Social Media and the Seminary

Three views on the rise of social media in religious education

In a class on spiritual memoir two years ago, Franciscan School of Theology Associate Professor Darleen Pryds assigned her students the task of creating their own Facebook page.

“It turned out to be a great way for me to connect with the students, and for us all to connect with each other,” says Pryds, who teaches Christian Spirituality and History. “On Facebook, I shared when and where I was preaching, we all exchanged articles and ideas, we learned what was going on in churches, and we also learned new things about each others’ interests — one of my students, for example, plays the trumpet — that may not have come out in the classroom.

That class convinced Pryds that Facebook is an enormously important tool that can be used professionally and in teaching, not just personally. “I was stuck once, getting a sermon written on Abraham and Isaac,” she recalls. “I asked for help from colleagues and friends on Facebook and got lots of wonderful ideas. Facebook broadens your communities and allows for a communitarian approach to teaching,” she says. “It’s all about interaction. With Facebook, we can communicate with an international community of students and scholars, as well as friends and family.”

To those who say they don’t have time for Facebook or criticize it as trivial or a waste of time, Pryds points out that Facebook can be viewed as a different way to spend time with people. “You might view Facebook as a digital

continued on page 6
Teaching “Lower Ed”: Junior High, High School, and Community College —

The right career choice for some GTU grads

Ask a GTU student what they hope to do when they graduate. Or ask some alums how they’re spending their days. If your guess is that their work, or their dream, is teaching in higher education, you may be surprised. Some have found their true calling — and true success — in helping to shape young minds in junior high through community college.

Jeffrey Buhl (M.A. ’01) has taught sixth, seventh, and eighth grades in both Christian and private school settings. “I thought I would teach in higher education, but I found my calling teaching English and Literature to kids who are 11, 12, 13, and 14 years-old. It’s a marvelous way to live,” he says.

“I’ve never felt so fulfilled. I believe being a teacher to these kids is who God intends me to be.”

— Jeffrey Buhl, (M.A. ’01)

Michael Sepidoza Campos, a Ph.D. candidate in Interdisciplinary Studies, counts among his goals the hope to return to Guam and resume work in secondary Catholic education. “It’s my ideal world,” he says. “It’s where my gifts fit.”

Patricia Shannon (Ph.D. ’07) teaches philosophy, religious studies, and humanities at Chabot Community College in Hayward, California. She says, “It was always my goal to teach at a community college. I believe it’s the way to make the biggest difference.”

English is not the first language for two-thirds of Shannon’s students. Ninety percent are not prepared for college math or English, and most work more than 15 hours per week in addition to attending school. Being at a
community college gives her students the option to transfer to a 4-year college and has a major impact on their earning power: “It makes the difference between whether they can only get a day labor job or a steady job,” she says.

“Teaching philosophy and religion is particularly difficult because the students lack a common cultural reference point, but it also can be very rich.” Shannon uses dialogue in small groups, journal writing, and film to bridge the divides — this year she has shown the films *Bladerunner* and *Mindwalk*. “When they see that a film about Kant and Descartes is relevant, when you can see the light go on, it’s simply wonderful,” she says.

Campos describes learning as the “unfolding of a person,” and sees a special opportunity in teaching high school students. He says, “What I love about high school is that students at that age stand at the cusp of adulthood, with an emergent sense of self and responsibility. In this regard, the work of teaching is fundamentally ministerial, a gesture of accompaniment.” Campos taught theology in Catholic high schools for 7 years before coming to the GTU to explore the ways sexuality, ethnicity, political contexts, and economies influence how one teaches religion. “I hope my own explorations will encourage my future students to dig deeper into their own questions as well.”

Shannon, Campos, and Buhl all see their work as being about relationships. “I am not always the authority,” says Buhl. “My students and I are engaged in something together, and it is always the relationship that makes it work. Eleven to 14-year-olds can be a challenging age group, but when you get a letter from a former student saying you were the most influential person in her life, it means I’ve done something right. I’ve never felt so fulfilled. I believe being a teacher to these kids is who God intends me to be.”

Shannon recently got an email from a student she taught four years ago, who is now taking a double major in rhetoric and theater at UC Berkeley. “You taught me how to take a theory apart,” the student wrote.

