



# SPIRIT RUSTLINGS

The Program in Christian Spirituality  
at San Francisco Theological Seminary  
December 2009 Newsletter

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Scott Clark, Interim Program Manager

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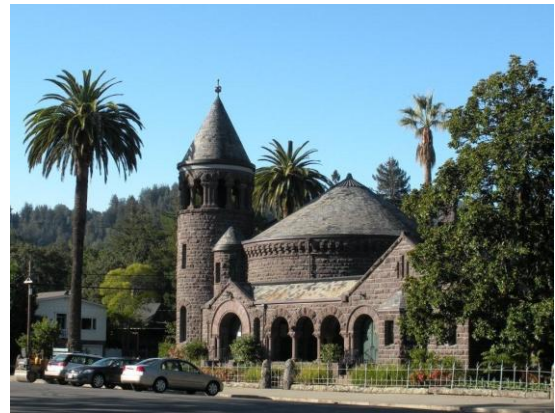
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## From the Director

Dear Friends in the Spirit—

The last several months have been a time of transitions for the seminary, including the Program in Christian Spirituality. Perhaps you've read or heard news about layoffs, early retirements, and—most recently—the resignation of President Butin, who plans to return to congregational ministry. Like a 747 flying through a thunderstorm, it has been a bumpy ride. But SFTS is not alone. The turbulence within the national and global economy has shaken nearly everyone, especially the poor, and I'm guessing that you, too—your families, churches, communities—have been affected.

Even in the midst of these turbulent times, the Program in Christian Spirituality continues to be blessed by the ongoing commitment and support of our friends, students, alumni, and seminary—and for this I am deeply grateful and humbled. Rather than “cutting back,” we've been able to expand our outreach to women and men who seek opportunities, assistance, and training in

paying attention and responding to the movement of God in their own and others' lives, the life of the church and human society, and God's wider creation.

Within this newsletter you will read about our upcoming 2010 January term for the Diploma in the Art of Spiritual Direction, as well as the initial "flight" of our new Doctor of Ministry-Pastor as Spiritual Leader. You'll also read of our hopes and plans to increase African-American leadership and enrollment in our DASD in the coming years. This edition of *Spirit Rustlings* also reports on past and future *Sacred Quests* led by our own Dr. Nancy Wiens, along with the launching of the Center for Nature and Christian Spirituality, which the PCS is co-sponsoring with the Westminster Woods Camp and Conference Center. Note, too, that the PCS is co-sponsoring with the Marin Interfaith Council its fourth trip this spring to the New Orleans area to assist in post-Hurricane Katrina construction. We continue to co-sponsor *Together in the Mystery*, a training for supervisors of spiritual directors, led by Maria Bowen and Rebecca Langer.

On the first Sunday of Advent, I heard these words read from the Apostle Paul: "How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we feel before our God because of you?" (1 Thess. 3:9) I confess that when I heard this question, I thought of *you*: our network of PCS friends and supporters who make it possible for us to offer courses, diploma programs, conferences, and retreats – all centered on the presence and movement of the Spirit of Christ among and within us. Please continue to keep us in your prayers and within your heart's "radar" as we trace the course of the Spirit as she flies freely among us. May we all follow her and, in following, find freedom.

Wishing you Christ's peace,

Sam



## Welcome to Dr. Barbara A. Holmes Joining the DASD Faculty in 2011



Dr. Barbara A. Holmes, Dean of the Seminary and Professor of Ethics and African-American Studies at the Memphis Theological Seminary, will join our DASD faculty beginning in January 2011. Among her many publications are *Race and Cosmos: An Invitation to View the Worlds Differently* (Trinity Press International, 2002); *Joy Unspeakable: Contemplative Practices of the Black Church* (Fortress Press, 2004); and *Liberation and the Cosmos:*

*Conversations with the Elders* (Fortress Press, 2008). In January 2011, Dr. Holmes will serve as “Contemplative-in-Residence,” participating in worship, classes, small groups, and faculty meetings—offering her prayer and insights. She will also meet regularly with a cohort of African-American DASD students (see next article). In January 2012, Dr. Holmes will teach the 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> Year DASD course, “The Art of Discernment”; in January 2013 she will co-teach with Dr. Maria Bowen the 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> Year DASD course, “Contemporary Issues in Spiritual Direction.” It is an honor to welcome Dr. Holmes to our DASD!

