



GTU currents

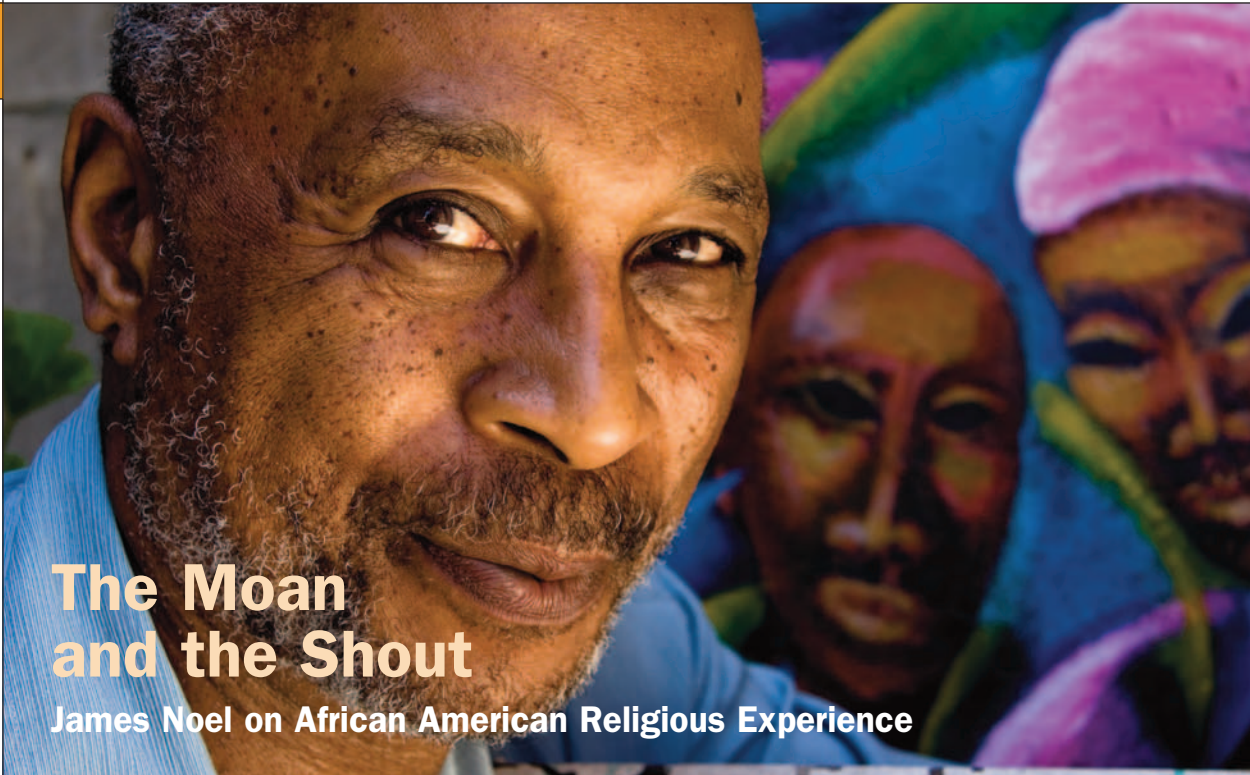
Where religion meets the world

NEWS OF THE GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL UNION

FALL 2009

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The Moan and the Shout

James Noel on African American Religious Experience

Background: "Continuity," painted by James Noel

Take a black sermon, print it in a book, then read it, and you have no idea what it means because it has been abstracted from the living worship of the black church, says the Rev. Dr. James Noel, (Ph.D. '99), Farlough Professor of African American Christianity at the San Francisco Theological Seminary. The sermon's meaning, he says, is determined by the hymns sung, the testimonials, the prayers said before and after the sermon's delivery, as well as what went on that week for parishioners.

