

Skylight

Fall 2021

A Time to Every Purpose Under Heaven

GTU 2.0: A Bold New Vision for the 21st Century

Building a Library for Today and Tomorrow



Skylight

Fall 2021

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ON THE COVER: A lotus, captured at the Institute of Buddhist Studies, symbolizing the purity of enlightened mind arising amidst suffering.

Photo: Benjamin Heller



The Flora Lamson Hewlett Library
re-opened to in-person access this fall.
Photo: Benjamin Heller
See, "The Heart of the GTU" on Page 16



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A time to every purpose UNDER HEAVEN



“Turn! Turn! Turn!” goes the classic tune penned by Pete Seeger, which was widely popularized several years later with the sensationally hypnotic recording by ‘60s pop music icons, The Byrds. It was as a high schooler in the Bronx that I first encountered The Byrds’ rendition of this song, but not until after I graduated from the The Graduate Theological Union and became a professor of Hebrew Bible that I came to learn of its connection to Seeger, and beyond that, of its biblical origins.

*To everything (turn, turn, turn)
There is a season (turn, turn, turn)
And a time to every purpose, under heaven*

*A time to be born, a time to die
A time to plant, a time to reap...*

As any student who has joined my class on the Introduction to the Hebrew Bible now knows, the song’s lyrics are borrowed from Qohelet/Ecclesiastes 3:1-8, where we are reminded:

*There is a time for everything,
and a season for every activity under
the heavens...*

Lately, I have again found myself transfixed by the melody of this song, much

As we approach
the 60th anniversary
of our groundbreaking
consortium,
the season to build up
the GTU has arrived.

like in those bygone teenage years. At that time, the lyrics seemed to speak to the dawning of a new era in our striving for equality among all God’s children, for peace, and for an age in which we could live out the dream of universal cooperation and camaraderie.

*A time to build up, a time to break down
A time to dance, a time to mourn
A time to cast away stones,
a time to gather stones together...*

These days, as I hum the lyrics in a loop throughout the week, the same sentiments are still present, and our collective commitment to realizing the dream of a peaceful, more just world is as clear and present as ever.

And yet, these lyrics have taken on another meaning for me, too. Now, they speak to the dawning of a new era for the GTU as well. With GTU 2.0, our institution is poised on the precipice of a brilliant horizon that illuminates the many opportunities at our fingertips to further the work of fashioning a better world, and to do so by reimagining the very nature of theological education and its contribution to culture and society.

*To everything (turn, turn, turn)
There is a season (turn, turn, turn)
And a time to every purpose, under heaven*

*A time to gain, a time to lose
A time to rend, a time to sew*

As we approach the 60th anniversary of our groundbreaking consortium, the season to build up the GTU has arrived. We look forward to joining hands with you, our community, as we come to fully embrace our time and purpose under heaven:

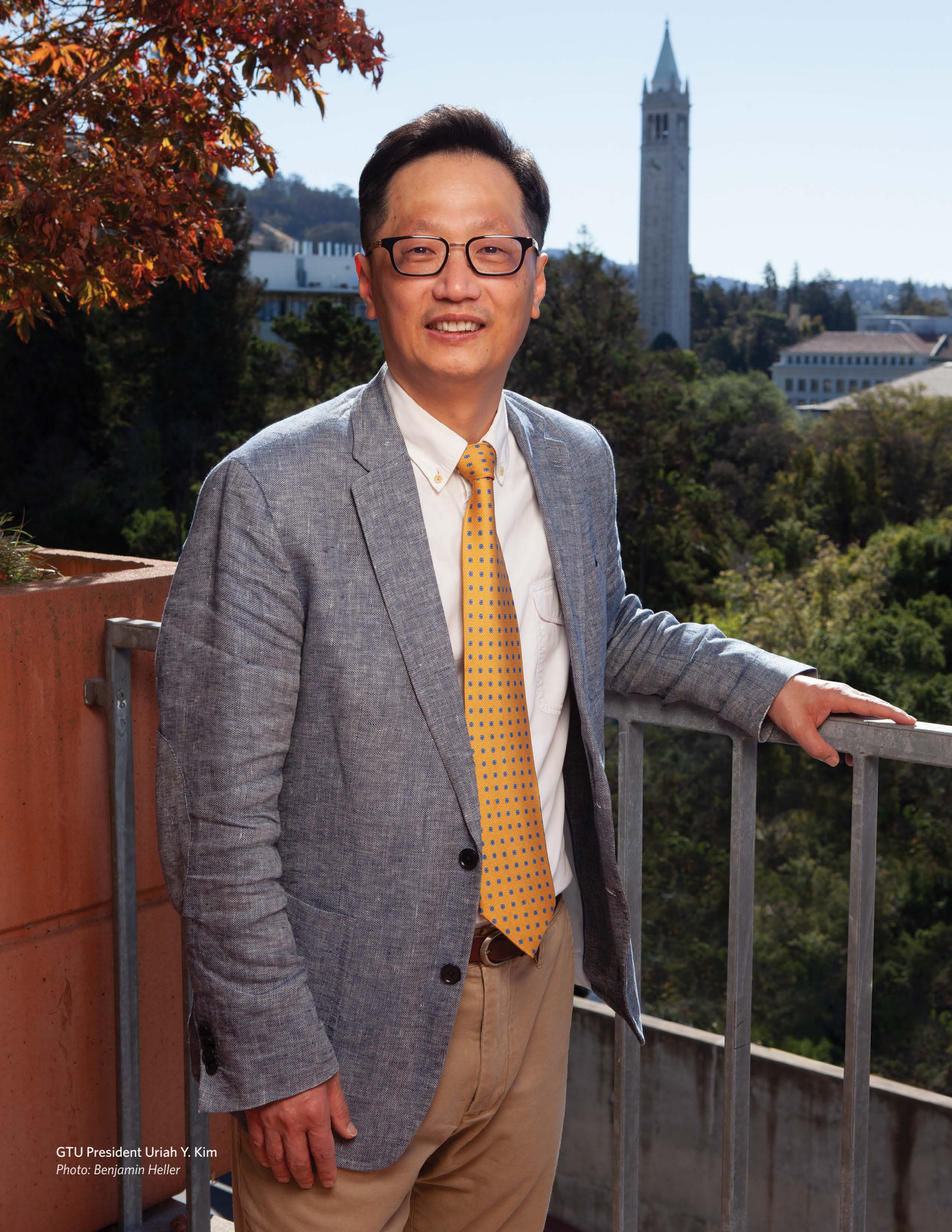
A time for peace, I swear it’s not too late.

With peace and blessings,

Uriah Y. Kim
President
John Dillenger Professor
of Biblical Studies
PhD, GTU ‘04



Groundbreaking ceremony for the Flora Lamson Hewlett Library, which took place on the morning of June 24, 1979. In this photo: Sylvia Hunter, Trustee, left foreground, and Jane Newhall, Trustee, right foreground. GTU Archive



GTU President Uriah Y. Kim
Photo: Benjamin Heller

GTU 2.0

A BOLD NEW VISION
FOR THE
21ST CENTURY

Meeting the Demands of Our Moment

The world of religion and spirituality is changing. As an institution dedicated to fostering spiritual education, we must heed the call to meet the challenges this moment demands. GTU 2.0 is the next step in the GTU's evolution, designed to meet the needs of today.

People are hungry for spiritual guidance and fulfillment. More than ever, spirituality intersects with many areas of modern life, including economics, culture, education, and socio-political considerations. At the same time, religious affiliation is shifting. In the Northern hemisphere, it is on the decline, even as it grows rapidly in other parts of the world.

In the midst of this hunger for spiritually rooted education and the change in the ways that people practice religion, the GTU has seized on this opportunity to engage with seekers and scholars through GTU 2.0.

Through the use of enhanced technology and reimagined content, GTU 2.0 is revolutionizing the ways that spiritually rooted learning is delivered and consumed.