## An Initiative to Increase DASD African-American Leadership and Enrollment

For many years, the PCS leadership, the faculty, students, and alumni of the DASD, as well as the larger SFTS faculty, have been troubled by a lack of racial-ethnic presence and diversity within the DASD. Although the DASD continues to receive a growing number of international students, the program has failed to attract a significant number of U.S. minority students—whether African- or Asian-American, U.S. Hispanic or Latina/o, or Indigenous-Native American.

Much thought, prayer, and discernment has been given on how to enhance and increase our DASD’s racial-ethnic presence and diversity; this issue emerged very clearly in 2007 and 2008 as part of the seven-month “DASD Discernment Process.” A strong and common theme emerged in the discernment process for the DASD to “learn from and incorporate leadership and insights about the practice of spiritual direction from people of races and cultures—especially African-American—other than the U.S. ‘majority culture.’” As an “action step,” interviews and conversations were held with a number of

African-American SFTS faculty and staff, pastors, teachers, and spiritual directors in 2008-09. Here are a few overarching themes that emerged from these interviews and conversations:

▶ “Spiritual direction” is widely seen (that is, if it is seen at all) as a matter of “white privilege,” at least as it is currently taught and practiced—akin to the ways in which psychotherapy and counseling tend to be regarded among U.S. minority communities/cultures.

▶ That being said, “spiritual direction” or “guidance” does take place within the African-American/Black Church community, but in ways substantially different than those taught and modeled by the DASD and other (perceived) Eurocentric schools and programs.

▶ While the African-American/Black Church community is itself quite diverse theologically and politically, there are major streams or “themes” within the religious experience of African-Americans—ways of perceiving the presence and movement of God—that would both challenge and enrich the ministry of all pastors, churches, and spiritual directors, including those of the U.S. “majority culture. For example, African-American/Black Church spirituality tends to emphasize (more than “white Christianity”) the *communal* experience and discernment of the Holy, as well as the inseparability of spirituality and justice.

▶ If the DASD is serious about learning from/collaborating with African-Americans, then this commitment must be reflected in both its *leadership* and its *curriculum*. “Leadership” includes who stands in front of the classroom, who leads small groups, who participates in decision-making. “Curriculum” includes assigned reading from African-American, minority, and other “post-colonial” voices, as well as affirming the validity and insights of African-American experience, practices, and “ways of knowing.”

▶ That the DASD recruit a cohort of African-American students rather than one or two students each year. One pastor who recently completed a D.Min. at another PC(USA) school expressed appreciation for being: (1) actively recruited by the school, (2) recruited as part of a cohort of African-American and other minority students, and (3) offered substantial financial support. Being part of a cohort helped him experience a “sense of community within the community.” As a cohort, the minority students exercised greater



influence of course assignments, classroom discussion, and learning.

▶ Be prepared for change. If the DASD actively recruits African-American leaders and students, then the DASD Director, Program Manager, faculty, small group leaders, and students must be willing to be pushed and stretched—in both kind and sometimes painful ways—by the insights, wisdom, experience, and critique of these teachers and students. If the DASD is not itself willing to learn and reform, then it should not pretend otherwise.

Drawing on the insights and collective wisdom of the people interviewed, and with the support of the seminary and friends of the Program in Christian Spirituality, the DASD will do the following:

▶ Actively recruit African-American woman and men, ordained and lay, as applicants to our 2011 DASD. The goal is to establish a cohort of five to six people. As a key part of this recruitment, upon admission, the PCS will offer scholarship assistance (tuition and housing) for three January Intensives to members of the African-American student cohort.

▶ Recruit an African-American spiritual director/guide to serve as a small group facilitator to work in our DASD beginning 2011. He/she will work alongside other small group facilitators, working with a variety of students. He/she will be invited to offer his/her insights and critiques of the DASD—curriculum, leadership, etc.—as well as serve as additional staff support to students in the African-American cohort.