"My fascination is with religious experience and its various modes of expression," he says, "especially African American religious experience, which is different than that of Europeans or white Americans. The disciplines generated by both the Protestant Reformation and the Enlightenment aren't adequate for elucidating black religion, and this has implications for theological education."

Noel's holistic view of African American religious experience and expression is reflected in his own life. This GTU graduate studies and teaches the history of African American Christianity, black religion in Africa and the Americas, and African American social, cultural, and intellectual history. He's also a painter; a seventh degree black belt in Moo Duk Kwan, a traditional form of Tae Kwon Do; a playwright; and an author who recently published *Black Religion and the Imagination of Matter in the Atlantic World* (Palgrave/Macmillan: June 2009), which takes an

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“

*Coltrane
and the church
— it's the same
thing.*

”

JAMES NOEL
San Francisco Theological
Seminary faculty

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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Contributor and Photography: Cheryl Bowlan

Designer: Barbara Nishi Graphic Design

We welcome your feedback.

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

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

Students

Carmen Lansdowne: A Prophetic Voice on Social Justice

The Rev. Carmen Lansdowne is also called Kwisa'lakw by one of the aboriginal peoples of Canada's central northwest coast. The name, given her by tribal elders at a ceremonial potlatch, means "woman who travels far," and acknowledges the globetrotting work of this 34-year-old doctoral student in Interdisciplinary Studies. Lansdowne serves on the World Council of Churches (WCC) executive committee, representing 560 million Christians in 110 countries and territories.

At the GTU, Lansdowne is preparing for a career teaching theology at a seminary, focusing her study on indigenous epistemologies, or ways of knowing, and Christian missiology. Ordained by the United Church of Canada, a denomination shaped by Methodism, Presbyterianism, and Congregationalism, she graduated in 2007 from the Vancouver School of Theology (VST) with a Master of Divinity.

Lansdowne was called back to the church of her childhood and to ministry in her early 20s. At the time she was studying to become a chartered accountant — a job she held a few years before starting VST — and serving an internship leading two rural congregations on the border of Alberta and Saskatchewan. She continues her work at VST on a Master of Theology, which she hopes to complete in 2010 as she pursues her doctorate in Berkeley.

"I came to the GTU," Lansdowne says, "because I wanted to study mission and explore an indigenous perspective in a context that represented the mainline Protestant tradition I came from. The GTU's Interdisciplinary Studies program was a perfect fit for me."

Churches, she says, can do a lot to regain their prophetic voice about social justice in the world. "My hometown, Alert Bay, B.C.," Lansdowne says, "is experiencing a decline in coastal fisheries. The aboriginal people are reaching out to the church, which asks, 'What has this got to do with us?' If the dominant society of Canada, including my denomination, wants to be in solidarity with indigenous communities, then restitution of culture, speaking out about economic impoverishment, and supporting successful ventures for aboriginals is what needs to happen."



“Churches can do a lot to regain their prophetic voice about social justice in the world.”

Lansdowne brings this view to her work for the World Council of Churches, which, in the past, helped lead the fight against South African apartheid, a legal system that, she notes, was modeled on Canada's own Indian Act. She has visited the Occupied Palestinian Territories in her role as co-moderator of the Palestine-Israel Ecumenical Forum, a WCC program formed to coordinate global peace advocacy in WCC-member churches, and she participates in WCC's Indigenous Peoples Program. In 2006 she took part in the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, and last year she traveled to the Philippines to start work on indigenous perspectives of ecclesiology (theologies of Christian self-understanding).

“The world is a smaller place than people imagine,” Lansdowne says. “If you think the world is big, it's easy to feel disconnected from what's going in a mining community in the Philippines or in rural Armenia. Participating in God's mission in the world is at the heart of my Christian faith.”

Hear Carmen Lansdowne recite poetry to tribal music: www.gtu.edu/currents



Lansdowne poses in Oakland by a totem pole carved by her uncle, Ted Wilson.



Finding Slavery in Your Own Back Yard and deploying solutions to abolish it



“... you transform whatever your gifts are to ... free another person.”

