

UNION NETWORK

The Magazine of Union Theological Seminary | Spring 2016



Securing Union's Future: Renovating the Campus
When "Spiritual Not Religious" Gets Religion
Donald W. Shriver, Jr., President Emeritus, On the
Science of Medicine and the Blessings of Love

UNION NETWORK

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On the Cover

James Memorial Chapel is at the heart of Union's worship life and the physical manifestation of Union's commitment to freedom of—and through—faith. The very design of the chapel supports expressive flexibility—without fixed pews or a permanent pulpit.

Cover Photo by Richard Madonna

Corrections to the Fall 2015 issue of *Union Network*:

In the alumna profile for Eboni Marshall Turman '05, '10, her professional title should have read Assistant Research Professor of Theological Ethics, Black Church Studies, and African and African American Studies and Director of the Office of Black Church Studies, Duke Divinity School, Durham, NC.

The article "Faculty Comings and Goings" should have clarified that the Rev. Dr. Pamela Cooper-White is an ordained priest in the Episcopal Church and was formerly an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ.

That same article announced that Ms. Penna Rose '68 had retired from the James Chapel staff as Director of the Union choir, but it should have noted that she continues as Director of Chapel Music at Princeton University.

President Serene Jones, Kelly Brown Douglas '82, '88, and Marvin Ellison '81



Gay Byron '92, '99 and Linda Thomas '81



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THE ALUMNI/AE COUNCIL: (FRONT ROW, L-R) David Sanchez '06, Cynthia Moe Lobeda '01, Sindy Morales Garcia '15, Linda Thomas '81, Kymberly Lucas '95, Marvin Ellison '81, Karen Byrne '07, Emily Enders Odom '90, Valerie Ross '14, '15, Kymberly McNair '08, '09; (BACK ROW, L-R) Christopher Jones '13, William Critzman '14, Seth Pickens '06, Maureen M. Morgan '63, Thomas J. Philipp '62, David Lewicki '04, Richard S. Hong '04; (NOT PICTURED) Mary Foulke '89, '96, Sharon Moe '86, Ben Sanders '08, Storm Swain '99, '09



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Dear Union Community,

GREETINGS FROM Union Theological Seminary! We're freshly in the new year and already have much to report. Our Islam, Social Justice, and Interreligious Engagement Program officially launches this semester under the direction of Dr. Jerusha Lamprey. Our 2016 Women of Spirit Lecture welcomes Dr. Katharine Hayhoe, an evangelical Christian, atmospheric scientist, and associate professor in the Department of Political Science at Texas Tech University where she is also director of the Climate Science Center. The Center for Earth Ethics sent delegates to COP 21 in Paris and the Parliament of the World's Religions in Salt Lake City. And in May, Union will host its 178th commencement ceremony. Union is alive with activity and excitement!

New Faculty Hires

Last fall we welcomed Dr. Pamela Cooper-White and Dr. Andrea White to our faculty in the fields of Psychology and Religion and Systematic Theology, respectively. As they wrap up their first year, they do so as beloved, fully integrated members of our community. Looking to the 2016-2017 academic year, we are thrilled to announce that Dr. Cláudio Carvalhaes '07 and Dr. Lisa L. Thompson will also join the ranks of our esteemed faculty, Carvalhaes

as Associate Professor of Worship and Thompson as Assistant Professor of Homiletics. We couldn't be more excited about these two important appointments.

Dr. Carvalhaes is a preeminent scholar of worship and liturgy in addition to having a worldwide reputation as a dynamic and enlivening teacher. He earned a Master of Divinity from Independent Presbyterian Theological Seminary in São Paulo, Brazil, and a Master of Philosophy degree in Theology, Philosophy, and History at the Methodist University of São Paulo. In 2007 he earned a Ph.D. in Liturgy and Theology from Union. He currently serves as Associate Professor of Homiletics and Worship at McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago.

Dr. Thompson, though early in her scholarly career, has already established a national reputation for excellence as a preacher. Her capacious spirit and intellect will be a blessing to this community. She received her undergraduate degree from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, earned a Master of Divinity from Fuller Theological Seminary, and an M.A. and Ph.D. from Vanderbilt University in Religion. She currently serves as Assistant Professor of Homiletics at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary.