▶ Bring Dr. Barbara A. Holmes on to the DASD faculty beginning January 2011. [See article on Dr. Holmes, above.]

We ask your prayers as our DASD is urged on by the Spirit to be deepened, stretched, and re-formed by the presence and leadership of African-American teachers and students.

***If you know of someone who might be drawn to join the African-American student cohort in January 2011, please encourage him/her to apply!*** The Director of the PCS, Sam Hamilton-Poore, is already beginning to make contact with potential students and would welcome suggestions: [shamiltonpoore@sfts.edu](mailto:shamiltonpoore@sfts.edu). This initiative needs financial support as well, beyond the ongoing financial needs of the PCS/DASD. If you wish to make a special gift towards this initiative, please send your donations to Program in Christian Spirituality, 105 Seminary Rd., San Anselmo, CA 94960.

## Profile of a Friend: Nancy Wiens

### Spirituality and God's Unfolding Creation

The PCS continues to offer new and exciting opportunities to explore the connections between spirituality and the whole of creation:

- In October, the PCS sponsored *Sacred Quest*, a 12-day wilderness experience that invited participants to enter into a time of holy silence and integration, deepening their relationship with self, others, creation and God.
- Just a few weeks ago, the PCS announced its collaboration in a new initiative with Westminster Woods (a Presbyterian camp in the redwoods of Sonoma County). *The Center for Nature and Christian Spirituality* will offer the opportunity for young adults (ages 22-30) to live in Christian community while they explore the relationship between faith and creation, learning and working on projects centered in permaculture and sustainability.

DASD graduate Nancy Wiens (DASD, 1997; GTU Ph.D., 2007) has been actively involved in the visioning, implementation, and leadership of both of these initiatives. We took a few minutes to talk with Nancy about what she has experienced in this work:

**Nancy, you've just led the PCS's *Sacred Quest*. Could you tell us what that experience has been like?**



I love leading a Sacred Quest because the process invites people to explore deeply what God is already doing with them and to bask in that experience in nature. This process offers clarity and wisdom as people discern God's calling for their next step in life. Sometimes we focus on what is *next* in our lives without really connecting with what *already* is happening with God, so we miss the depth of the experience and the signs of God's calling. On a quest, however, the time in nature affords such a clear mirror of who we are and of God's presence that it astounds people. Seeing the clarity in a person's face when they return from the solo time is truly profound. Plus, doing a quest in the context of the PCS offers a deep experience of Christian community where all the parts contribute to the whole in empowering and inspiring ways—people's unique stories interweave with others' stories in ways only the Spirit could imagine. Beautiful!

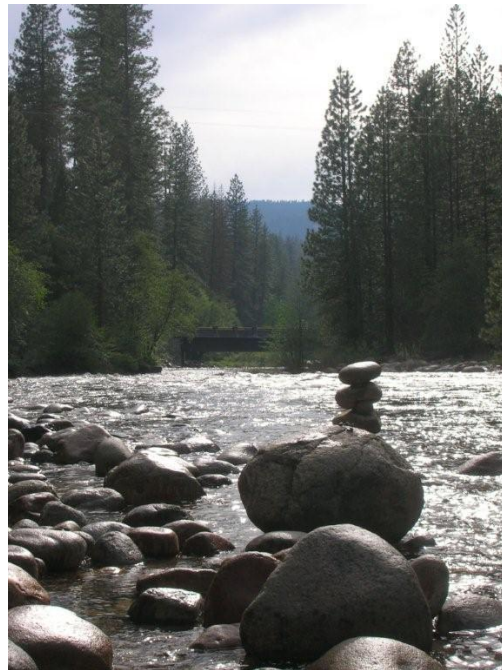
### **What were some of the significant moments for participants?**

Here's what Eric Ledermann (Associate Pastor – First Presbyterian Church, San Bernardino) shared about his experience:

"It was in the telling of my story, in the listening to the stories of others, and in the reflecting upon my experience in the wilderness that the reality of God's presence in both the spectacular and the mundane truly came alive for me. I continue to rest and wrestle with this new insight which has become increasingly significant for me during my re-incorporation."