“That’s success,” says Shannon.
For more than 40 years, GTU’s Center for Jewish Studies (CJS) has offered outstanding academic programs committed to interreligious conversation, and has served as a vital center for Jewish life in the Bay Area, hosting scholarly lectures, films, conferences, and Jewish holiday celebrations that are open to the public.

Thanks to a three-year $900,000 grant made in 2008, by both the Taube Foundation for Jewish Life and Culture and the Koret Foundation, CJS continues to offer robust academic and community programs.

This July, six GTU students interested in East European Jewish heritage will each develop and research a topic in Poland, where an estimated 30,000 Jews live, compared with 3.3 million in 1939. The research/seminar trip is sponsored and made possible by the Taube Foundation.

To prepare for the trip, students will spend the spring semester studying Polish-Jewish history from its origins through the contemporary revival of Jewish culture, and developing methodologies for the analysis of heritage tourism and culture festivals.

Accompanied by CJS Director and Koret Professor of Jewish Culture Naomi Seidman and Visiting Scholar Shana Penn, students will visit Warsaw and Krakow, touring institutions, meeting with activists and scholars, and participating in Krakow’s Jewish Culture Festival — an annual grassroots event run mostly by young non-Jewish Poles to keep Jewish history alive.

“The Festival is one of the most exciting cultural phenomena the contemporary Jewish world has to offer,” says Seidman. “The trip will introduce our students to rich cultural activism, bring academic research to the grassroots efforts already illuminating Polish Jewry, and enrich our program and curricular offerings with a collaborative, real-world approach to Jewish Studies.”

Tad Taube, chairman of the Taube Foundation for Jewish Life and Culture, praised the seminar in a letter to Seidman as a “unique Jewish Studies experience” in which students will “recognize the significance of their searching out the cultural web of Jewish life and culture in Poland, as they also fulfill their academic pursuits.”

We say Bon Voyage! and eagerly await the rich store of knowledge and experience the returning students will bring back to the GTU.
An Interview with Heup Young Kim, 2009 Alum of the Year

_Congratulations! How does it feel to receive this award?_
Thank you. There are four things I would like to say. Number one is humility. There are people more able and intelligent than I. Second is gratitude. I thank God, my family, my teachers, and GTU. Thirdly, relief. Exactly three decades ago God appeared very suddenly in my life, also becoming my biggest problem. Thirty years later, this is a message from God saying “What you have done so far is okay.” The last is responsibility. This award is not the end, but the beginning of a further mission, an expanding horizon.

_The Alum of the Year Award recognizes your rich and illustrious career. Of all the things you are involved in, what piques your interest and involves you the most?_
My family has been Confucian for one and a half millennia. I came to the U.S. and became a Christian. Immediately, I had a problem with my own culture. Born a Confucian Korean, but theologically 100% “Made in the USA.” Since then I have been building bridges between these two worlds, East meets West. You could also say I am creating theological space for East Asian Christians.

_What about your work now is most engaging/most important to you? Why?_
I’m trying to construct a theology of the Tao or “Theo-Tao.” The current dualistic way of thinking of the West consists of theo-logos or theology, which is primarily doctrinal, and its counterpart theo-praxis, or action. I try and bring in the Tao, the embodiment of the cosmic way in our historical existence. If you know Tao, you cannot divide knowing and acting. Theo-Tao provides a new paradigm for this millennium characterized by dialogue.

_What do you hope your students will take away from their work with you?_
That there is a need, there is value for East Asian Christians and theological thinking. That people will develop an attitude to listen to our voice. So far my work has been rhetorical, debatable, controversial, and provocative, but the people after me would ideally be masters of both traditions, Western and Eastern, and be able to build up their own theologies to be both local and global.

_Is there something unique to you about the GTU? Looking back on your experience here, what first arises in your mind?_
Freedom to be outrageous and courage to be yourself. You can’t do that in other programs. Other schools will try and fit you into their particular box. Here at GTU you can create your own program, make your own path, study what fits you. It’s the best merit of GTU.