Reimagining services to expand access to learning

GTU 2.0 will allow us to reach people in an accelerated and far-reaching way, through greater use of technologies and a focus on professional development and career outcomes. The result is a new environment of creativity, connection, and community, using technological modalities to create a borderless platform for sharing the world's wisdom. This effort includes the introduction of hybrid and fully online degree and non-degree programs of study. GTU 2.0 also seeks to provide the greatest access possible to the wisdom resources available at the GTU, including enhanced digital library services and innovative digital-first course offerings.

GTUx: A new way to think about content

In addition to the GTU's existing academic offerings, GTUx will serve as a hub for an array of digital learning and teaching tools. GTUx content will be tailored to suit the interests and learning styles of those within and far beyond the GTU, reaching a wide audience and serving as a dynamic, digital learning resource for individuals and communities to engage deeply with the world's religious traditions. (Learn more about GTUx on Page 6.)

Rooted in tradition, creating a more just future

The GTU is both rooted in the world's great wisdom traditions and dedicated to inspiring meaningful change in the world. GTU 2.0 will allow us to facilitate meaningful connections between that wisdom and those who seek it, today and in the future. For more information on GTU 2.0, please visit www.gtu.edu/GTU20brochure.

GTU



WHERE RELIGION MEETS THE WORLD

A central component of GTU 2.0,
GTUx represents the next stage of GTU's
pioneering commitment
to the spirit of innovation.

People are connecting with spirituality in new ways, just as their expectations from theological education are changing. GTUx is a central component of our mission to lead the future of theological education. Offering cutting-edge content that addresses some of today's most critical issues, GTUx makes religious learning dynamic and accessible.

Facilitating transformation through connection and discovery, GTUx invites users to discover new ways of connecting with their purpose through online learning opportunities that are grounded in the world's religious traditions and address timely issues such as social, racial, and environmental justice. This programming is created and hosted by leading experts in religion, theology, and spirituality, and is geared to helping users connect with others who share the GTU's commitment to building a more just, compassionate, and sustainable world.



Dr. Deena Aranoff instructs a global community of learners in the GTUx original *The Lure of Power*.

GTUx's innovative offerings explore timely topics and perplexing issues through leading scholarship and engaging conversations.



Expanding access to spiritual and religious wisdom

Since its inception, the GTU has had a tradition of offering ground-breaking interreligious and interdisciplinary dialogue. GTUx elevates that tradition to a new level through innovative content exploring timely topics and perplexing issues, led by leading scholars in engaging conversations.

Once fully launched, GTUx is envisioned as including:

- GTUx Originals
- GTUx Lectures
- GTUx Live
- GTUx Collections
- GTUx Gallery

GTUx Originals

These on-demand, asynchronous modules are available online for broad audiences, including professional development pathways for religious leaders and educators, spiritual care providers, professionals in the business sector, and more. In time, we plan to offer hundreds of GTUx originals across a broad spectrum of pressing issues and relevant fields.

GTUx Live Events

In addition to on-demand resources, GTUx will offer standalone lectures, seminars, workshops, and more virtual events to engage and equip the GTUx community.

GTUx Collections

Each GTUx Original will offer diverse digital learning offerings and recommended resources, establishing a robust array of online educational tools.

Partnerships

GTUx will serve as a key resource and model of partnership for seminaries and theological schools across North America, advancing the larger cause of theological education.

Community Building

Encouraging connection in response to a growing hunger for community, GTUx will offer public seminars, blog posts, and informal "fireside chats," all specialized by topics of interest.

GTUx represents the future of religious and theological education

Since its launch in early 2021, GTUx has proven popular with a growing number of participants. Sign up today to engage with topics from justice in public life to environmental spirituality. Request a GTUx brochure to learn more about how you can support this initiative.

Learn more about how you can engage with GTUx at gtu.edu/x.



GTU Welcomes the Institute of Buddhist Studies as a New Member School

After a productive 36-year affiliation, the GTU is pleased to welcome the Institute of Buddhist Studies (IBS) as the consortium's ninth member school. IBS has provided graduate-level education in the Buddhist tradition for more than half a century, with specialized training in Buddhist chaplaincy and Jōdo Shinshū Buddhist ministry.



IBS is the GTU's first non-Christian member school, furthering the GTU's commitment to interreligious life, learning, and leadership.

"By becoming a full member school, we'll be an even more vital part of this community, contributing to and shaping the future of interreligious education," said Dr. Scott



Mitchell, Dean of Students and Faculty Affairs at IBS. "The impacts of this step are already felt and will be far reaching."

A Buddhist seminary and graduate school, IBS has been offering Buddhist education in Berkeley since 1949. *Photo: Benjamin Heller*

GTU welcomes inaugural East Asian Art and Religion Fellow

The GTU has welcomed Dr. Dessislava Vendova as its inaugural Postdoctoral Fellow in East Asian Art and Religion. This two-year appointment is a joint project of the GTU's Center for the Arts & Religion (CARE) and the Asia Project. It includes teaching, exhibition curation, and conference planning.

"We are absolutely thrilled to welcome a scholar of Dessi's caliber to the GTU," said CARE Director, Interim Dean, and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dr. Elizabeth Peña. "The interdisciplinary nature of [Dr. Vendova's] work makes her a wonderful fit for our community, and her area of expertise helps us provide a more complete curriculum for the arts and religion at the GTU."

Coming to the GTU from Columbia University, where she earned PhD, MPhil, and MA degrees in Religion (Buddhism),



Dr. Dessislava Vendova, the GTU's inaugural Postdoctoral Fellow in East Asian Art and Religion. *Photo: Benjamin Heller*

Dr. Vendova specializes in early Indian art and premodern Chinese Buddhism and art. Prior to Columbia, Dr. Vendova spent 11 years living and studying in China and Japan. She has also conducted wide-ranging field research in India.

Dr. Vendova taught her first GTU course, "The Genesis of Buddhist Art," in Fall 2020. Her next project, "Trees in the Life of the Buddha," will contribute to the GTU's work in sustainability by exploring religious practices connected with tree worship, tree spirits, and other tree deities in early Buddhist texts and art.

"Faculty across the GTU are currently collaborating on courses and colloquia related to the agency of plants and spiritual experiences," notes Dr. Devin Zuber, former Chair of the Department of Historical and Cultural Studies in Religion. "I am so excited to have Dessi's work on sacred trees in Buddhism add to these initiatives."



Photo: Evgeny Tchegotarev on Unsplash

The Newbigin House of Studies and Wilmette Institute Join the GTU Consortium as Affiliates

This year, the GTU welcomed two new affiliates to its consortium. The Newbigin House of Studies and the Wilmette Institute became the GTU's fifth and sixth affiliates, in addition to its nine member schools and five centers, making it the largest theological consortium in North America.



NEWBIGIN
HOUSE OF STUDIES

Newbigin House is an ecumenical study center which has been developing leaders and renewing a vision for Christian ministry for a rapidly changing world since 2011. Their staff, along with senior and teaching fellows, bring rich experience in church and non-profit work, social justice ministry, vocational discipleship, counseling, and pastoral care.

"The experience and passion of their staff and fellows will create valuable new opportunities for GTU students to engage in study, conversation, and mentorship," said GTU President Dr. Uriah Kim.

Today, the study center welcomes more than 90 participants in the annual Newbigin Fellowship for Faith, Peace, and Justice, a nine-month journey into Christian theology, spirituality, and community for clergy, laity, and students alike.

"In tumultuous times like ours, it's hard to imagine doing theological education without creative collaboration and robust interreligious dialogue, both of which have long been hallmark features of the GTU."

— Dr. Peter Choi, *Dean of Newbigin House*

"In tumultuous times like ours, it's hard to imagine doing theological education without creative collaboration and robust interreligious dialogue, both of which have long been hallmark features of the GTU," said Dr. Peter Choi, Director of Theological Education at Newbigin House. "We are especially excited about the many extraordinary opportunities opening up for our fellows and students as we join this vibrant consortium of learning."