### **The PCS is excited to be collaborating with Westminster Woods on the new Center for Nature and Christian Spirituality. What is the spirit of this new program? What inspired you and Sheila Denton (Executive Director of Westminster Woods) to start this program?**

This program gestated quite some time through the inspiration of a number of people associated with the PCS. Jen Butler (who was part of the Youth Ministry and Spirituality Project), and Sheila Denton (who is a DASD graduate and has worked with thousands of high school and college-aged people), and I noticed that many young adults struggle with their faith after high school. These struggles take different forms—whether it is moving out of their childhood homes and individuating from their parent's belief and values, or taking science classes in college that present the view that science is in conflict with faith, or not finding Christian communities in which they experience a vital practice of faith. The struggles often lead to them exiting the church and putting their spiritual growth on the shelf. Having their own children or experiencing a life crisis may bring them back to church someday. But in the meantime, they may choose careers and develop life habits or practices that do not necessarily reflect their own faith or beliefs. Plus, they may encounter real life challenges without the support of Christian community. We want to address those unmet needs underneath their exodus from the church, especially helping them to discern their vocations and to experience the companionship of Christian community.



The other part of the inspiration relates to nature. Far too often, people have profound experiences in nature that refresh and transform them, but they do not connect those experiences with the powerful presence of God acting in and through creation. Or they find deep commitments to working on ecological issues but do not connect it to any theology of hope and thus get

burned out or cynical. Therefore, the nature focus of the program includes a hands-on approach to practical skills in nature, a theology of nature shaped by Christian hope, and an understandable way to live as a Christian with a worldview shaped by contemporary science.

### **What will be the connection with SFTS?**

The participants will attend the SFTS Concentration in Spirituality classes that SFTS Dean Beth Liebert teaches. Each Wednesday they will be in class with her and other SFTS students; the class will include a small-group experience that I will lead. In exchange for that opportunity, the participants will help with ecological projects on campus. The first project will be to remove the invasive species that are devastating the biodiversity on the campus hillsides and that are creating potential fire hazards. The skills and insights that the participants learn through the permaculture aspect of the program will be put to use in developing more sustainable practices on campus, like water harvesting of rainfall for watering the landscape or restoring native habitats on campus or further development of the community garden. Along with Beth Liebert and Sam Hamilton-Poore, Carol Robb (Dollar Professor of Christian Social Ethics) and a number of SFTS administrators have enthusiastically fostered this collaboration with SFTS.

### **Who do you see as being particularly drawn to this experience?**

I imagine there are various doors that a person might be attracted to as they enter this program:

- One might be a *spirituality* door for people who want to deepen their experiences and relationship with God, as well as those who want to clarify for themselves how their faith can shape their daily life.
- Another might be a *nature* door for people whose connection with nature shapes their spiritual experiences and/or their activism.
- Another might be a *community* door for those longing to live in Christian community with intentionality and support.
- Yet another might be the *vocation* door for those longing to discern their next steps in life, trusting that nature is one of the powerful ways that God guides and supports our callings.
- Finally, another might be the *intelligible faith* door. This door might open a way for those who want a congruity between what they think intellectually and feel emotionally and sense physically in their bodies, as they live a Christian faith in this time when the urgency of ecological awareness is dawning more and more.

### **When does the 11-month program get started?**

We will have our first group in fall 2010, beginning with anywhere between 4 and 8 people.

### **Nancy, you've remained involved in the PCS in very creative ministries and outreach. At this point in your journey, where or how are you experiencing the movement of the Spirit in your ministry and service?**

I deeply appreciate the opportunities that the PCS has offered me to integrate my love of Nature, which includes people, with my love of God. Through my doctoral work in the dialogue between science and Christian spirituality, I came to have a deeper grasp on the complexity of factors that shape the human process of Christian discernment. The Sacred Quest and the Center for Nature and Christian Spirituality both integrate the insights I gained in that academic setting into spiritual practices that I pray will help people to collaborate with God in their daily lives. I think that collaboration is where meaning soars in the human experience. Our human part of the process can be so richly fulfilling. I want to share that with others and, in so doing, faithfully encounter it myself over and over.