David Batstone’s business card reads: “I am not for sale.

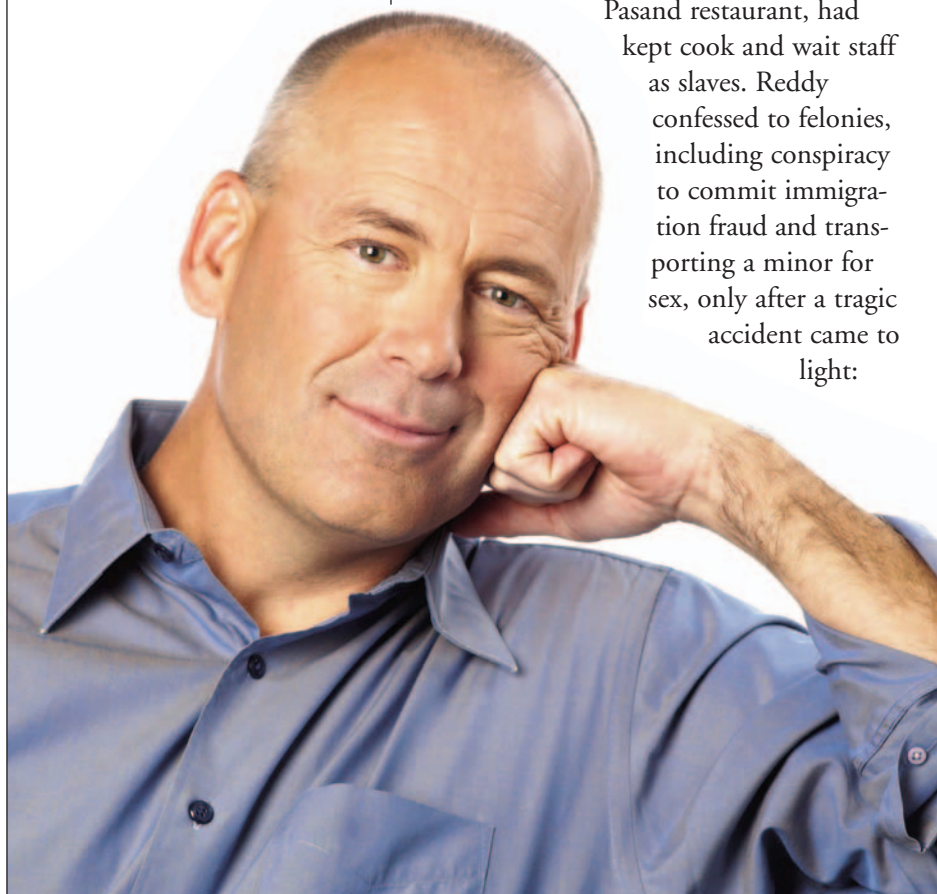
You are not for sale. No one should be for sale.” This professor of ethics at University of San Francisco, entrepreneur, author, and social activist — founded the nonprofit *Not For Sale* when he discovered slavery in his own back yard; Berkeley, that is.

Batstone (Ph.D. ’89) learned that Lakireddy Reddy, owner of Pasand restaurant, had kept cook and wait staff as slaves. Reddy confessed to felonies, including conspiracy to commit immigration fraud and transporting a minor for sex, only after a tragic accident came to light:

A roommate found two teenage sisters — Chanti and Lalitha Prattipati — unconscious in a Berkeley apartment also owned by Reddy. They were poisoned by carbon monoxide leaking from a blocked heating vent, and Chanti was pronounced dead at Alta Bates Hospital. An investigation revealed that Reddy and several family members used fake visas and false identities to traffic adults and children into the United States from India. In many cases Reddy secured visas under the guise that these were skilled technology professionals who would be placed in software companies. They ended up working as waiters, cooks, and dishwashers at Pasand or other businesses Reddy owned, forced to work long hours for minimal wages they returned to him as rent for one of his apartments. Reddy had threatened to turn them in to the authorities as illegal aliens if they tried to escape.