Wilmette Institute

The Wilmette Institute is a higher educational institution that has offered courses in Bahá'í history, texts, and the Bahá'í approach to social transformation since 1995. Current and future courses also include a wide array of topics on sustain-

ability, environmental ethics, peace education, countering racism, the advancement of women, and establishment of a stable and just global system.

"The values and mission of the Wilmette Institute beautifully mirror the GTU's own dedication to creating a more just, equitable, and sustainable world," said Dr. Uriah Kim.

"The Wilmette Institute is excited to affiliate with the Graduate Theological Union to offer the perspective of the Bahá'í Faith on the role of religion and spirituality in bringing about lasting social change," said Director Robert Stockman. "We look forward to participating in the many opportunities for dialogue within the GTU family."



NEW FACULTY

Introducing the New Madrasa-Midrasha Program Director: Dr. Mahjabeen Dhala

The GTU welcomes Dr. Mahjabeen Dhala as Assistant Professor of Islamic Studies and Director of the Madrasa-Midrasha Program, a collaborative effort of the Center for Islamic Studies and Center for Jewish Studies.

Dr. Dhala received her MA in Islamic Studies from the GTU in 2017 and her PhD from the GTU's Department of Sacred Texts and their Interpretation in 2021. For nearly two decades, Dr. Dhala has lead Muslim communities worldwide.

Founded in 2008, the Madrasa-Midrasha program explores the richness, diversity, differences, and commonalities of Jewish and Islamic traditions. As director,

Dr. Dhala will be responsible for the development and enhancement of public programs and resources that bring these two religious traditions and communities into a deeper study and dialogue.

"Mahjabeen has an exciting and strong record of teaching and religious leadership," said Dr. Deena Aranoff, Director of the Richard S. Dinner Center for Jewish Studies. "We are so lucky that her passion, skill, and vision will become a part of the Center for Islamic Studies and our Madrasa-Midrasha Program."

Read more about the Madrasa-Midrasha Program on page 18.



Dr. Mahjabeen Dhala, Assistant Professor of Islamic Studies and Director of the Madrasa-Midrasha Program. Photo: Benjamin Heller

The Koret Fellowship Trains Leaders to Facilitate Interreligious/Intercultural Dialogue

In increasingly polarized times, the world needs change agents who can skillfully facilitate encounters between religious and ethnic communities. The GTU recently partnered with the Koret Fellowship, training fellows to become leaders in interreligious and intercultural dialogue.

The GTU is fertile territory for this transformative journey. Six GTU students were selected for the Koret Fellowship, including representatives from Jewish, Christian, Islamic, Hindu, Buddhist, and indigenous faith traditions, from India, Sub-Saharan Africa, Southeast-Asia, and the United States. The Dialogue Institute of Philadelphia, an organization involved in building and sustaining transformative relationships across religion and culture, provided mentorship in facilitating meaningful interreligious and intercultural dialogue.

Reflecting on his experience as a Koret Fellow, Daniel Stein, a student at the GTU's Richard S. Dinner Center for Jewish Studies, describes the urgent need for this work:



Daniel Stein, Koret Fellow and GTU / Richard S. Dinner Jewish Studies student.

"(The Dialogue Institute's) methodology provided a framework for reflective listening as constructive engagement and reminded me that we could only share with our partners if we learn to shift our lens from evaluation to appreciation . . . As I heard (the others') stories, I grew in my admiration for them."

In addition to their training, the cohort facilitated two dialogue sessions with undergraduate students from Holy Names University in Oakland. Given the positive response, the GTU looks forward to the prospect of extending the fellowship, which promises to have a transformative impact on religious communities and academic institutions throughout the Bay Area.

As Daniel Stein concludes his reflection, "I am most grateful to the Koret Foundation, the Dialogue Institute, and most of all to the community of fellows who joined with me over this past year. The sense of connection, sharing, openness, and honesty we gave to each other allowed us the opportunity to truly see and be seen."

The Koret Fellowship is made possible through the generous support of the Koret Foundation, a philanthropic foundation based in San Francisco that devotes its resources to enhancing the quality of life for the Bay Area community through education, the arts, and civic institutions.

The GTU Welcomes its Newest Board of Trustees Members



Rev. Dr. Laura Barnes
Placerville, CA

Senior Pastor, El Dorado County Federated Church (a joint UMC/PCUSA congregation)

How would you describe your religious affiliation and/or spiritual background?

Raised in the Southern Baptist tradition in a megachurch in Dallas, I found that women could be ordained in the Presbyterian church. I returned to grad school for my MDiv and, when the PCUSA refused to ordain my LGBTQ siblings, I sought ordination within the United Church of Christ. I have been an ordained UCC minister since 2003, after graduating from the Pacific School of Religion in 2001. I also continued with my DMin at the University of Creation Spirituality.

In one word, how would you describe the way you feel about the GTU?

Jazzed!

What excites you about becoming a member of the GTU's Board of Trustees?

To support the institution that provided me with the ability to engage with others on their spiritual journey; to continue to expand my understanding of the necessity and power of interfaith realities; and to be part of a world where anything is possible, and imagination is part of the daily conversation.

What do you find inspiring about GTU 2.0 and the future of the GTU?

I am excited about the commitment to diversity within the current seminary education experience, as well as within its student population and leadership. I look forward to encouraging others to participate in supporting the GTU and becoming part of its ever-expanding vision for preparing the next generation of world leaders. On a personal note, I get to work with Bill Glenn (again) and a world-class group of individuals who are serving on this board and leading this institution.



Linda Dakin-Grimm
Hermosa Beach, CA
Lawyer, Speaker, Writer, Immigration Advocate

How would you describe your religious affiliation and/or spiritual background?

Catholic

In one word, how would you describe the way you feel about the GTU?

Hopeful

What excites you about becoming a member of the GTU's Board of Trustees?

The GTU is, and can continue to be, a model of the way forward through the divisiveness in our country today. The acknowledged interconnectedness and mutual dependence of the GTU's member schools, centers, and affiliates is this way forward. The GTU's leadership's humility, mutual respect, and willingness to work together for the common good inspires me.

What do you find inspiring about GTU 2.0 and the future of the GTU?

We are living through an era of change. I believe that theological education can be a major part of the healing needed for a saner and safer future. GTU 2.0 aims to ensure that competent theological education, in community, remains available for a better future.



Rev. Dr. David R. Matsumoto
Albany, CA
President, Institute of Buddhist Studies (IBS)

How would you describe your religious affiliation and/or spiritual background?

Ordained by the Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha of Kyoto, Japan and affiliated with the Buddhist Churches of America, San Francisco. Served as minister at the Stockton Buddhist Temple and Berkeley Buddhist Temple.

In one word, how would you describe the way you feel about the GTU?

Inspired

What excites you about becoming a member of the GTU's Board of Trustees?

IBS is excited to join its partners in working to bring about the fulfillment of the GTU's expanded vision. Personally, I am looking forward to learning from my new colleagues and contributing to a dynamic and professional Board of Trustees.

What do you find inspiring about GTU 2.0 and the future of the GTU?

Grounded upon nearly 60 years of excellent scholarship and religious education, the GTU is set to explore the implications and real-world applications of multi-religious thought and practice.

The Board of Trustees is the GTU's governing body, responsible for the academic graduate programs offered by the GTU as an accredited institution.

Continued on next page



Anthony Millette

Oakland, CA

Director of Liturgy and Music,
Church of Santa Maria, Orinda,
CA

**How would you describe your
religious affiliation and/or
spiritual background?**

Roman Catholic

**In one word, how would you
describe the way you feel about
the GTU?**

Enthusiastic

**What excites you about
becoming a member of the
GTU's Board of Trustees?**

GTU has the incredible opportunity to bring people together to be able to be an instrument of transformation for the individual and our world.

**What do you find inspiring about
GTU 2.0 and the future of the
GTU?**

Amid a global pandemic, those charged with running this amazing institution had the time, passion, and vision to create this new model of who we are as an institution.