For more information about the Center for Nature and Christian Spirituality, visit the website at [www.westminsterwoods.org/cncs/](http://www.westminsterwoods.org/cncs/)

## **PCS News**



### **Graduation 2009!**

Fourteen students received their Diplomas in the Art of Spiritual Direction on May 23, 2009. The Class of 2009 includes Maria Andita H. Barcelo, Jean Waring Boal, Victoria Anne Corliss Brown, Linda M. Capello, Wayne K. Chittenden, Mary Anne Cook, James Carl Gregg, Jr., Susanne Vanzant Hassell, Jennifer Ann Herrmann, Julie Ann Johnson, Ellen

Cooper Klyce, Cynthia Lousie Cook Morgan, Sarah Rorick-Orlando, and Denise Bowman Wylie. Congratulations to the graduates!!!

## Dr. Elizabeth Liebert Installed as SFTS Dean



The PCS continues to celebrate (with the whole SFTS community) the installation of Dr. Elizabeth Liebert as Dean of San Francisco Theological Seminary and Vice President for Academic Affairs. Beth was installed as Dean in a worship service in Stewart Chapel on Sunday, October 4, 2009. Beth will continue to serve as faculty for the PCS January Intensive, teaching *The Art of Discernment* in January 2010. The PCS gives thanks for the many gifts that Beth brings to the life and service of the seminary.

## The January 2010 Intensive: Welcoming Students for Two Programs

The faculty and staff of the Program in Christian Spirituality are excited to be welcoming (and welcoming back) students for *two* programs this January: (1) the Diploma in the Art of Spiritual Direction, and (2) the new Doctor of Ministry, with a concentration in the “Pastor as Spiritual Leader.” We will be welcoming a total of 51 students for the three-week intensive, and are very much looking forward to the learning, discernment, conversation, and community that will happen here in January. Students in the new D.Min. program will participate with the first-year DASD students in the first half of our Art of Christian Listening course, and will then join Marjorie Thompson (author of *Soul Feast*) for a course in Prayer and Discernment in Pastoral Ministry. The second- and third-year DASD students this year will participate in courses in the Art of Discernment and the History of Christian Spirituality. Chaplain Tim Mooney, and musicians Stephen Iverson and Mike McCarty, will lead our morning and evening prayer. Please hold the participants - students, faculty, and staff—in your prayers, as the Spirit nourishes and shapes us in community.



## Introductions: Scott Clark, Interim Program Manager



In September, the PCS was pleased to welcome Scott Clark as Interim Program Manager. Scott is a recent graduate of SFTS (M.Div. '09), who is sharing his gifts with the PCS while he seeks a call to serve in a congregational setting. In 2005, Scott relocated to California from Birmingham, Ala., where he had practiced law for 12 years, mainly working on cases involving employment discrimination and constitutional law. While in seminary, Scott participated in the PCS Spirituality Concentration, and served as a chaplain's assistant. Scott is looking forward to the January Intensive, and is grateful for the opportunity to work with the extended PCS family.

**New Orleans Service/Work Trip, March 20-27, 2010** The PCS is partnering once again with the Marin Interfaith Council to sponsor a service/work trip to help in the continuing effort to rebuild New Orleans in the still-continuing wake of Hurricane Katrina. The trip—scheduled for March 20-27, 2010—will offer the opportunity to help rebuild houses in the most devastated areas of New Orleans, to meet and share stories with the residents of New Orleans, and to experience shared contemplative action. The trip coordinator is Alison Hendley (DASD '08), who currently serves with the Marin Interfaith Council. For more information or to express interest, please contact Alison at [admin@marinifc.org](mailto:admin@marinifc.org), or the PCS program office, [dasd@sfts.edu](mailto:dasd@sfts.edu).