Shocked that his favorite restaurant had become a hub for a trafficking ring, Batstone realized that far from being a thing of the past, slavery likely crosses our path on a regular basis without our awareness. His research reveals there are more than 27 million slaves in the world today, more than at the height of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. A tool called Slavery Map: <http://slaverymap.org> on the *Not For Sale* website, www.notforsalecampaign.org, allows users to see, post, and report where slavery exists today.

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David Batstone, Professor of Ethics at University of San Francisco and founder, *Not For Sale*

A-twitter with American Buddhist Monk Heng Sure

You might need a list to describe Heng Sure. He's a Buddhist monk, director of the Berkeley Buddhist Monastery, scholar, member of several interfaith organizations, GTU alumnus, teacher at Pacific School of Religion (PSR), musician, singer-songwriter of Buddhist folksongs, story teller, youth leader, and most recently, a tweeter on Twitter. Or you could drop the list and just say he is real. His name — given to him by his teacher Master Hsuan Hua when he became a monk — translated from Mandarin, means "constantly real."

"In Buddhist tradition, monks are given a name signifying what they have to work on," Heng Sure says. I'd been an actor in summer stock theater, and my bad habit was to continue to act even off-stage. So my name is a teaching for me."

In turn, Heng Sure teaches people

about happiness and how to end suffering. He does this in working with youth, singing the dharma or body of teachings expounded by the Buddha, and in his class on Buddhist-Christian Dialogue at PSR. "Dialogue is much more than conversation," he says. "It can effect change, but it can be tricky because leaders have to be willing to take their hats off."

In his Buddhist-Christian Dialogue class, Christian students address topics such as compassion, from a Buddhist perspective, and Buddhist students speak from a Christian perspective. "What amazes

me," Heng Sure says, "is each year I learn more about

Buddhism in seeing my faith commitment through others' eyes.

"When I talk to young people about happiness, I ask them, 'When were

you last happy? How did you know? What felt happy? — Your feet? Your heart? Your eyes? Did it last?' Isn't it funny, you

**Wise ones know
we plant a seed,
With every word and deed;
Once we plant it,
here comes karma now.**

— first verse, *Cause & Effect, or Here Comes Karma Now*, from the CD, *Paramita: American Buddhist Folk Music* by Rev. Heng Sure and Friends



can't hang onto it. We want happiness, but it is fleeting. So we work on satisfaction. And often that comes to us through giving and serving."

Heng Sure grew up in Toledo, Ohio, a "Methodist baseball-playing, Mickey Mouse Club-watching kid". At age 12, he was captivated by the Chinese characters in a Chinese painter's exhibition catalog. "I knew they had meaning.

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from "Ritual," painted by James Noel

The Moan and the Shout...

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interdisciplinary approach to the study of black religious experience.

All African American expression, Noel says, from singer Michael Jackson's funeral program to John Coltrane's jazz saxophone works, includes "the moan and the shout." At one end is the moan — a collective sorrow invoking the cultural memory of suffering, from the Middle Passage of slaves across the Atlantic, onward into slavery and oppression. Then comes the catharsis, the shout that releases the pressure of this personal and collective memory of oppression.

"The shout comes from the glimpse of the possibility of a final release," he says, "similar to what theologians call 'realized eschatology,' or the ultimate destiny of humanity. The way to give utterance to what's glimpsed is a deep, visceral shout, a 'Hallelujah' or 'Thank you, Jesus.' I painted a portrait of Coltrane called, 'Ascension.' That's the shout. I've also painted people in churches with arms stretched high, and that's the shout, too. Coltrane and the church — it's the same thing."

In his new book, Noel asks whether the way we think roots us in the reality of life. He uses a type of phenomenology that views how human

*"Coltrane
and the church —
it's the same thing."*

beings are constituted in modernity by the activity of imagination and the myths that arise from it.