Dr. Ejaz Naqv

Walnut Creek, CA

Physician

**How would you describe your
religious affiliation and/or
spiritual background?**

Muslim

**In one word, how would you
describe the way you feel about
the GTU?**

Much-needed

**What excites you about
becoming a member of the
GTU's Board of Trustees?**

The opportunity to make a difference in our common goal of promoting interfaith understanding and harmony.

**What do you find inspiring about
GTU 2.0 and the future of the
GTU?**

The renewed focus on diversity and inclusion.

Dr. Kathy Ogren

Redlands, CA

Provost and Chief Academic Officer,
Executive Director
Marin Campus

**How would you describe your
religious affiliation and/or
spiritual background?**

Confirmed in the Lutheran Church, non-practicing in any specific religious community, broadly interested in religious and spiritual practices.

**In one word, how would you
describe the way you feel about
the GTU?**

Positive

**What excites you about
becoming a member of the
GTU's Board of Trustees?**

The opportunity to learn more about and contribute to the consortium that SFTS (now embedded in the GST and the University of Redlands) helped create.

**What do you find inspiring about
GTU 2.0, and the future of the
GTU?**

Responsiveness to religious and spiritual seekers.

Dr. Khalia J. Williams

Atlanta, GA

Candler School of Theology,
Emory University - Associate
Dean of Worship and Music;
Associate Professor in the
Practice of Worship; Co-Director
of the Baptist Studies Program

**How would you describe your
religious affiliation and/or
spiritual background?**

Christian (Baptist)

**In one word, how would you
describe the way you feel about
the GTU?**

Grateful

**What excites you about
becoming a member of the
GTU's Board of Trustees?**

The opportunity to serve and give back as a way of staying connected and honoring the institution's gift of growth in scholarship and aiding me in finding my voice.

**What do you find inspiring about
GTU 2.0 and the future of the
GTU?**

I am excited about the energizing possibilities of the future of the GTU. Through strategic shifts, an emphasis on social justice, and a deepened focus on cultivating creativity, we are positioning ourselves to be a unique leader in the world of theological education.

The Board of Trustees includes representation
from GTU member schools, faculty,
and the wider GTU community.

Learn more about our Board of Trustees, its membership,
and key initiatives at gtu.edu/about/board-trustees.



Stephen De Staebler's "Winged Figure" (1993), gifted to the GTU on the occasion of its 30th anniversary, welcomes students, faculty, and staff back to the Hewlett Library.
Photo: Benjamin Heller

BUILDING A LIBRARY

for Today and Tomorrow

New Director of the GTU's Library Services is passionate about preservation



On the occasion of being named the Director of Library Services at the GTU's Flora Lamson Hewlett Library in September, the GTU held an extended conversation with Colyn Wohlmutter to learn what led her to this role, what inspires her passion for library services, and what excites her about the Hewlett Library's future.

Did you grow up loving books and spending time in libraries?

We were a literate and cultured household — we spent countless weekends in the Fine Arts Museums in San Francisco, where my mother was a docent. She taught my brothers and I to read well before we started school. Unlike my brothers, I much preferred television to books.

It wasn't until I encountered *The Mahābhārata* in my late twenties that I really started reading. I fell in love with the epic. They say it's larger than *The Illiad* and *The Odessey* put together, and I've read 2.75 complete translations. I say 2.75 because my favorite, the last one I picked up, was started by a man named P. Lal who died in 2010 with the *Śanti Parva* incomplete.

What attracted you to the GTU and its mission?

Its reputation is unquestioningly what drew me to the GTU. The GTU is an integral part of Bay Area history. I used to periodically check the Employment Page on the GTU's website to see if anything had opened. Before the job I finally got was ever posted, I met a former Library Director through my mom's participation in Catholic religious life in Santa Fe, New Mexico, where she and my father had retired. Through



Colyn Wohlmutter became Director of Library Services at the Flora Lamson Hewlett Library this summer. Photo: Benjamin Heller

"Its reputation is unquestioningly what drew me to the GTU. The GTU is an integral part of Bay Area history ... To be a part of the GTU now, when the interreligious focus has really come into its own, is thrilling."

their involvement in this community, I met Bonnie Hardwick, my Director of Library Services Great-Great-Grandmother (who served in this role from 1999 to 2006).

What does being named GTU's Director of Library Services mean to you?

To be a part of the GTU now, when the interreligious focus has really come into its own, is thrilling. I'm keenly aware of the lineage of which I have now become a part. I follow in a long line of Library Directors who valued research, scholarship, teaching, and learning, but who desired above all to preserve the history of theological thought and its present manifestations. I'm talking about millennia of thought.

Being named Director carries with it the responsibility of ensuring that the theological discussion can continue centuries into the future, without losing sight of a single heretic, truth claim, doctrine, ritual, or scripture as it relates to our member schools, centers, affiliates, or any of those with whom they debate. The chance to work to build the Library, not just for today, but for the faculty and students who will come 20, 50, 100 years from now—in concert with this talented, dedicated, and accomplished community of scholars—is terrifying and humbling. I am humbled by the confidence my friends and colleagues at the GTU have placed in me.

The GTU Library is the largest theological library on the west coast, with more than 700,000 items in its collection. In-person library access resumed this fall.

Photo: Benjamin Heller



THE HEART of The GTU

Continuing and expanding service during the COVID-19 pandemic



In a time of building closures and remote learning, the Flora Lamson Hewlett Library continues to be the heart of the GTU. While the COVID-19 pandemic raged around the world in 2020 and into 2021, forcing closures and restrictions in almost every sector, the Flora Lamson Hewlett Library staff worked tirelessly to sustain and innovate ways to meet the GTU community's ongoing needs for library services and resources.

"Credit goes to my predecessor, Clay-Edward Dixon, for keeping the library afloat during the difficult beginning months of shelter-in-place ordinances," says Colyn Wohlmutter, Director of Library Services.

"He was here pretty much every day, along with Jeffrey Jackson, Head of Access Services, and Stephanie Miller, Branch Librarian, hammering out ways to get materials to students who couldn't come into the building. I am committed to maintaining continuity of service."

"Since patrons couldn't come into the building, we offered curbside pickup," says Stephanie Miller, SFTS Branch Librarian. "At SFTS, we'd bag up items for faculty, students, and community card holders and leave the bags on top of the book return for people to pick up. Additionally, we offered scanning services so that people who would normally come

in to copy a journal article or book chapter could have a library staff member do that for them."

"While the library building was closed, we were still running full library services," explains Beth Kumar, Learning and User Experience Librarian at the Hewlett Library. "Additionally, our reference desk, which offers research help, switched to remote. Our most popular service is the Ask-a-Librarian chat, which has been available every weekday for the entire pandemic. We also offer live Zoom appointments and workshops, pre-recorded workshops, and extensive guides online."



A student works at a desk on the first floor of the Hewlett Library as in-person services and access resumed this fall. Photo: Benjamin Heller

Impressively, the Hewlett Library expanded its services to meet the demand of students as they returned to campus this fall.

“There’s just no substitute for the physical book,” says Wohlmutter. “Although we’ve substantially increased access to electronic formats, the corpus of theological study still resides predominantly in print. Essentially, we’ve tripled our work with the same number of staff. It’s not easy—but our staff is passionate about service.”

“We’ve modified curbside pickup so that people can drop in anytime during open hours to pickup items,” Miller notes. “People can reserve study space, and at SFTS, students have additional rooms for spiritual direction that they can reserve online through the library. I’m proud of the ways library staff members continue to step up.”

“We have expanded our e-book collections, and online research databases,” says Kumar. “While we continue to offer all of the new online services, we have started being back in the library again to answer face-to-face questions, and we have added a curbside pick-up time on Sundays for those who have a hard time making it to the library on weekdays.”

“I love hearing that people love being back in the library,” Miller says. “I think we can all relate. Despite [variant] fears, giving the first tour to new students this semester felt like a real sign of resilience and hope for the coming year.”

“It’s been great having students back in the stacks and seeing them again, and, for some of our students, meeting them for the first time in person,” Kumar adds.

Looking to the future, GTU Library staff share several sources of hope and excitement.