## Together in the Mystery: Supervision Training for Spiritual Directors

After graduating its first two classes last summer, one in California and one in Oregon, *Together in the Mystery: Supervision Training for Spiritual Directors* celebrates the formation of two more classes. The first class will convene for its introductory seminar in April 2010, in conjunction with Spiritual Directors International's Annual Conference in San Francisco, followed by its second weekend in Boston at the end of April 2011, just prior to the SDI conference there. The second class will convene in the spring of 2010 and the spring of 2011, meeting in the greater Seattle area both times. The program consists of an introductory three-day contemplative seminar, conducted over a long weekend in a retreat-like setting, followed by a year of supervised practice that culminates in a second contemplative three-day seminar. This second seminar features soon-to-be graduates presenting supervision information and demonstrations for their peers. This year's presentations included such topics as using the labyrinth in supervision, group



supervision, long-distance supervision, cross-cultural supervision, supervision in training programs, and employing the arts in supervision.

*Together in the Mystery* seeks experienced spiritual directors who feel called to pursue supervisor training. In addition, we will happily train supervisors on-site at your program. Please contact Rebecca Bradburn Langer, D.Min., or Maria Tattu Bowen, Ph.D., through [www.togetherinthemystery.org](http://www.togetherinthemystery.org), where you can receive further information and download an application.

**DASD Application Deadlines for 2011!** Even as we prepare to experience the January 2010 Intensive, the Program in Christian Spirituality is ready to receive applications for the 2011 Program. The deadlines to apply for the Diploma in the Art of Spiritual Direction January 2011 term are Aug. 1, 2010 (for housing priority), and Sept. 15, 2010. Call or e-mail the DASD program office for more information and an application today: [dasd@sfts.edu](mailto:dasd@sfts.edu) / 415-451-2838, or download an application at [www.sfts.edu/dasd](http://www.sfts.edu/dasd).

## Upcoming Events

### **Companions on the Inner Way Retreat: “Celebrating Our Soul-Soil”**

**April 11-16, 2010, at Holy Spirit Retreat Center, Encino, CA.**

Companions on the Inner Way offers this five-day journey of creative exploration, with featured presenter Ron DelBene. Participants will “observe how the seeds of God’s action in our lives are planted, break open, push through the ground of our soil and bloom in the gardens of our experience.” For more information, contact Joan Currey: [jecurrey@gmail.com](mailto:jecurrey@gmail.com) / 415-235-1027, or visit <http://www.companionsontheinnerway.org> And mark your calendars for the Companions on the Inner Way summer retreat: August 8-13, 2010, at Zephyr Point, NV. The featured presenter will be Jan Richardson.

### **Before The Cradle and Beyond the Cross Studying and Praying the Gospel of Matthew ~ A Retreat for Preachers**

**July 26-30, 2010 at SFTS**

This third annual event for preachers blends sermon planning for the 2010-11 lectionary year with contemplative practice and reflection. Each day begins and ends with contemplative worship and includes both a scholarly and prayerful approach to the Gospel lectionary texts from Advent to Easter. The co-leaders this year are Rev. Dr. Sam Hamilton-Poore (Director of the PCS), and Rev. Dr. Judy Yates Siker (Vice President for SFTS Southern California and Professor of New Testament and Christian Origins), with further leadership from the event chaplain, musicians, and spiritual directors. For more

information or to register, visit [www.sfts.edu/pcs/events](http://www.sfts.edu/pcs/events) or contact us at [dasd@sfts.edu](mailto:dasd@sfts.edu) / 415-451-2838.

## Sacred Quest

**A holy adventure to deepen relationships with self, others, creation and God**

**Oct. 20-31, 2010, San Anselmo campus and the Mendocino Wilderness**

Join us for a Sacred Quest. Guided by Nancy Wiens (DASD '97), this extraordinary holy adventure provides time for silence and personal integration in a wilderness experience to discern how God is present in your life and rediscover your gifts, talents and call to service. It is our hope that you emerge to serve your community with renewed energy, imagination, clarity and love. For more information, contact [dasd@sfts.edu](mailto:dasd@sfts.edu) / 415-451-2838.