Homiletics and the liturgical life of Union have long been central to our identity, and we are honored to welcome two scholars and teachers with the excellent credentials that Dr. Carvalhaes and Dr. Thompson bring with them.

International Connections Initiative

Since its founding in 1836, Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York has understood its mission to be international in its scope and substance. In our early years, this was in part because of New York's own richly polyglot environment and in part because of the desire of the founders to start schools in key cities around the world. While much has changed at Union since those early "missionary" days, the important role we have to play in global theological education remains. Indeed, theological

education in the 21st century must, at its heart, be diverse if it is to have relevance in the global world and in transnational faith communities. This reality is already recognized at Union through the fact that more than half of our faculty members come from countries outside of the United States.

In 2015 the faculty and administration at Union began an organized process of planning ways to reconnect with many of our longstanding international friends as well as discover new ones. At the core of this International Connections Initiative sits the realization that we have much to learn from partner seminaries around the world that, in innovative and practical ways, are forging paths for future faith communities. We also realize that new connections need to be forged with non-Christian international educational centers as Union expands its own mission to include the field of Interreligious Engagement.

Over the next five years, a key feature of this initiative will be sending small groups of faculty, combined with administrative support, to our partner schools. In January I traveled with Dr. Daisy Machado '81, Professor of Church History, to Cuba's Matanzas Evangelical Theological Seminary for the first of these trips. In the years ahead, I'll look forward to sharing with you all about the renewed connections we're cultivating around the world.

Our connections with alumni/ae and friends across the country and around the world are our greatest treasure and asset. You know more than anyone else how powerful the Union experience is. I hope you enjoy reading through this latest issue of the *Union Network* and are reminded of your experience as you do!

Peace,
Serene

The Rev. Dr. Serene Jones
*President and Johnston Family Professor
for Religion & Democracy*

Securing Union's Future and Renovating the Campus

This is a time of rebirth at Union. In 2014 the Seminary's Board of Trustees adopted a Jubilee Strategic Plan to guide the institution into the future. At the center of the Plan is a commitment to provide a more affordable education to students while continuing to strengthen Union's educational programming so that the Seminary will remain intellectually rigorous, church-engaged, interreligious, and reflective of Union's longstanding social justice commitments.

An equally important requirement for ensuring a vibrant future for Union is addressing how best to preserve our aging buildings. Long-term capital needs include making the campus ADA accessible; upgrading heating, cooling, electrical, and plumbing systems; as well as modernizing classrooms. It also means repairing the external façade which will require an estimated \$30 to \$45 million. In her January 25, 2016 letter to alums, President Serene Jones wrote, "A reinvigorated campus is essential to fulfill the mission-based vision of continuing to attract the finest students and faculty for the next hundred years."

Union is by no means the only theological school facing the ongoing challenge of finding the right balance of expenditures for facilities, programming, and personnel. In recent months, Andover Newton Theological School announced the sale of its residential campus and a likely affiliation with another educational institution. News soon followed that two Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) seminaries in Pennsylvania, Philadelphia Lutheran and Gettysburg, will be closing and a new seminary formed. According to some predictions, given declining enrollments and mounting costs of theological education, as many as one-third of seminaries accredited by the Association of Theological Schools in the U.S. and Canada will close their doors or undergo radical reshaping in the next decade.

Happily, today Union is in a strong position, both financially and programmatically. Enrollment is increasing. The faculty is exceptional and highly productive. Union's curriculum continues to expand creatively to meet the challenges of the day. As President Jones notes, "You can feel that vitality in our halls, dorms, and classrooms, in the engaged, lively voices of our students, our Union Fellows, our excellent faculty, and the many world-renowned scholars who seek us out for theological conversation. Moreover, to support this work, we continue to be blessed with a healthy endowment and a balanced operating budget."

At a recent conversation with members of the Alumni/ae Council, Dr. Jones recalled that on the day she came to Union to be interviewed for the job as Seminary president, there were perhaps portends of things to come because a spire from James Chapel tower fell. Subsequent masonry repairs to this single

tower amounted to \$2.3 million. Once she had assumed her duties, President Jones worked with the Trustees and other members of the Union community to examine campus needs, evaluate the scope of the facilities challenges, and consider options for moving forward with the necessary renovations.