“I hope that faculty, students, and library staff can work together to embrace equitable pathways to research,” says Miller. “One of the ways we can do this is by using open educational resources (OER) as classroom texts instead of expensive textbooks. My favorite part of working in a library is hearing how students and faculty are putting their work into action to benefit society.”

“I also hope that the library remains a comfortable, inviting, and buzzing center of research, writing, and learning,” Miller



Beth Kumar, Learning and User Experience Librarian at the Hewlett Library, and Stephanie Miller, SFTS Branch Librarian.

Hewlett Library staff worked tirelessly to maintain continuity of services during the pandemic and expand library services.

Photo: Benjamin Heller

adds. “SFTS is celebrating 150 years this November, so I am looking forward to seeing alumni and breaking bread and worshipping together. I am also excited to welcome more students from a variety of member schools and organizations.”

“I’m excited when I Zoom with a GTU student on the other side of the world, and I can share my screen and help them with their research,” says Kumar. “The personal connection part of my job hasn’t changed at all.”

“I hope to expand print collections along with the expansion of electronic resources so our community may continue to produce globally relevant research that models the intersection of religious pluralism and social justice,” says Wohlmutter. “Our stakeholders understand and admire the traditional library. There is still a tremendous value in a quiet place to study and lay out multiple books, arguing with thinkers of the past and present. That tradition has been successful for millennia, and parts of it must be preserved even as we incorporate new technologies. There is no reason old technologies and new can’t walk together hand in hand.”

“I love hearing that people love being back in the library . . . I think we can all relate. Despite [variant] fears, giving the first tour to new students this semester felt like a real sign of resilience and hope for the coming year.”

— Stephanie Miller, SFTS Branch Librarian

The Dialogue of Interreligious UNDERSTANDING & EXPLORATION

An interview with Dr. Mahjabeen Dhala



In a recent interview with the GTU, Dr. Mahjabeen Dhala, who began her position as Assistant Professor of Islamic Studies and Director of the Madrasa-Midrasha (MM) Program at the GTU earlier this year, paints a vivid portrait of the work of Madrasa-Midrasha, how it aligns with the GTU's mission, and shares her hopes for the program's future.

What do “Madrasa” and “Midrasha” mean? How does the meaning of these terms and their juxtaposition help elucidate the mission of this initiative?

The Arabic word *madrasa* (مدرسة) refers to any type of educational institution, secular or religious, whether for elementary instruction or higher learning. The word derives from the tri-consonantal Semitic root *د-ر-س* (D-R-S), meaning “to learn or study.” The modern Hebrew word *midrasha* (מדרשה) refers to a place of Jewish learning. It grew out of the words *beit midrash*, an ancient rabbinic term that means house of study. The Hebrew root of *midrasha* refers to the process of inquiring into sacred texts to derive meaning.

Both terms convey a sense of critical study and passionate learning along with care and concern for the subject of study, the place of study, and all parties involved in the process of study. Their combination embraces learning as sacred and transformative. These terms capture the mission of the program: to advance study, dialogue, and understanding on Jewish and Islamic texts and contexts within academia and the larger public.

“Through my work with the MM program at the GTU, I have learnt that when the going gets tough, the tough meet the moment with passion, compassion, and faith to offer knowledge, hope, and support for a better and more just world.”

— Dr. Mahjabeen Dhala



What are the origins of Madrasa-Midrasha? What enabled this program to launch?

The Madrasa-Midrasha program was founded in 2008 as a collaborative effort between the Richard S. Dinner Center for Jewish Studies and the Center for Islamic Studies to explore the richness, diversity, differences, and commonalities of Jewish and Islamic traditions. Over the years, the program has flourished under the dedicated leadership of Dr. Deena Aranoff, Dr. Munir Jiwa, and Dr. Naomi Seidman.

How does Madrasa-Midrasha serve as an exemplar of our institutional commitment to fostering interreligious dialogue?

As an academic institution of higher education and as a consortium of member schools, the GTU offers a unique opportunity to bring together critical academic methods with diverse faith perspectives to advance interdisciplinary research. The GTU's commitment to interreligious dialogue is evident in the diversity of the course offerings, focus on interreligious course curriculum, the Interreligious Studies Certificate, and the Interreligious Chaplaincy Program. The annual MM spring courses model an interreligious curriculum and class dynamic. Through its public-engaging programs, diverse faith communities and secular communities engage in dialogue around shared themes.

What work is Madrasa-Midrasha currently doing that you would like others to know about?

Currently, the program facilitates



The Madrasa-Midrasha program uniquely reflects the GTU's core commitments, offering broadened perspectives through interreligious courses, events, and program offerings. Photos: Benjamin Heller

interreligious understanding and exploration through four initiatives:

(1) **Course Offerings:** MM offers a course every spring semester, which is open to all students. Last spring, I co-taught an online course titled “Women and Gender in Jewish and Islamic Texts and Practices” with Dr. Naomi Seidman, who is presently the Chancellor Jackman Professor in the Arts at the University of Toronto, and who has previously served as director of the MM program. I am excited to teach the next MM course in the spring of 2022, which will explore “Theories and Practices of Justice in/and Religion.”

(2) **Student Summer Research Grants:** With the generous support of the Walter and Elise Haas Fund, we are able to offer student grants to encourage interdisciplinary and collaborative research. Last summer six students received grants that facilitated their research on Jewish and Islamic sacred texts, chaplaincy, and fashion, as well as Islamophobia and narratives of racial othering.

(3) **Developing Academic Partnerships:** Under the leadership of Dr. Deena Aranoff and Dr. Munir Jiwa, the MM program hosts faculty colloquia, bringing together colleagues from UC Berkeley and the

GTU from a range of academic disciplines in Jewish studies and Islamic studies to engage in discussions around their academic research and comparative pedagogy across the two traditions.

(4) **Public Programs:** Besides engaging with academic scholars and students, the MM program also engages communities of multi-faith affiliations in conversations around sacred texts, rituals, spirituality, mysticism, art, religious education, culture, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and other related themes.

How has the Walter & Elise Haas Fund helped Madrasa-Midrasha advance its mission? What existing initiatives or new initiatives are being funded by this grant?

Through their generous support, the Walter and Elise Haas Fund continues to facilitate the MM spring courses, the public programs, the GTU-UCB faculty colloquia, and the student research grants for collaborative research. We are working toward the possibility of offering intersession and summer programs that are both academic and for the wider public.

What are your hopes for the future of the Madrasa-Midrasha program?

Since 2008, the MM program has demonstrated leadership in effectively bringing together Jewish, Muslim, and other communities in deeper conversations around shared sacred, moral, social, cultural, and academic understandings. With my background in Theology and Women's Studies in Religion, I am keen to explore how the MM program could lead, facilitate, and advance research and dialogue on women's contributions to religious education and leadership from an interreligious perspective.

What do you find most fulfilling about working with the Madrasa-Midrasha program? What have you learned in this work?

It is most gratifying to offer students resources that widen their interreligious and interdisciplinary perspectives through courses and grants. Through my work with the MM program at the GTU, I have learnt that when the going gets tough, the tough meet the moment with passion, compassion, and faith to offer knowledge, hope, and support for a better and more just world.

Healing the World with HOPE & ACTIVISM

Rev. Dr. Al Tizon (PhD '05) celebrates his Filipino heritage
and God's work among the most vulnerable



In August, the Rev. Dr. Al Tizon (PhD '05) was named the 2021 GTU Alumnus of the Year. Dr. Tizon is Affiliate Professor of missional and global leadership at North Park Theological Seminary and the author of multiple books on holistic Missiology. He has engaged in community development, church leadership, advocacy, and urban ministry in the United States and in the Philippines.

"Dr. Tizon's selection as the GTU Alumnus of the year is well deserved," Dr. Elizabeth S. Peña, Interim Dean and Vice President for Academic Affairs, wrote of this selection. "Dr. Tizon's global perspective and the intersectionality of his teaching and activism reflects what the GTU hopes for all of its graduates."