## Alumni (and Others!) Rustlings ~ News from Fellow Pilgrims

**Heather Toteston (DASD '04)** continues her work with Universal Table, an organization committed to promoting tolerance and social trust along many dimensions of life. Her publications with their Wising Up Press include *God Speaks My Language, Can You?* and *Visible Signs*. Take a moment and visit the Universal Table's website at [www.universaltable.org](http://www.universaltable.org) to connect with their good work, and for more information on Heather's thought-provoking publications.

**A call-out for articles from Deborah Arca Mooney at Patheos.com:** [Patheos](http://Patheos.com), a new multi-faith website, is soliciting articles for the Spirituality tab on the [Mainline Protestant Portal](http://Mainline Protestant Portal). Patheos seeks a broad array of articles on spiritual practices, spiritual formation, and general musings/reflections on seeing/finding/noticing God in our daily lives for a broad audience. Patheos is also considering regular contributors for a new group blog entitled "Everyday Spirituality," featuring "spiritual directors" who would regularly offer inspiring blogposts on contemplative living. If interested, please email Deborah Arca Mooney at [darcamooney@patheos.com](mailto:darcamooney@patheos.com). Articles need not be original, as long as permission is granted from the original source. Book reviews on spirituality books also welcome! There is no pay for publication, but bios and links back to your work/website/blogs will be included. Plus, you will be helping to spread the good news of contemplative living with a new audience! Help share the life-changing spirit of the PCS with the rest of the world!

*Please submit your own or others' "rustlings" to us at [dasd@sfts.edu](mailto:dasd@sfts.edu).*

## Six Brief Book Reviews and Recommendations from Sam Hamilton-Poore

I'm a reader, always juggling several books at a time: fiction and non-fiction, poetry and prose, for work or play. Among the many delights of my work as Director of the PCS and teacher of Christian spirituality, is the need and opportunity to read widely and deeply in a variety of disciplines. Among the books I've read in the last couple of years, here's a short list of six that I especially recommend. All of these books connect, in some way, to the spiritual life, and none have been previously reviewed in *Spirit Rustlings*:

*A General Theory of Love*, by Thomas Lewis, Fari Amini, and Richard Lannon (Vintage, 2000). The three authors—all M.D.s and professors of psychiatry—do an artful job of summarizing recent scientific discoveries about the human brain, but with special attention to “pivotal urge” of our species “for intimacy.” Think of *A General Theory of Love* as a companion-volume to Gerald May's classic *The Awakened Heart*. Lewis, Amini, and Lannon offer insights that may be especially useful for spiritual directors, pastors, and therapists.



### Poetry of Ted Kooser

Special thanks to my friend and DASD classmate Jackie Kleinman for introducing me to the Kooser's poetry. Kooser is a Nebraskan and former U.S. Poet Laureate; he creates poem after poem—usually quite short—in which each word falls into place with perfect ease. But there's also an underlying element of wonder, even surprise, in nearly every poem. Start, as I did, with his *Winter Morning Walks: one hundred postcards to Jim Harrison* (Carnege-Mellon, 2000)—as the subtitle indicates, each poem is short enough to fit on the back of a postcard. Here, for example, is his poem “November 12” (p. 13.):

4:30 a.m.

On mornings like this, as hours before dawn  
I walk the dark hall of the road  
with my life creaking under my feet, I sometimes  
take hold of the cold porcelain knob  
of the moon, and turn it, and step into a room  
warm and yellow, and take my seat  
at a small wooden table with a border of painted pansies,  
and wait for my mother to bring me my bowl.

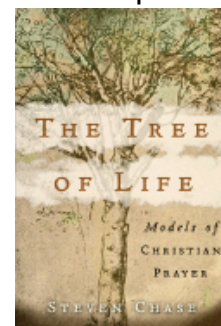
I've taken to using Kooser's poetry whenever I teach contemplative listening or prayer—or whenever I need to slow down and pay attention.