In 2011 the Trustees approved a strategic plan, "A Stronger, Global Union," which established a Master Plan Committee that was asked to develop a comprehensive strategy for addressing Union's serious and ever-mounting facilities needs. From its inception, that Master Plan Committee was guided by two core affirmations. First, Union's physical plant, now over 100 years old, had reached such a state of disrepair that nothing less than a total campus renovation would suffice. Second, the Committee affirmed the positive direction in which the Seminary was moving in terms of its academic programming and made a key decision: not to jeopardize student scholarships and faculty support by using the endowment to fund repairs.

These two guiding principles—stay mission-focused and renovate the entire campus—led the Trustees to engage in wide-ranging conversations, internally and externally, to explore options for campus renewal. While an exciting vision of a modernized and green campus began to emerge, it was also apparent that Union faced serious constraints in moving forward: 108 year-old buildings, three officially designated landmark structures, negotiated leases with Columbia University, escalating infrastructure decay, lack of accessibility, city obligations to comply with building code requirements (Local Law 11 of 1998), and not least an estimated price tag of \$125 million to renovate the entire campus.

Included in the approximately \$125 million budget are complete exterior renovation, dormitory renovation, accessibility, complete heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) renovation, mechanical, engineering, and plumbing (MEP) overhaul, information technology upgrade, new kitchen, upgrade of the Social Hall and Refectory, offices, corridors, and renovated classrooms.

To generate the funds needed, the Board of Trustees engaged fundraising consultants to assess possible sources of donations and new revenue, but learned that today, in contrast to earlier times when Union's Morningside Heights campus was constructed, donors are much more interested in supporting students, faculty, and programmatic initiatives than they are in funding buildings. Moreover, as the Trustees have come to realize, "To grasp the sheer size of the funding needed, for example, note that if we totaled all the Annual Fund giving since 1965 [50 years of fundraising], that amount would not reach the \$125 million needed to renovate. Accordingly, it became clear to the Board that fundraising alone would not be able to generate

the funds that are needed to sustain Union for another century." Further investigation of Union's fundraising revealed that "there is no history of major (over \$500,000) capital gifts to Union since the 1950s." (This does not mean, however, that Union is not actively seeking capital gifts! If you are interested in buildings, let us know.)

Given the scale and urgency of the need and also the limited funding options, the Board's Master Plan Committee carefully explored a variety of paths that Union might take. After thorough investigation, it concluded that almost all of them were inadequate for meeting the challenge. The options that were considered and then rejected included doing nothing, using endowment monies, changing the mission and dramatically downsizing, finding a funding partner, moving within the Morningside Heights neighborhood, and moving out of the neighborhood. (A full discussion of these options can be found on the Union website along with many other background materials at utsnyc.edu/revitalizing-unions-campus.)

The remaining option that the Board has found, both practical and yet visionary, is to take advantage of a real-estate asset that Union can use to capitalize its campus renovation, namely its air rights which can be sold to a developer and thereby provide the necessary funding to remain at its current location, renovate the facilities as needed, and preserve the endowment so that it can support faculty salaries, student scholarships, and the robust educational programs that so many depend upon Union to provide.

As the Board has shared with the Union community, no final agreement has been signed as of this date, but the Board has before it a proposal for renovating the entire campus over a 3-5 year period. This requires Union to enter into agreements with companies in the New York real estate industry that will allow Union to realize sufficient value from the sale of its air rights to largely fund the cost of campus renovations.

Union's neighbor Jewish Theological Seminary is involved in a similar real estate plan that involves selling air rights in order to pay for program and facilities. New Brunswick Theological Seminary has also been in the news for its efforts to "leverage land, shed debt." Other schools, including Bangor Theological Seminary (BTS) in Maine, have sold their residential campuses (BTS closed in 2013) or sold portions of their real estate to support programs and personnel (Episcopal Divinity School, Pacific School of Religion, and Chicago Theological Seminary).

In identifying a promising way forward for Union, the Trustees believe that leveraging the use of the Seminary's air rights is the best option to ensure Union's long-term future. "As responsible stewards of the institution," Trustees have noted, "the decisions that we make now will have major implications not only for the next several years of our great school, but for many, many decades to come." In order to keep the Union community, including its many alums, informed about these matters and to solicit feedback, the Trustees and the President have created on-campus opportunities for conversation and developed website materials related to the plan to renovate Union's facilities. (utsnyc.edu/revitalizing-unions-campus)

CALL FOR PAPERS:

Sharing Stories of Institutional Challenges and New Directions

Many Union alums offer leadership in churches, educational institutions, and non-profits where they have encountered challenges similar to Union's regarding aging facilities, the pressure to attain financial equilibrium, and the ongoing struggle to sustain the institution's mission and values in the face of mounting constraints.