"Art, the sciences, and literature are forms for expressing mythology," Noel says. "The big myth is the world view that undergirds value judgments we make as a culture or civilization. Post-modernity, we believe there is no coherent reality.

Before that we had the myth of Enlightenment, which stressed human reasoning over blind faith. Our reality — and, therefore, religious experience — is always one imagined within contexts that are historically and culturally conditioned. And the conditions under which black people experienced Divinity in modernity were different from those of whites.

"White Americans narrate their history in terms of agency — the ability to control one's destiny, sailing for the Americas for religious freedom, or to spread democracy — not in terms of debasement, subjugation, and dehumanization," says Noel. He references the forced "dark night of the soul" and "state of nothingness" resulting from the abominations on slave ships crossing the Atlantic.

"The horror of that experience was un-name-able and ineffable," he says. "The collective spirituality of people who experienced the Middle Passage or the Holocaust includes a sense of the Divine that arises from it. This is the *a priori* of African American religious consciousness."

**Hear poetry and a song
performed by Noel
at www.gtu.edu/currents.**



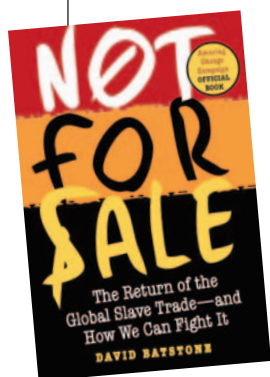
Noel's 'Ascension' hangs in the office of GTU President James A. Donahue.

*“We give you tools to act locally
and show you how your local action connects with global activism.”*

Finding Slavery in Your Own Back Yard...

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“The shoes I wear, the coffee I drink, the sugar I put in my coffee — may all be invisible links to slavery,” Batstone says. “Being free to choose our destiny is fundamental to how we see ourselves. That’s why human trafficking strikes a nerve, and people want to help.”



Indeed, in two years of operation, *Not For Sale* has 42 state operations; projects in Uganda, Peru, Nepal, Thailand, and Ghana; eight full time staff members; and countless volunteers, including some top sports and music celebrities. The organization’s success, Batstone says, lies in a method they call “Open Source Activism,” derived from the high tech industry. “We don’t write the rules. We give you tools to act locally and show you how your local action connects with global activism.”

Another *Not For Sale* tool is Free2Work (www.Free2Work.org), a wiki, where users publish and find information on whether products they use are linked to slavery. The International Human Rights Forum now downloads its data into *Not For Sale*’s wiki. In addition to the wiki, *Not For Sale* invites companies to be Free2Work companies. These companies pledge transparency and allow investigators trained at *Not For Sale* to examine their operations and ensure they are free from slavery.

Not For Sale’s success undoubtedly arises from Batstone’s experience as an investment banker working in under-developed nations. The nonprofit is part of a social venture Batstone cofounded called *Right Reality*, which also includes business consulting services and a company that builds and sells organic farming tools. “*Right Reality* is about helping nonprofits be financially viable, and companies be socially responsible,” he says.

The thread running through all of Batstone’s work? He

calls it a passion for transformation, and credits his GTU education with nurturing it. He uses another *Not For Sale* initiative called *Free To Play* as an example. It started with Batstone’s kids’ basketball teams: If a kid scored a basket they gave ten cents to free kids somewhere else on the globe. Now, a pitcher for the San Francisco Giants and a left fielder for the St. Louis Cardinals give to *Not For Sale* when they score home runs; an Oakland Raiders linebacker gives when he makes a tackle; an international skating champion gives each time he performs a triple toe loop.

“The beauty is you don’t have to be a celebrity to participate,” Batstone says. “The idea is you transform whatever your gifts are to give a gift to someone else, to free another person.”



David Batstone is the author of seven books. His most recent are: *Not For Sale: The Return of the Global Slave Trade and How We Can Fight It* (HarperCollins, 2007) and *Saving the Corporate Soul & (Who Knows?) Maybe Your Own* (Jossey Bass, 2003).