_Does the GTU build and nurture leaders?_
Yes, it does, as long as GTU maintains its unique tradition of encouraging men and women to be themselves. I do not believe it is effective or efficient to promote only one product, one type of scholar. If you do, you won’t have a creative one.

_What do you hope for the future of the GTU?_
GTU might become the cutting edge, the frontier to make new paradigms for theology and theological education for the coming age. It will be the kind of place for connecting East and West.
version of shooting the breeze around the company water cooler. Sometimes those watercooler conversations lead to innovations and important insights…the same is true with Facebook.”

Elizabeth Drescher (Ph.D. ’08), assistant professor of Christian Spiritualities and director of the Center for Anglican Learning & Leadership at the Church Divinity School of the Pacific (CDSP), is charged with engaging CDSP’s 750 students in online classes. “I learned quickly,” she says, “that my job required more than a computer-based understanding of online learning. In the past, online learning was about automating face-to-face learning. But social media is changing our culture in profound and dynamic ways because it involves high levels of collaboration and broad distribution over geography and time.”

Drescher adds that we now have a different understanding of who “owns” knowledge. Rather than locating knowledge or leadership in a specific person, social media finds them in a place — a Facebook page, for example — where people can come together to create their own understanding, and learn to understand others. “Learners have much more control over their environment. For example, we can be with people all over the world at any time,” Drescher says, “and this is changing consciousness. We are beginning to think very differently about community, relationships, and knowledge itself, because social media challenges our traditional understandings of fixed relationships and bodies of knowledge.”

Social media also is changing the way seminaries market to prospective students and other interested parties. CDSP reaches many prospective students and other audiences through Facebook ads. For $52, more than 400,000 people viewed CDSP’s Facebook ad for its annual Epiphany West conference in January.

Drescher recently gave a presenta-
new understandings of church and of seminary education. There are some alarmist responses to social media, questions about how it may affect face-to-face relationships, and spiritual formation. There is always anxiety about change. For me, it’s comforting to understand these changes in the context of a longer historical horizon. I think, ‘We’ve been through this before; we know how to do it.’ We might call it the ‘Digital Reformation.’”

GTU Alumna Noreen Herzfeld (Ph.D. ’00) says social media is returning us to a time when religion was more oral-based. “In social media, someone creates something, then someone changes it, and this can go on without end,” says this professor of both theology and computer science at St. John’s University in Minnesota. “The positive side of that is the creativity it engenders. But it also takes away the control that religions have over text.

“As Americans, we’re fairly uncritical consumers of technology because we have an inherent belief in progress. I think all technologies are a mixed blessing. When we adopt a new technology, we give something up, and we gain something new. It’s important to be aware of the gains and the losses.” Herzfeld’s book, *Technology and Religion: Remaining Human in a Co-created World*, published in May 2009, raises key theological and ethical questions about ground-breaking technologies, including social media.

For better or worse, gain or loss, it appears that social media, or the “digital reformation,” will be with us for a while. See New York Times reporter David Carr’s enlightening article: *Why Twitter will Endure*: http://bit.ly/50OrNB.

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Loving Creation: Christian Spirituality, Earth-Centered and Just
Paulist Press

“How can we bring about the profound conversion of mind and heart that is necessary if we are to protect and preserve our planet at this critical point in history? Loving Creation shows that only when we are touched by God will we find new ways of relating to all other species and the Earth itself.” — Amazon

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Spirits of the Place: Buddhism and Lao Religious Culture
University of Hawaii Press

“A rare and timely contribution to our understanding of religious culture in Laos and Southeast Asia” — Amazon

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Technology and Religion: Remaining Human in a Co-created World
Templeton Press

“Clearly written, rooted in real life, exploring ideas rather than offering quick judgments: this book is an excellent incentive for further reflection …” — Willem B. Drees, editor of *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science*
Eileen Chamberlain Donahoe
nominated as ambassador to UN Human Rights Council
President Barack Obama nominated Eileen Chamberlain Donahoe (Ph.D. ’06) as U.S. ambassador to the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, as a member of the U.S. Mission to the United Nations. The nomination is subject to review by the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee, which will make a recommendation to the full Senate, and the Senate will vote on the appointment.