Submit your own story and lessons learned for possible publication in the *Union Network* magazine.

- Suggested length: 750–1,000 words.
- Submission deadline: July 1, 2016.

Please send electronically to Marvin Ellison, Editor-in-Chief, at mellison@uts.columbia.edu.

At its late February meeting, the Alumni/ae Council met with President Jones for extensive conversation about the facilities challenges in addition to discussion of new faculty hires, program developments, and renewed efforts at international outreach. In addition to Council members, the gathering included two other alums, Marian (Mim) Warden '98, '04 who is a current Trustee, and Derrick Harkins '87, a former Trustee and now Union's Senior Vice President for Innovation in Public Programs. Council members shared their diverse perspectives and raised important questions. These included reflections on gentrification, the need for affordable housing in New York, the type of labor used in New York construction projects, and the opportunities for greening Union. The Council also expressed its deep appreciation to the President and the Board for their commitment to assuring that Union has a healthy, long-term future.

Although no final plan is as yet in place, the Board will continue its work until such a plan is found. In the meantime, in good Union fashion, no doubt alums will continue their lively and necessary engagement with the President and Trustees, as well as with students, faculty, staff, and friends of the school, about the daunting challenges before Union (and other seminaries) and about the most effective and ethically principled strategies for addressing them. The stakes are, indeed, high as President Jones has observed: "Union's great legacy resides in its insistence that we not turn away from such [challenges], but face them squarely, together, with both sharpness of mind and openness of heart. Never has that legacy been more important to embrace and uphold than at this moment in our 180-year history. And nothing less than the future of our Seminary is at stake." ¶

When “Spiritual Not Religious” Gets Religion

An interview with **Dr. Su Yon Pak ’99** and four alums/students of Union’s field education program

BY MARVIN M. ELLISON ’81

For a long time Union has attracted a significant number of “spiritual but not religious” students. That was true even before that term was in vogue. What’s fascinating is that by the time they’ve completed their M.Div. studies, 70% of the graduating class are pursuing ordination in their respective denominations. Of the remaining 30%, half have decided definitely against ordination, and the other half are still in a discernment process, reports Dr. Su Yon Pak ’99, Senior Director and Associate Professor of Integrative and Field-based Education at Union.

“The students in my field education seminar this year reflect this pattern: 70% of the students are doing field placement in congregational settings, 20% are working in non-profit social agencies, and 10% are in chaplaincies of various sorts, including prison, higher education, and hospital sites. Although we hear often about a decline in denominational loyalties and an overall weakening of Jewish and Christian denominational structures, Union students keep preparing for ordination in order to serve in parish ministry. What’s going on here? Something happens between the time when students apply to Union and when they graduate. I suspect that in the course of their studies, and especially from their field placement, they encounter the transformative power of church. Practicing believers in congregational settings are significant teachers and living examples of community for many North Americans. Our students want to be a part of that.”

Consider St. Lydia’s Dinner Church that began in rented space at the Brooklyn Zen Center. People from the neighborhood gather every Sunday and Monday nights to cook and share a meal. They eat, study, pray, and sing. They tell stories. Tied to the Lutheran and Episcopal traditions, the worship is



“Although we hear often about the decline in denominational loyalties and an overall weakening of Jewish and Christian denominational structures, Union students keep preparing for ordination in order to serve in parish ministry.”

rooted in Early Church patterns. What does the church become when the shared meal is at the center of the community? When you show up at this church, you are put straight to work preparing dinner or setting the table. The pastor, Emily Scott, says, “By gathering together at the table, we are practicing how we would like to be when we are out in the world, practicing what it means to feed one another and be fed, and practicing being open to God’s presence and spending time feeling that movement in our lives.” They begin by cooking and end by cleaning up. Menu planning, the prepping,

the cooking, the washing, and, yes, even sharing a kitchen which for many people is a very personal, particular space, show the messiness and intimacy of making church together each week.