Watch our interview with David Batstone on video:
www.gtu.edu

Hear a full interview audio podcast with David Batstone:
www.gtu.edu/currents

*“What amazes me is
each year I learn more about Buddhism
in seeing my faith commitment
through others’ eyes.”*

They led me to the Tao Te Ching and then the 6th Patriarch’s Sutra — Buddhist scripture centered on enlightenment and direct perception of one’s true nature — and I felt like I’d just been speaking with the Patriarch that morning. My Sunday School teacher was not supportive, but my pastor told me to keep going.”

And Heng Sure did. He became a Buddhist while earning a master’s degree in Oriental Languages at UC Berkeley in the ’60s. He became a monk in 1976, took a six-year vow of silence, and with another monk walked 800-miles from Los Angeles to Ukiah, bowing after every three steps. Heng Sure, who likes to talk, said the hardest part of the pilgrimage was being silent. People threw stones, some threatened them with guns and insults, but more often, they would spontaneously offer to help. The main lessons from the pilgrimage, he says, were about himself — his mental habits, his mind’s tricks, the limits of his understanding.

After 18 years as a monk, Master Hsuan Hua asked Heng Sure if he would like to get a Ph.D. He inquired at two eminent graduate schools, which questioned his wearing monk’s robes on campus — “they worried that believing in something might challenge my objectivity,” he says. “But the GTU welcomed me, robes and all, and affirmed that my faith commitment wouldn’t scare off my classmates. I was a satisfied customer at the GTU.”

Heng Sure welcomes everyone to the Berkeley Buddhist Monastery:
<http://berkeleymonastery.org>

Check out Heng Sure’s tweets on Twitter: twitter.com/revhengsure

See the lyrics and hear 30-second previews of Heng Sure’s American Buddhist folk music:
www.dharmaradio.org



恒 heng
安寶 sure

Celebrate!

In 2008-2009:

- We surpassed our \$30,000 challenge grant goal for new and increased gifts
- Donor participation increased by 18%
- The number of alumni donors increased by 80%

The GTU still needs your help to provide innovative interreligious education, preparing our students for careers in teaching, service, and ministry.

DONATE ONLINE!
www.gtu.edu/give

The Gift Always Comes Back

The GTU welcomes Harold (Hal) Leach as Chair of the GTU Board of Trustees. Leach has served on the GTU Board since 2005. He is Chief Operating Officer of Performant Financial Corporation in Livermore and also the president of DCS, Inc., one of Performant's subsidiaries. The companies focus on business process outsourcing and workflow management technology in the accounts receivables management industry.

Leach learned about the GTU from Alan Kelchner, Leach's minister at Danville Congregational Church, and a current GTU Board member and alumnus. "When I heard from Alan about the GTU mission, I knew this was exactly what I wanted to be a part of," Leach says. "People feel so strongly about religion, and they don't always agree. The GTU encourages the dialogue that helps understanding, and understanding can be the root of peace in the world."

"When I attended my first commencement at the GTU, I was amazed by the faculty, students, courses of study, and diversity. I understood that the GTU is more than a school; we teach people to serve in the world."

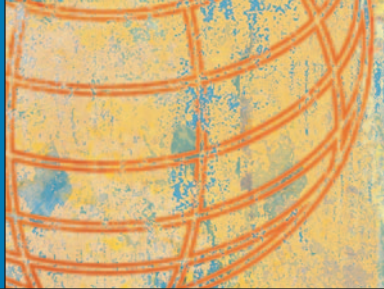
"GTU is well worth my time and money. Giving to the GTU President's Circle, our leadership giving club, is a priority for me, as well as hosting events and writing letters to introduce potential donors to the wonderful work of the GTU. My hope is for our Board to be active in raising and giving funds as well, serving as a strong model to the community. Our donors play a critical role in allowing the GTU to carry out its mission, and I know that the gift always comes back."