Janet Ruffing, R.S.M.
appointed to Yale Divinity School faculty
Janet K. Ruffing (Ph.D. ’86), a Sister of Mercy teaching at Fordham University, is the new professor of the practice of spirituality and ministerial leadership at Yale Divinity School (YDS), a position created to strengthen YDS offerings in ministerial studies.

Professor Martha “Marty” Stortz leaves GTU/PLTS after 25 years
Martha Stortz, professor of Historical Theology and Ethics, leaves Berkeley after 25 years for Augsburg College in Minneapolis, MN, where she will be the Bernhard M. Christensen Chair in Religion and Vocation beginning July 1. “Marty will be a role model for our students of how a life of the mind and a life of faithful service in the world are linked,” says Augsburg President Paul Pribbenow.

Terrence Tilley named inaugural Dulles Chair in Catholic Theology
Fordham University named Terrence W. Tilley (Ph.D. ’76), professor and chair of the department of Theology at Fordham University, the first Avery Cardinal Dulles, S.J., Chair in Catholic Theology. Tilley is GTU’s 2008 Alumnus of the Year. Tilley says, “I can imagine someone...telling me, ‘You’re no Avery Dulles.’ I can only reply, ‘Indeed so. But, I hope to continues Dulles’ work.’”

New Jobs! Congrats to these 2009 Ph.D. grads!

Gaymon Bennett
SynBERC/University of California, Berkeley

Sean D. Burke
Luther College, Decorah, IA

Michele Connolly
Catholic Institute for Theology and Ministry, Sydney, Australia

Elizabeth Drescher
Church Divinity School of the Pacific/Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley

Andrea Giovannoni
Holy Names University, San Francisco

Doo Hee Lee
Berkeley Christian College and Seminary, Berkeley

Kang Hack Lee
Berkeley Christian College and Seminary, Berkeley

Erica L. Martin
University of Puget Sound, Tacoma, WA

Eliyahu Stern
Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies at the University of Oxford, Oxford, UK
A Baptist, a Jew, a Buddhist, a Franciscan friar, and a Muslim walk into the Graduate Theological Union’s world-class Flora Lamson Hewlett Library. This is not the beginning of a joke, but an occurrence that happens daily at the Graduate Theological Union, a place committed to outstanding interfaith education.

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 10 years as president, I am still amazed and always proud to hear of student dissertations, such as those from our crop of ’09 graduates 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. Last spring, Shibley Telhami (M.A. ’78), Anwar Sadat Professor for peace and Development at University of Maryland, spoke eloquently on rethinking the role of religion in foreign policy at our Surgit Singh annual lecture. Recently I met with and was inspired by David Batstone (Ph.D. ’89), a University of San Francisco Professor of Ethics who founded Not For Sale, a non-profit organization that enables grass roots activism against slavery.

In addition to our academic programs, the GTU is a vital contributor to the community, hosting fascinating colloquia on special topics, interfaith holiday celebrations, and public lectures by renowned scholars on important issues of the day. There are so many examples — just one is Faith in Human Rights: An Interfaith Project, a series of lectures and workshops sponsored last February by our Center for Islamic Studies, Center for Jewish Studies, and the Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology.

We remain a vital and vibrant global force in interfaith education in a time of extraordinary change and continued economic challenge. I am excited that our new Board Chair, Hal Leach, has brought tremendous energy and a keen sense of financial and organizational perspective to the leadership of our Board. Last fall we celebrated the start of our certificate program in Islamic Studies as well as certificate programs in Asian and Oceanic Cultures and Faith Traditions, and Black Church/African American Religious Studies.

We are immensely grateful for the $900,000 combined grant in 2008 from The Koret Foundation and the Taube Foundation for Jewish Life and Culture. These funds make it possible for our Center for Jewish Studies (CJS) to continue its unparalleled research, scholarship, and community education to further an understanding of Jewish culture, history, and theology. This July, as part of a research seminar, six students, accompanied by CJS Director and Koret Professor of Jewish Culture Naomi Seidman and Visiting Scholar Shana Penn, will visit Poland — touring institutions, meeting with activists and scholars, and participating in Krakow’s Jewish Culture Festival. You can read about it in this special issue of Currents.