“As a scholar of faith practices,” Pak notes, “I am struck and delighted by the centrality at St. Lydia’s of everyday practices lived out in community. When rehearsed together over time, such practices constitute a way of life. Practices address fundamental human needs for healing, for community, to be fed and cared for, and to be connected. While human needs are universal, the



Michelle Nickens '08

shape and form of practices are always particular, depending on the context. At St. Lydia's the form is table fellowship. At another congregation, it may take the form of hospitality in including marginalized people. At another, practices of healing may be central. Practices are ways of rehearsing a way of life. In turn, these acts done in community form community, and they also form faith leaders as they, too, are formed and often transformed in the process of doing and being in these practicing faith communities."

Michelle Nickens '08 credits Union for "helping me deepen my own imagination" about church and introducing her to diverse models of ministry during her M.Div. studies. For the past five years Michelle has been an associate pastor at Metro Baptist Church, a progressive, welcoming and affirming congregation in midtown Manhattan and has recently accepted a call to become pastor of the Washington Plaza Baptist Church in



Julia Burkey '12

Reston, VA. For the past six years, she has also been a teaching fellow in Union's field education program. "When students take the risk of becoming a church intern, that experience not only clarifies for them the power of the tradition, but also allows them to see themselves in the pastoral role and discover opportunities for changing harmful aspects of their faith tradition that trouble them and so many others." Nickens herself came to Union only after shifting away from a more conservative evangelical faith and finding that she had lost certainty. "As a woman of color, I didn't know if there was a place for me in the church. I felt called to ministry, but not to ministry as modeled to me by the church leaders around me. Union gave me fresh models to live out my faith with integrity, and in the process I've been able to reclaim the power of my own tradition." Through her own student field education experience and her involvement with Union's

worship program, Nickens acknowledges that "I discovered my own voice, my gifts, and I came to understand ministry in an expanded way."

Julia Burkey '12, pastor of First Church in Middletown, a United Church of Christ congregation in Middletown, Connecticut, first arrived at Union as "spiritual, not religious," "definitely unaffiliated," interested in the academic study of religion or perhaps interfaith work in a non-profit, and, as she notes, "curious about who people think of as God and who it is that they're praying to." As a dancer, she is fascinated with embodiment, and her undergraduate thesis explored the history of sacred spaces. "At Union I learned to interpret the Bible and tradition in ways that connect with my own life. Progressive Christianity was new to me. The Bible courses were phenomenal, and Dr. Cone brought us through a whole long journey in his introductory theology course, asking us to locate ourselves in this tradition. Over the course of my studies, I found myself a part of Christianity, not apart from it." While engaged as a student intern at Judson Memorial Church, Burkey observes, "I really wanted to contextualize myself in a faith community where I could worship. From Donna Scaper [Judson's senior minister] I learned that being a pastor is 'like having a front row seat on ordinary life,' and that's really extraordinary." The church where she is now pastor will soon celebrate its 350th anniversary, but she notes that as its first female pastor, she recognizes that the congregation and the entire church at large is in the time of a great paradigm shift. "We are the shapers of the tradition now, so how do we want to shape it?" Burkey has been appointed to a national UCC effort to connect with the under-40 generation, and out of her own history,

“Union gave me fresh models to live out my faith with integrity, and in the process I’ve been able to reclaim the power of my own tradition.”

—Michelle Nickens '08

she understands the challenge. “With the steady decrease in religious affiliation, especially among younger adults, churches need to learn from this new wave of spirituality that is blossoming from the ‘unaffiliated’ and keep our church doors open to our own transformation. What’s the vision we need to articulate?”

William Critzman ’14 entered Union as an inquirer in the Presbyterian Church’s ordination process, but he did not expect to serve a congregation. “I had spent more than ten years in the arts and thought I would go back to the art world.” During his second year in the M.Div. program, Critzman followed Dr. Pak’s advice and “did what would make me most uncomfortable,” an internship in a Presbyterian church. While he enjoyed working in a congregation, he continued to wrestle with the ordination process and ultimately decided not to pursue ordination, at least not in the PC (USA). “As a gay man, I read those ordination vows (which have since changed) and wondered whether I could affirm them in good conscience while still being true to myself and my community.” In a discernment class at Union, Critzman came to see the central question not as “whether or not I should be ordained, but rather in what denomination might my ordination be most authentic.” Since leaving the PC (USA) ordination process, Critzman has found himself at home in the United Church of Christ, in part “because I’m preparing myself for an ecumenical ministry where the shape will continue to change as denominational identity becomes increasingly less central to many believers.” In Critzman’s words, “I’m being ordained in the United Church of Christ as I believe this prepares and supports me for the broadest possible ministry both in the parish and in the world.”