*Sensing the Spirit: The Holy Spirit in Feminist Perspective*, by Rebecca Button Prichard (Chalice Press, 1999). This is a book I wish I'd had years ago! Prichard presents a pneumatology that is grounded in the matter of creation, including human bodily experience, in a way that is Reformed, feminist, and poetic all at the same time. A favorite passage from page 29: "The Spirit is not bound by gender, class, or geography, nor is she contained by the boundaries of the Church. God's Spirit speaks in the words of the faithful, but not only and always in the words of the orthodox. In fact, it would seem that the free-spirited Word of God often speaks in a tone of voice critical and suspicious of the dominant voices in the church. This liberated Spirit is also liberating, freeing the tongues of those long-silenced and filling the lungs of believers whoever and wherever they may be."

*Joy Unspeakable: Contemplative Practices of the Black Church*, by Barbara A. Holmes (Fortress Press, 2004). Holmes sees within Black church practices many "indescribable moments of deep spiritual abiding" that bear all the marks of contemplative practice, "yet they are not identified as such in black Protestant churches" (p. 7.)—nor identified as such by White or Eurocentric churches. She contends that "African American contemplatives" turn the "inward journey" into a communal, shared experience that nurtures and encourages "congregational encounters with the mysteries of God." (p. 42.) This is a remarkable, resonant, and challenging book. "The world is the cloister of the contemplative. There is no escape." (p. 138.)



*The Tree of Life: Models of Christian Prayer*, by Steven Chase (Baker Academic, 2005). Chase uses five "models"—conversation, relationship, journey, transformation, and presence—to present the traditions and practices of Christian prayer throughout the centuries. Biblically informed, rich in theology and history, Chase's book is also beautifully and prayerfully written; indeed, it inspires prayer. A favorite sentence: "Prayer is like a kiss given and received. Given, it is God's presence to us; received, it is our presence to God." (p. 210) I've use *The Tree of Life* in my course on prayer for M.Div. students (along with Teresa Blythe's *50 Ways to Pray*), and the students have loved it.



*American Born Chinese*, by Gene Luen Yang (Square Fish, 2008) This is a graphic novel. Jin Wang is the only Chinese-American kid at his school; he's frustrated by being bullied and picked on, he's got a crush on an "all-American

girl,” and he loathes his own ethnicity to the point that he day-dreams that he’s “Danny,” an alter-ego who’s white, athletic, and great with the girls. Woven into the story is the ancient Chinese fable of the Monkey King. At key narrative moments, the author, who is Roman Catholic, also incorporates Psalm 139 and a meeting with the Holy Family!

## Resources

If you are interested in contributing a short article (100-400 words) to *Spirit Rustlings*, please let us know! We are looking for book reviews, poems and reflections on your application of the DASD. Also, please share with us any resources you have found helpful in your spiritual accompaniment of individuals and congregations. Tell us about books, curriculum and events you have found to be useful and inspiring.

## Spread the Word

Our research has proven that “word of mouth” is the way most students hear about our programs. For that, we say thank you! Please continue to help us spread the good news about the PCS in your communities of faith:

- Forward this e-newsletter to those who may be interested.
- Print our ads in your church newsletters (we can e-mail camera-ready art to you upon request).
- Order bulletin inserts and our new brochures for use at your churches at [dasd@sfts.edu](mailto:dasd@sfts.edu)
- Invite Sam Hamilton-Poore to lead a retreat and speak about the program in your area!

## Support for PCS

**Thank you for your ongoing financial support of the Program in Christian Spirituality:** Please send your gift to the Program Manager, PCS, 105 Seminary Rd., San Anselmo, CA 94960. Checks can be made out to SFTS. To make a donation online, please click on the link below, and select “Program in Christian Spirituality.” The page is secure and donations can be made by credit or debit card.

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**Seeking Scholarship Funds for PCS:** Each year, there are several students in our diploma programs who would benefit from financial assistance for their tuition and board. Thanks to generous gifts from the most recent graduating

classes, a DASD Scholarship Fund has been started. If you would like to contribute to this fund please mail your gift to the Program Manager, DASD/Scholarship Fund, 105 Seminary Rd., San Anselmo, CA 94960. The checks can be made out to SFTS.

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