In all that we do, the GTU is a place where world religions meet, and religion meets the world. Through critical study, dialogue, and practice, we are cultivating understanding, justice, and peace. Join us.

James A. Donahue
Ph.D. ’84
President,
Graduate Theological Union
Following is a list of donors whose gifts and pledges were received between July 1, 2008 and June 30, 2009, including gifts supporting the President’s Circle, the Richard S. Dinner Center for Jewish Studies, the Center for Islamic Studies, the Flora Lamson Hewlett Library, student scholarships, endowments, capital, and other special funds. We have made every effort to ensure that this list is accurate. If there is an error, please contact the Office of Institutional Advancement: 510-649-2531.

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*deceased
## Financial Overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assets</td>
<td>$42,382,443</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net assets</td>
<td>$37,415,952</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increase (decrease) in net assets</td>
<td>$(8,294,406)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Market value of endowment and funds</td>
<td>$23,672,921</td>
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<tr>
<td>Loans payable</td>
<td>$4,027,925</td>
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<tr>
<td>Revenues</td>
<td>$8,264,559</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Losses and Draw on Investment</td>
<td>$(8,764,627)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expenditures</td>
<td>$7,794,338</td>
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<tr>
<td>Capital expenditures</td>
<td>$554,754</td>
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</table>

### Revenues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tuition and fees</td>
<td>$1,532,287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants and contracts</td>
<td>$53,100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Member school allocations</td>
<td>$3,490,403</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributions Unrestricted</td>
<td>$213,557</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contributions Temporarily restricted</td>
<td>$984,058</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contributions Permanently restricted</td>
<td>$507,690</td>
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<tr>
<td>Investment income Unrestricted</td>
<td>$20,927</td>
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<tr>
<td>Investment income Temporarily restricted</td>
<td>$139,781</td>
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<tr>
<td>Investment income Permanently restricted</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net gains (losses) on investment Unrestricted</td>
<td>$(1,220,976)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net gains (losses) on investment Temporarily restricted</td>
<td>$(6,425,825)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Net gains (losses) on investment Permanently restricted</td>
<td>$(23,142)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Auxiliary enterprises</td>
<td>$193,993</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other sources</td>
<td>$34,079</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total revenues</td>
<td>$(500,068)</td>
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</tbody>
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### Expenditures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Programs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Instruction</td>
<td>$908,556</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>$35,104</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public Service</td>
<td>$10,802</td>
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<tr>
<td>Academic Support</td>
<td>$306,729</td>
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<td>Library</td>
<td>$3,062,327</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student services</td>
<td>$873,803</td>
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<tr>
<td>Auxiliary enterprises</td>
<td>$208,785</td>
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<td>Support</td>
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<td>Development</td>
<td>$699,619</td>
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<tr>
<td>Institutional support</td>
<td>$1,688,613</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total expenditures</td>
<td>$7,794,338</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Operating revenue            | $7,756,869   |
| Operating expenditures       | $7,684,206   |
| Operating surplus (deficit)  | $72,663      |

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*The Theology of Forgiveness from a Comparative Perspective*

**ANRI MORIMOTO,** Professor of Religion and Theology, International Christian University, Tokyo, and GTU Visiting Professor, Spring 2010

Understanding how forgiveness is expressed in different religious and cultural contexts is crucial when restoring broken relationships in today’s world.

**Tuesday, April 13**
Reception 6 pm: Pacific School of Religion Badé Museum
Lecture 7 pm: Chapel of the Great Commission, across from the Badé Museum, 1798 Scenic Ave., at Le Conte Ave., Berkeley

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The Seventh Annual McCoy Memorial Lecture on Religion, Ethics, and Public Life

**MARGARET R. MCLEAN,** Ph.D. GTU ’97, Associate Director and Director of Bioethics, Markkula Center for Applied Ethics, and director of the Applied Ethics Center, O’Connor Hospital in San Jose. McLean will speak on health care reform and end-of-life medical decision making.

**Tuesday April 27**
Lecture 7 pm: Pacific School of Religion Chapel of the Great Commission, 1798 Scenic Ave., at Le Conte Ave., Berkeley
Reception 8 pm: Badé Museum

These events are open to the public and free.

For more information on these and other events, visit www.gtu.edu.

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