On the occasion of this honor, Dr. Tizon shared what this recognition meant to him, how the GTU uniquely prepared him for local and global ministry and scholarship, and how his time at the GTU continues to shape his approach to today's unique challenges.

What does it mean to be recognized as GTU Alumnus of the Year at this time?

This recognition means much to me on several levels. Of course, it feels good to be recognized personally. Consider me reenergized to keep doing what I'm doing! But on another level, being recognized for the kind of work in which I've engaged—justice, reconciliation, peacemaking, earthkeeping, urban ministry, holistic mission—speaks to the value in the eyes of God of the poor, oppressed, marginalized, and lost. By this award, the GTU



The Rev. Dr. Al Tizon celebrated being named GTU Alumnus of the year by returning to the Hewlett Library, where he spent years as a PhD student. Photo: Benjamin Heller

acknowledges, affirms, and advocates for the world's most vulnerable.

What does it mean to be the first Filipino named GTU Alumnus of the Year?

The sense of honor is deepened by this realization. If my immigrant parents were still alive, they would be proud! I'm confident that I will not be the last Filipino to receive this award, as I know the faithful, quiet, subversive work many Filipino theologians and activists do. May my kababayan (fellow Filipinos) be inspired to be true and faithful to their calling to be lovers of God and lovers of people, especially the needy.

In what ways did your studies at the GTU prepare you for teaching patterns of faith that encourage justice and care of the planet? How did the GTU prepare you to be an educational and theological resource for local communities and the wider world?

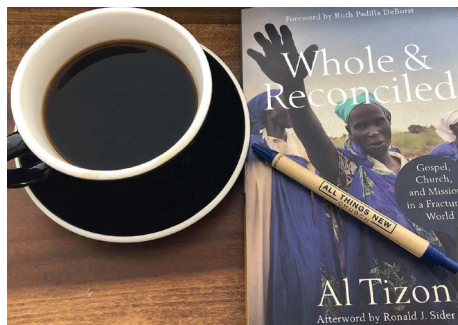
The GTU provided the perfect environment for someone who knew that there was more to life, faith, and mission than the evangelical tradition to which he adhered (and adhere). I arrived at the GTU after ten years of community development work in my homeland of the Philippines as part of a small, theologically conservative mission-sending agency. The residents of the impoverished communities (both urban and rural) in which I lived and worked during those years taught me invaluable life lessons, forcing me to ask questions that my tradition would probably consider out-of-bounds: What of orthopraxy, in addition to orthodoxy? What does it mean to practice rightly among the poor? What does it mean to practice rightly with people of other cultures and other faiths?

Such questions led me to the GTU, where one is exposed to diverse faiths, cultures, and thought. I studied a holistic or integral mission movement forged by a global network of "radical evangelicals" called "Mission as Transformation." I knew a "single-lens" institution wouldn't do. Add to the GTU's diverse schools and affiliates the opportunities afforded us at Cal, and the "GTU lab" was a microcosm of our beautifully diverse world. What better place to study mission?

Any favorite memories from your time at the GTU that you would like to share?

"Being recognized for the kind of work in which I've engaged—justice, reconciliation, peacemaking, earthkeeping, urban ministry, holistic mission—speaks to the value in the eyes of God of the poor, oppressed, marginalized, and lost. By this award, the GTU acknowledges, affirms, and advocates for the world's most vulnerable."

— Rev. Dr. Al Tizon



Rev. Dr. Al Tizon's latest book, *Whole & Reconciled*, outlines a holistic missiology, toward a ministry of reconciliation.

Photo: Al Tizon

I have so many good memories. Getting to know the professors who were willing to work with me was (and continues to be) the most meaningful and memorable. I remember when I finally formed my qualifying exams committee, I called a meeting, but being new to the area, I had no idea of venue. The late Dr. Lewis Mudge graciously offered his home. We had dinner together, and then I shared

my developing thoughts on my subject, as they spoke into the project. It was a doctoral student's dream!

I also remember being part of the Evangelical Round Table—not a very big table at the GTU! We would have our monthly brown-bag meeting. Sometimes it felt like an AA meeting: "Hello, I'm Al, and I'm an evangelical ..."

I remember the deep gratitude I felt when I was asked to give the graduate speech at commencement. I felt the same way when I received the call informing me that I was selected as this year's GTU's Alumnus of the Year.

What work do you feel especially proud of, as it embodies the GTU's values, that you might like to share?

I don't know if I'm so much proud of the books I've written or the holistic ministry programs I have had the privilege of starting or the churches I have served in as I am extremely grateful for these avenues through which I was and am able to serve those whom the world would call "the least of these." The poor, oppressed, and marginalized are the real heroes of God's story. To walk alongside, serve, and learn from them is core to the gospel to which I bear witness.

My current work has to do with peacemaking and reconciliation. My book *Whole & Reconciled: Gospel, Church, and Mission in a Fractured World* (Baker Academic, 2018) articulates my understanding of the crucial theology and practice of reconciliation. I long to see the walls built between genders, races, ethnicities, class, and so on erode. They have to; our future depends on it. This will take both profound appreciation for the diversity that is humanity and a commitment to the universal common good.

I strive for unity amid diversity. As a Christian, I add, "in Christ Jesus." Indeed, I have particular religious convictions, and I will be faithful to these. But the God who transcends my tradition (and everyone else's) compels me/us to love all. That is the gift of the GTU to me: the capacity to love, even and especially, the unlovable, the different, and the enemy.

Students of FAITH & PRAXIS

Four incoming scholars drawn to the GTU



EACH YEAR, the Presidential Scholarship Program provides four doctoral students, one from each department, with full tuition for five years. The fruit of generous donors' giving to the GTU, this prestigious scholarship is awarded based on merit by the GTU's doctoral admissions committee.

This year's Presidential Scholars represent a combination of international and domestic scholars, drawn to the GTU by a common interest in the unique intersectionality of mission, interreligious and interdisciplinary study, faith, and praxis they have found at the GTU.

Gilbert Duah Otuo-Acheampong *Sacred Texts and Their Interpretation*

The GTU represents another international stop on first-year PhD student Gilbert Acheampong's educational journey.

"I am most excited for another opportunity to study outside my home country, this time in the US," Acheampong writes, "and especially for the scholarship the GTU has awarded me, which will serve as a good motivation for my academic work."



"I am attracted to the GTU because of the emphasis it places on equipping leadership for ministry, I also want to take advantage of the diverse interreligious community of the GTU."

— Gilbert Duah Otuo-Acheampong

Prior to starting his doctoral studies at the GTU, Gilbert Acheampong completed his MA in Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Roehampton in London. Gilbert's doctoral work at the GTU will consider the role of Biblical Theology in

contributing to sustainable agriculture and ecology, focusing on the book of Deuteronomy.

"I am attracted to the GTU because of the emphasis it places on equipping leadership for ministry," Acheampong explains. "I also want to take advantage of the diverse interreligious community of the GTU."

Sophie Callahan

Religion and Practice

Sophie Callahan has spent the last four years pastoring an intentional Christian community on a Bay Area farm that practices hospitality, sustainability, and creativity, as she explains it, to bear witness to God's love.



"I am interested in the intersection of spiritual formation and ethics, questioning how our daily habits can form Christians into more ethical beings concerning racial, environmental, and economic injustice," Callahan writes. "I am curious which practices produce this personal and social transformation, particularly the practices of simplicity and hospitality."

Prior to practicing intentional community, Callahan earned her Master of Divinity degree from Candler School of Theology in 2017, where she focused on community engagement, exploring

consumerism, privilege, and race in the church. The intersection of her academic studies and her practical work in the intentional community led her to the GTU this fall to begin her doctoral studies, motivated by a desire to grow her skills as a community leader and educator.

"I chose the GTU because of the diverse community of learners, the partnership with UC Berkeley, and the opportunity to work with my faculty advisor, Dr. Jennifer Davidson."