Leach says that in his 27 years at Performant he's seen many economic peaks and valleys. He shares his wisdom: "I see transition as an opportunity. Timing is everything, and we'll be seizing the opportunities as they arise."



Harold Leach

*"I understood that
the GTU is more
than a school;
we teach people
to serve in the world."*



New Church on the Block

Unity of Berkeley sits nestled on the corner of Scenic and Le Conte, surrounded by three GTU member schools. Rev. Dr. Patricia Keel, Unity's minister, is excited to be here.

Keel says she was called in 2001 to pioneer a Unity church in Berkeley while meditating on Hildegard von Bingen. "Hildegard was called to leave her monastery and establish a new one across the Rhine. My message from Hildegard was to cross the Bay from a congregation I was a part of in Marin."

Keel's Unity church in the East Bay originally offered only weekday classes on meditation and creativity. Then national tragedy nudged her into formal ministry: "I remember 9-11 was on a Tuesday. I put a small ad in the local paper for a service to be held the following Sunday. Nine people showed up. Today, we see more than 100 each week."

The church moved to Holy Hill in fall 2008. "Our church's building was being sold, and when I called to rent classroom space at Pacific School of Religion, I learned PSR had just acquired the former University Christian Church. It was a providential moment.

"We were able to bring new life to a beautiful space. In essence, the walls were painted with prayers of people who had worshipped here before. The building held a sense of holiness, vitality, and joy."

Founded in the late 1800's, Unity's message comes from the life and teachings of Jesus and honors the universal truth in all wisdom traditions. The term "Practical Christianity" is often used to describe Unity, which is grounded in positive prayer and healing. In addition to Sunday mornings, Unity offers classes, concerts, and events throughout the week. A recent focus on healing included "Wisdom Healing Qigong" and "Emotional Freedom Techniques."

Unity of Berkeley looks forward to welcoming all of its Holy Hill neighbors, and Rev. Keel hopes the church will become a unique spiritual center for the community.

Check out Unity's schedule and offerings at www.unityberkeley.org.



Into God

Coming to a Theater Near You!

The much lauded TV series on cosmos, consciousness and God, — *Closer To Truth* — is being made into a feature-length documentary, *Into God*. It will explore issues of universe, brain/mind, religion, meaning, and purpose through intimate conversations with leading scientists, philosophers, scholars, theologians and creative thinkers — including **Robert Russell**, GTU's Ian G. Barbour Professor of Theology and Science, and Founder and Director, The Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences (www.ctns.org). Stay tuned for more details about release date and distribution. See the trailer at www.gtu.edu.

Dr. Mia Mochizuki

has been awarded a Ryskamp Fellowship

by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. As part of her project — *The Netherlandish Image Abroad, 1543-1639: Art, Religion and Economics in the Early Modern World* — she'll study Netherlandish prints brought to Japan by the Jesuit mission. She is GTU Core Doctoral Faculty, Assistant Professor, and Thomas E. Bertelsen, Jr. Chair of Art History and religion at the Jesuit School of Theology.

GTU Tweets!

... along with Harvard Divinity School, Barack Obama, Downing Street, Southwest Airlines, GTU alum Rev. Heng-Sure, the Sierra Club, and many more!

Stay connected with the GTU in real time. Follow us on Twitter! It's easy: Go to <http://twitter.com/tweetGTU> and click on "Join Today" to set up your account and follow our tweets. That's all there is to it! When we tweet, you'll hear from us on your text-message-enabled phone, or you can turn that feature off and hear from us on your computer's Twitter account home page.

New Books

by GTU People

CHRISTIAN MEMORIES OF THE MACCABEAN MARTYRS

Palgrave Macmillan

... by **Daniel Joslyn-Siemiatkoski**

Assistant Professor of Church History at Church Divinity School of the Pacific

"... analyzes the creation of Christian identity via the lens of veneration of the Maccabean martyrs, Jews who died for the Mosaic Law ... a model study on Jewish/Christian interfaith culture."