When **Requithelia Allen**, soon to graduate in May 2016, entered Union, she recalls that she “started with the understanding that I was not going to preach. Maybe I would do lay ministry or work with older adults, but pastoral ministry was not for me.” Singling out her field education experience as the most transformative component of her Union education, she describes a

“...call for me is the simplicity of what we ought to do when we look deep down into the pools of our own souls and see in ourselves a reflection of God.”
—William Critzman ’14

not-very-linear process of “coming to know,” as she discovered during her field placement at Concord Baptist Church that “I have a pastoral bent in my personality, but I was the last one to know!” Licensed as a minister last September, she admits that she can still register amazement when she’s called “Pastor Requithelia,” but people’s affirmation of her in the pastoral role and the very positive experience of a shared team ministry have been transformative of her understanding of ministry and of her own calling to that office. “Su kept telling me to ‘step into my authority,’ but in taking on that role, you feel different, and you feel the responsibility differently. When those of us who are pastors get it wrong, people question God, so that was a large part of my fear with this whole process. I also grew up with an image that ministers aren’t real people. But I also have to say that I’ve

never felt more at home than when I’m praying with people. Not at them. With them. And people kept telling me that I was a preacher and pastor even though I could only laugh. It took me a long time to see it and feel it, too.”

The “road less travelled” for these four student-alums of Union’s field education program is summed up by Will Critzman, who shared this excerpt from his ordination paper: “I have come to believe that this gift of God that I call ‘faith and call’ is not about what I should be or what I can be; it’s not about what I could do with my gifts, nor what I should do to please God or others. Rather, call for me is the simplicity of what we ought to do when we look deep down into the pools of our own souls and see in ourselves a reflection of God. In the spiritual discipline of coming down to where we ought to be, we find ourselves in a place just right.”



William Critzman '14



Requithelia Allen

Donald W. Shriver, Jr., President Emeritus, On the Science of Medicine and the Blessings of Love

A Conversation with Lewis Thomas

“One of the very important things that has to be learned about the time dying becomes a real prospect is to recognize those occasions when we have been useful in the world. With the same sharp insight that we all have for acknowledging our failures, we ought to recognize when we have been useful, and sometimes uniquely useful.... One thing we’re really good at as a species is usefulness.... Some things I’ve written and thought... they may have been useful.”¹

—Lewis Thomas

How “useful” his life would prove to be to my life I could hardly have suspected in the 1980s when I met Lewis Thomas at a dinner given by the chairman of the board of the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center. Little aware I was that my body would one day host a variety of cancer—B-cell lymphoma—that would kill him at age 80 but that I would survive to age 87, thanks to the hospital of which he was Chancellor and eminent scientist-administrator. After that dinner, I read *The Lives of a Cell*, one of several books that embodied his reputation as “a poet of science,”² as one of his colleagues at MSKCC, Dr. Lloyd J. Old, would rightly comment later for Thomas’ obituary in *The New York Times*.

Now, in the aftermath of what appears to be my successful treatment for lymphoma in that hospital in 2013-14, I have reasons to celebrate the “usefulness” to my life of lives like that of Lewis Thomas and a company of medical scientists who are at work extending our lifetimes into years longer than his lifetime of 80. I have spent some months of those added years reading “things written and thought” by Lewis Thomas. In no small sense, I have been in conversation with him in these thirty years since that dinner with him in the mid-1980s. I mean this essay as a belated tribute to him and those troops of scientists and caretakers who, mostly anonymous, have been “useful” indeed to this fellow sufferer from a disease that, Thomas calculated, would afflict 25% of us 21st century humans. Following are some of my reflections on a year’s experience of the institutional and professional descendants of the life of this eminent “poet of science.”