— Sophie Callahan

"I chose the GTU because of the diverse community of learners, the partnership with UC Berkeley, and the opportunity to work with my faculty advisor, Dr. Jennifer Davidson," Callahan continues. "I hope that my ministry context and my academic work can mutually inform and inspire each other. I am excited to develop a theological project that has practical implications for the communities where I am called to serve."

Albert Douglas Honegan

Historical and Cultural Studies of Religion

"The MA in Biblical Languages program helped me to harmonize my faith and spirituality with my academic interests at the intersection of language and religion," Albert Douglas Honegan writes about the impact of his time at the GTU, having earned his MA in Biblical Languages from the GTU in 2020.

Honegan decided to continue his studies at the GTU. This fall, he began his doctoral work in the Historical and Cultural Studies of Religion Department, within the Art and Religion concentration. He plans to explore Christian music as a means of intercultural ecumenical dialogue.

"I am looking forward to learning more from the GTU's brilliant faculty and students. Our library, access to resources, and special enrichment programming are a great blessing. I am honored to call the GTU 'home.'"

"I am looking forward to learning more from the GTU's brilliant faculty and students. Our library, access to resources, and special enrichment programming are a great blessing. I am honored to call the GTU 'home.'"

— Albert Douglas Honegan



Javney Mohr

Theology and Ethics

"Throughout my life in study and movement struggle, I have been witness to a high form of love," Javney Mohr writes. "From under the tables of neighbours' labour-organizing, I was shown a critical pedagogy of love in the face of oppression. This place is the sacred and uncaded territories of the *x̱məθkwəy̓əm* (Musqueam), *Skwxwú7mesh* (Squamish), and *Selilwitulh* peoples, currently known as Vancouver, Canada, and the nation-state's poorest postal code. Here, settler-colonialism, racial capitalism, and patriarchy in violent intersection is lived experience. Yet, also, this place and people are where revolutionary love and movement struggle at its best is being sown."



"Of utmost importance in this discernment was that in the GTU, the rare but essential takes place: movement, scholarship, and faith converge. I see GTU as a vibrant community of critical scholar-activists, dedicated to the urgent work of justice, liberation, and hope."

— Javney Mohr

Mohr's doctoral work at the GTU is a continuation of the work she began at the University of Alberta, Universidad de Oriente in Cuba, and the United Nation's University for Peace in Costa Rica. Encountering works such as *Teaching to Transgress*, *Jesus and the Disinherited*, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, and *Freedom Dreams*, these undergraduate and graduate programs offered her the capacity to name, study, and engage in the dismantling of the global structures of oppression as a step in a liberation.

"The lives of the oppressed," she notes, "were acknowledged, powerful, and beloved. In scholarship and as an organizer, I am inspired and gripped by the role of solidarity, sacredness, and sacrificial love in movement struggle, and its proposition as critical praxis."

When asked what led her to the GTU, Mohr describes the convergence of essentials.

"The GTU reflected the question at the heart of that which I most sought for in an institution, an institution that understands itself as located *within* a community of people and place, committed to the actualization of justice. Of utmost importance in this discernment was that in the GTU, the rare but essential takes place: movement, scholarship, and faith converge. I see the GTU as a vibrant community of critical scholar-activists, dedicated to the urgent work of justice, liberation, and hope."

JOHN WEISER

Giving Back LOVE & SUPPORT

From Fleeing Religious Violence to Supporting Interreligious Dialogue



After retiring from Bechtel Group as General Counsel and Director, John Weiser became a trustee of the Graduate Theological Union in 1996 and served as Chairman of the Board for eight years. Over the past 25 years, John has played a vital role in the GTU's health and growth. The GTU had an extended conversation with John in October on his own spiritual and religious formation, why he became involved with the GTU, and what excites him about the GTU's future.

At age seven, I was abruptly torn from the bosom of an extended loving family with multiple cousins, aunts, and uncles, and a comfortable life. I was taken to a strange new land with only my mother, father, and sister. We were strangers in a strange land: Brazil. After two years there, including an extended stay in the undeveloped back country, we arrived in the United States, where after a few months I was sent away to a boarding school—once again a stranger in a new setting.

Years later, I understood that all of this was because my father was Jewish by birth and the Nazis—who had invaded our home country of Austria—would have sent him to a concentration camp if he had not escaped. I finally found confirmation of the Jewish nature of my father's family in my fifties. I had long known we were refugees, but not the religious reason for our escape. It was never discussed at home. If you want more detail, all of this is described in my book, *A Thousand Kisses*.

Religion has played an important part in my life. Through our travails and travels, we were regularly assisted by religious organizations, primarily Catholic. It was



"In a world often marked by religiously motivated violence, the GTU trains people who understand and appreciate other religions, and who can act as informed peacemakers. We need as many of those as we can train."

— John Weiser, former Chair of the GTU Board of Trustees

Catholic schools in Brazil and the US that accepted me on a non-paying basis, providing help, love, and support. When we came to the United States, I was sent to a Catholic boarding school in Upstate New

York, run by the Christian Brothers. In retrospect, they must have taken me on as a scholarship student.

My mother's family was deeply Catholic. We went to church regularly and my father often accompanied us. He supported my attendance at Catholic schools and was a model of good moral behavior.

Religion would have a lot to offer, if people took it seriously. If everybody just took the basic concept of every religion—treating their neighbor as they want to be treated themselves—it would make a huge difference. The Nazis took religious intolerance to the extreme in the Holocaust. Having been victimized by their Anti-Semitism, I strongly favor religious tolerance and interfaith cooperation.

The first thing that religions have to do is make peace among themselves. It's hard to talk about loving your neighbor if you're busy fighting your religious equals. I'm now working with the United Religious Initiative, the world's largest grassroots interfaith movement, where I serve as Chair of the President's Council of United Religions Initiative. I think a lot of the leaders of major religions are finding ways of cooperating. But that's at the heart of the GTU. That's what makes it so strong. I was delighted to become involved with the GTU.

I had heard about the GTU because Jesuits I knew were studying at the Jesuit School of Theology. When I was invited to join the Board, I quickly learned about the interfaith nature of the GTU, and I was very pleased to work in such a model of interreligious cooperation.

When I joined, the GTU was revisiting the Common Agreement, the basic constitution of the Union. I had had some experience negotiating alliances among companies and volunteered my services. Working on that committee, I became acquainted with the presidents of several GTU member schools. Later, the Chair of the Board resigned unexpectedly because of his daughter's critical illness, and I was asked if I would be interested in serving as Chair. I had just retired from my position as General Counsel of Bechtel Group, and interfaith cooperation was a high priority. I said I would be interested. I went through a vetting process and I was duly elected Chair. I was delighted.

I attended almost all committee meetings and had many sessions with Jim Donahue, then GTU President. Eventually we went on "asks" together and had two successful \$1 million "asks." This was very gratifying work. The Chair before me had endowed a Presidential Scholarship and it seemed to me I ought to do the same. Happily, I was able to do that.

One thing I am proud of was the establishment of the Center for Islamic Studies. As we looked around the GTU, the lack of an Islamic presence was palpable. It took some years and many meetings with various members of the GTU, but eventually, with the help of a foundation and some private donors, the Center for Islamic Studies (CIS) was launched [in 2007]. I helped raise and personally contributed to the seed capital. Through my seat on the Bechtel Jr. Foundation, I was able to direct annual gifts for many years to CIS. A lot of other people wanted to see it happen. It took time, but there were a lot of people working together.

What excites me about the GTU is the core idea: interfaith cooperation, interreligious experience, and education. The GTU brings different religions together and educates the future leaders of those religions—in the benefit of interreligious dialogue, of working together, in not seeing them as "the other."

In a world often marked by religiously motivated violence, the GTU trains people who understand and appreciate other religions, and who can act as informed peace-makers. We need as many of those as we can train. The world badly needs the GTU. It's the core idea of the GTU that fascinates and excites me.



Did you know . . .

. . . that the Graduate Theological Union is a charity eligible to receive Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCD) directly from your IRA? A Qualified Charitable Distribution is a direct transfer of funds from your IRA custodian, payable to an eligible charity such as the Graduate Theological Union.