— Amazon editorial review

CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY: THE CLASSICS

Routledge

... presents thirty texts — including works by Augustine, Jonathan Edwards, Thérèse of Lisieux, and Thomas Merton — as living wisdom that invite contemplative reflection and existential response.

... by **Arthur Holder** *GTU Dean and Vice*

President for Academic Affairs (ed.) and

Douglas Burton-Christie *(Ph.D. alum)*

Nonna Verna Harrison *(Ph.D. alum)*

Theresa Ladrigan-Whelpley

(Ph.D. student)

Darleen Pryds *(FST faculty)*

Elizabeth Liebert *(SFTS dean)*

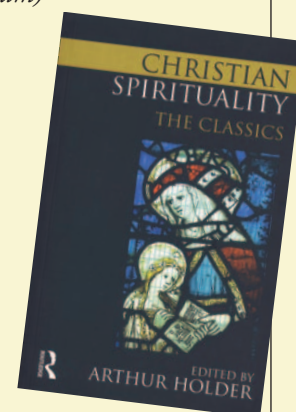
Timothy Hessel-Robinson

(Ph.D. alum)

David Kangas *(husband of Inez Radzins of PSR faculty)*

Lisa Dahill *(Ph.D. alum)*

Bruce Lescher *(JST associate dean), among others*



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Have you seen GTU's new e-newsletter, insight? Through *Currents* by email, our new e-newsletter, *insight*, and our Web communications, we're helping to lessen our impact on the environment! Support a greener GTU by subscribing to our email communications. It's easy — go to the "Receive our free newsletters link" on www.gtu.edu.



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Fall 2009 *Currents* Newsletter

GTU calendar

GTU Alumni Reception ~ American Academy of Religion

November 7th, 8–9:30 pm

Fairmont Queen Elizabeth Hotel-
Richelieu, Montreal

GTU will honor

HEUP YOUNG KIM, Ph.D. '92 as
2009 Alum of the Year

The Eli Katz

Memorial Yiddish Conference

*Sex and the Shtetl: Gender Roles,
Erotic Practices and Marital Structures
in Yiddish Literature and Ashkenazic
Culture*

Presented by the Center for Jewish Studies
Panel discussions, lectures, film,
live theater

November 15-17 in various locations

For more information:

www.gtu.edu/sexandtheshtetl

Art and Human Rights: Reflections on Fernando Botero: The Abu Ghraib Series

Speakers include

WILLIAM O'NEILL,
S.J., Associate Professor of Social Ethics, JST
REBECCA GORDON, doctoral
candidate in Ethics and Social Theory,
GTU and Instructor of Ethics, University
of San Francisco

PAMELA BLOTNER, artist,
educator and curator

MUNIR JIWA, Director, GTU Center
for Islamic Studies

Moderated by

LAUREL FLETCHER, Clinical
Professor of Law; Director, International
Human Rights Law Clinic, UC Berkeley

November 15, 3–5 pm

Presented by the Center for the Arts,
Religion and Education
Museum Theater, Berkeley Art Museum
2621 Durant Ave., Berkeley

Distinguished Faculty Lecture *Awkward and Alive: Secularization and Religion Reconsidered*

PHILIP WICKERI, Flora Lamson
Hewlett Professor of Evangelism and
Mission, San Francisco Theological
Seminary and GTU Core Doctoral Faculty.

Respondent:

EDUARDO FERNÁNDEZ,
S.J., Associate Professor of Pastoral Theology
& Ministry, JST

November 17th, 7 pm

Pacific School of Religion
Chapel of the Great Commission
1798 Scenic Ave. at Le Conte, Berkeley
Reception following in the Badé Museum

GTU Alumni Reception ~ Society of Biblical Literature

November 21, 8–10 pm

JW Marriott, New Orleans
St. Jerome Room