destiny, all shape our understanding of what it means to be responsible stewards of our environment. The short answer to the question is yes, we do have a moral responsibility to be stewards of the earth. Theologically and ethically, delineating the meaning and extent of our stewardship will revolve around our construals (call them our “theologies”) of many ideas, but minimally the following:

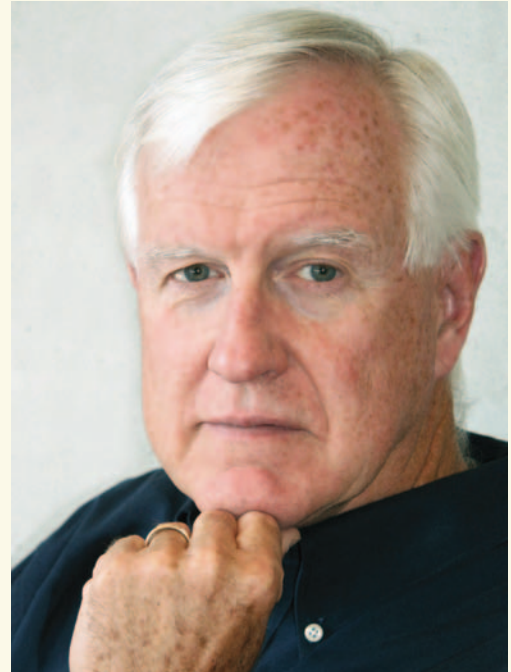
Creation and Nature: How do we understand what it means to be created by God and how is the natural order, including all creatures and the environment, imbued with worth, dignity, and value by virtue of this creation? This will shape how we determine the choices and policies we must enact to be responsible stewards of the earth.

Ownership/Stewardship/Property: Who owns what and under what terms, limits, constraints, and possibilities? The degree to which we perceive our own limits and possibilities is key to understanding our moral choices.

Relationships: What is the nature of our relationships to one another, the natural world, all species and creatures, and the larger cosmos? Answering these questions will help guide us in seeing what our responsibilities to the earth entail.

Generativity: How are we responsible for those who come after us? It’s easy for each generation to become locked into a world view consisting only of the immediate present. It is important to broaden our view, to consider what we owe to future generations.

How we decide these questions, and especially how we make the critical trade offs, sacrifices, and compromises in order to pass on a world that is not only sustainable but healthy, is a core issue for any theology.



GTU President and Professor of Ethics
James A. Donahue

GTU

calendar

GTU Alumni Reception ~ American Academy of Religion

Saturday November 1

8:30 - 10:00 pm,
Palmer House Hilton
Salon 5 and 6, Chicago

GTU will honor

TERRENCE TILLEY, Ph.D.
'76 as **2008 Alum of the Year**.
Tilley's new book, *The Disciples'
Jesus: Christology as Reconciling
Practice* approaches the historic
Jesus through disciples' imaginative
emulation of his practices as a way

into christology from practical
theology.

Distinguished Faculty Lecture Tuesday November 11

7:00 pm, Pacific School of Religion
Chapel of the Great Commission,
1798 Scenic, at Le Conte, Berkeley
*Learning to Speak a New
Tongue: Imagining a Way that
Holds People Together*

FUMITAKA MATSUOKA,
Robert Gordon Sproul Professor of
Theology & Executive Director,
Institute for Leadership Development

& the Study of Pacific and Asian
North American Religion (PANA
Institute), Pacific School of Religion
Respondent: **JUDITH BERLING**,
Professor of Chinese and
Comparative Religions,
Graduate Theological Union

GTU Alumni Reception ~ Society of Biblical Literature Saturday November 22

8:30 pm to 10:00 pm
Sheraton Boston Hotel
39 Dalton St., Room Fairfax A,
Boston

Fall 2008 Currents Newsletter

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