QCDs can be counted toward satisfying your Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) for the year. If you're 72 years or older, you must take RMDs from your traditional IRA. There are stiff penalties for failing to take your RMD, and RMDs must be made before December 31 of each year. The GTU can accept distributions directly from your IRA custodian.

Did you also know that recent changes in the tax laws allow IRA holders who are over 70-and-a-half years old and do not itemize their deductions to make a QCD where the distribution is not considered taxable income?

Unlike regular withdrawals from an IRA, a QCD excludes the amount donated from taxable income. To qualify, certain requirements must be met. Please consult a qualified financial advisor or tax attorney with questions regarding QCD and RMD rules and regulations.

For additional information, questions, or assistance regarding the GTU, please contact:

Christopher Cox, Director of Advancement Services,
by email at ccox@gtu.edu, or by phone at (510) 649-2531.

Distributions can be directed to:

**Graduate Theological Union
Office for Institutional Advancement
2400 Ridge Road
Berkeley, CA 94709**

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A Lifelong Commitment to THEOLOGY & SCIENCE

Through the vision and leadership of Dr. Robert John Russell



After four decades of innovative leadership, Dr. Robert “Bob” Russell will be retiring from his role as Founding Director of the Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences (CTNS) at the end of this academic year. CTNS’s contributions to the intersection of theology and the natural sciences and global prominence in the field is the result of Dr. Russell’s decades-long labor of love. Reflecting on CTNS’s first 40 years, the GTU looks forward to expanding collaboration opportunities with CTNS and a bright horizon together.

The Birth of a Dream

The story of CTNS cannot be shared without the personal story of Dr. Russell. After losing his father at the age of 12, he was led to pursue questions about science, nature, and God. These questions coalesced in college as he studied physics, religion, and music at Stanford University.

At Stanford, Dr. Russell had the opportunity to meet Dr. Andy Dufner, a Jesuit physicist, working at the Stanford Linear Accelerator Center (SLAC), whose interests included the relationship between science and religion. During this time, Dr. Ian Barbour published his landmark book, *Issues in Science and Religion* (1966), which has been credited with creating the contemporary field of science and religion. Dr. Dufner and Dr. Barbour were early inspirations for Dr. Russell’s future work. After graduating from Stanford, he enrolled at the GTU in 1968, where he met Charlotte, his future wife. Their paths remained connected from that point on.

Earning his PhD in Physics at UC Santa Cruz, Dr. Russell went

on to teach Physics at Carleton College in Minnesota for three years. While there, he began sharing his idea of starting a center focused on the intersection of science and theology. Identifying the GTU as the ideal location for such a center, Dr. Russell and his family moved to the Bay Area in 1981 to make his dream a reality. Starting with a small staff and membership, CTNS has grown to hold a prominent position of global leadership, serving as a critical resource for scholars working in theology and the natural sciences.

Gratitude for 40 Years of Service & Excitement for the Future

How do you measure the impact of one’s life work? For Dr. Russell, it means establishing a firm foundation for a promising future. Reflecting on his experience teaching hundreds of MDiv and PhD students on theology and science, ethics, and Christian spirituality, and his commitment to advancing the work of science and theology with his own contributions on Big Bang



The annual Russell Family Fellowship in Religion and Science Research Conference brings leading scholars in these intersecting fields to the GTU. Pictured here, from left to right: Dr. Braden Molhoek (GTU alum), Dr. Robert Russell, Dr. Mary Cheng (GTU alum), Dr. Ki Wook Min (GTU alum), Dr. Noreen Herzfeld (GTU alum), and Dr. Brian Patrick Green (GTU alum). Photo: CTNS

cosmology, biological evolution, eschatology, and divine action, Dr. Russell shares his excitement for CTNS’s future.

“100 years from now, I won’t be here,” Dr. Russell shares, “but CTNS and the endowed Ian G. Barbour Chair and fellowships we’ve established will be.”

In addition to the work it has performed for 40 years in theology and science, the Center plans to expand its work to include issues of ethics and technology, continuing to offer cutting-edge scientific research. As a program of the GTU, the Center is now instructing students from many traditions, enriching the work of the Center while equipping religious leaders,

future chaplains, activists, and scholars to engage in critical interdisciplinary issues.

Congratulations to Dr. Russell and everyone involved in the first 40 years of CTNS’s work leading a global conversation at the intersection of theology and science. The foundation that has been established will allow scholars to continue researching cutting-edge questions at the intersection of theology and the natural sciences for many years to come. The future implications of this longstanding work are immeasurable.

“CTNS has grown to hold a prominent position of global leadership, serving as a critical resource for scholars working in theology and the natural sciences.”

40 Years of CTNS Achievements

CTNS's achievements over its first 40 years are numerous. Some of its most significant accomplishments include:

- Conducting a 20-year collaborative research project on theology and science with the Vatican Observatory, resulting in five scholarly published volumes.
- Receiving the first NIH-sponsored grant awarded to a theological organization for the ethical (legal and social) implications of the Human Genome Project
- Creating the Science and Spiritual Quest Program, which brought senior-level scientists together for large public conferences into dialogue internationally about the many ways in which, for them, scientific research is a spiritual quest.
- Developing the Science and Religion Course Program, which offered \$3,330,000 in total by way of \$10,000 grants and created hundreds of new courses.
- Forming the Science and Transcendence Advanced Research Series (STARS), bringing together small teams of scientists and humanities scholars on collaborative research, through grants totaling \$1,300,000.
- Becoming one of the GTU's academic center in 2016, fostering broader support, collaboration, and stability.
- Establishing an endowed chair, The Ian G. Barbour Professor of Theology and Science, at the GTU.

- Establishing two endowed fellowships: the Charles H. Townes Graduate Student Fellowship and the Russell Family Fellowship.
- Creating the scholarly refereed journal, *Theology and Science*, now in its twentieth year.

Supporting CTNS's Future

Thank you to all who have generously supported CTNS's mission to bridge theology and science. If you would like to support CTNS, you can visit their website to donate online (ctns.org), or send a check payable to the GTU (include the name of the CTNS fund in the memo line, from the list below):

Graduate Theological Union Advancement Office
2400 Ridge Road
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The following CTNS funds are available to support:

CTNS General Fund
Supports teaching, CTNS Public Forums, *Theology and Science*, website resources, CTNS E-News, and more.

The Ian G. Barbour Chair in Theology and Science

Supports faculty research and seminary and doctoral education at the GTU.

The Russell Family Research Fellowship

Supports a worldwide leader in theology and science in sharing their research with GTU faculty and students.

The Charles H. Townes Graduate Student Fellowship

Supports the training and promising scholarship of current doctoral students in the field of theology and science.



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The GTU's Skylight Society honors donors who have made a future commitment to us through a bequest or other planned gift. We invite you to join this special group, whose gifts help ensure our mission continues — today and into the future. Membership in the Skylight Society is open to anyone who has or will be providing a planned gift of any amount or type.

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To explore these and other planned gift options please contact:

Stephanie Tristan, Chief Advancement Officer
stristan@gtu.edu

Please let us know if you have made a bequest or some other estate planning arrangement to support the GTU. It helps us with our organizational planning and allows us to express our appreciation in a way that is meaningful to you.

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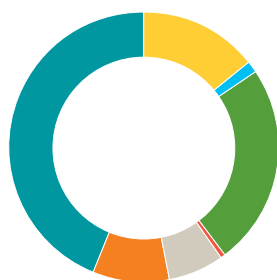
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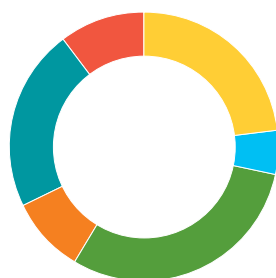
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● Other sources	\$41,700
● Government grants use	\$664,800
● Grant and funds use	\$903,900
● Endowment use	\$4,303,600
TOTAL	\$9,834,300

Operating Expenses FY 2020-21



● Instruction	\$2,336,100
● Academic Support	\$520,500
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