The shock of lethal illness

“The real problem is the shock of severe, dangerous illness, its unexpectedness and surprise. Most of us, patients and doctors alike, can ride almost all the way through life with no experience of real peril, and when it does come, it seems an outrage, a piece of unfairness. We are not used to disease as we used to be, and we are not at all used to being incorporated into a high technology.”³

The assault of cancer on one’s life should be occasion for some deep reflection on what one’s life means to oneself and others. Such reflection has been one of the gains of my recent year of struggle with lymphoma. The most enduring gain has been the experience of a new awareness of the conjunction of modern medical care with the human relations that have enriched my existence for these, my 87 years.

Since my tonsillectomy at age 5, I had spent not a single night in a hospital until 2013. With these 80 years of health in my history, I am newly aware of health as an unusual gift, not shared by most humans on this planet. I may have been seduced by health into forgetting sickness. Health perhaps dampened my awareness that as mortal I have a future of death. Having always acknowledged my mortality, I nonetheless have had the spiritual nerve to ask my Creator to extend my life and that of those whom I love. As a Christian I have never yearned for heaven but have rather honored the gift of life too much to consider trading it in for a heavenly existence. My faith compels me to leave my mortality in God’s hands. If the Creator decides to resurrect me, in the company of a “Communion of Saints,” I will be grateful! But it is a comfort to leave the matter in better hands than my own or the hands of medical caretakers. I have to honor the commitment of those caretakers to life against death as an expression of honor for the Creation. Theirs is the hope in the famous Jewish toast, “L’chaim!”—“to life!” I am heir to the faith that the resurrected Jesus can be trusted by his disciples when he said “because I live, you also will live.” Most

Editor’s note: Dr. Shriver is President and William E. Dodge Professor of Applied Christianity Emeritus of Union Theological Seminary. This essay brings forward some of his reflections first conveyed in his edited volume *Religion and Medicine: Strategies of Care* for the Institute on Human Values in Medicine (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1980). The complete version of this essay is available as a downloadable PDF on the Union website at utsnyc.edu/shriver.

of all, I share his confidence when, in his dying words, he said, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit."

More than a few times I prayed those words in the past year. They are enough strength for facing my death any day that it comes. What happens to me in those hands is God's business. I am glad that it is not mine.

Often in walking past our neighborhood hospital I have envisioned the sick and the host of caregivers there in my prayers for them. Often then I am quietly aware that I am vulnerable to joining them one day in one of those beds. News stories about Ebola in West Africa summon similar feelings, but usually with the false comfort of believing that we Americans can continue to be spared that bit of terrible kinship to the animals that are the original hosts of that disease. For those of us so used to health, the shocks of a worldwide cancer scourge are momentous, most of all when it engulfs one's own self. That sense of a world of humans subject to disease is a second part of my memory of this illness and its rigorous treatment in a world-class hospital in New York City.

Love, healing partner

"But the one thing we do know for sure about our bacterial ancestors is that they learned, very early on, to live in communities.... Very little is known about their metabolic functions or nutritional requirements, beyond the conspicuous fact that they live together and cannot live apart.

[It] is simply not true that 'nice guys finish last'; rather, nice guys last the longest.⁴

I can even assert out loud that we are, as a species, held together by something like affection (what the physicists might be calling a 'weak force') and by something like love (a 'strong force'), and nobody can prove I'm wrong."⁵

Another dimension of my kinship with Thomas was our mutual debt to our marriages. Having lived with Beryl for forty years, he dedicated two of his books to her. And he testified that "our living together has been like an extended, engrossing, educational game." She taught him to engage with the novels of Jane Austen and the poetry of Wallace Stevens, and, in turn, she acquired more knowledge "about endotoxin and the Schwartzman reaction than any academic wife in our acquaintance.... We have been exchanging bits of information, tastes, preferences, insights for so long a time that our minds seem to work together. My firm impression is that I've come out ahead so far, in the sense that I've been taught more surprising things by her than I've ever stored up to teach in return.... [O]n the very big matters, the times requiring exactly the right hunch, the occasions when the survival of human beings is in question, I would trust that X chromosome and worry about the Y. ...I do not trust men in this matter [of nuclear weapons]. If it is left in their charge, someone, somewhere, answering some crazy signal from a Y chromosome, will start them going off and we will be done as a species."⁶

Words affirming feminism are not likely to get stronger from the scientific community!

I think that Thomas would understand and cheer this patient in his hospital in the conviction that the love of a life companion complemented and assisted my apparent healing and survival. His colleagues at MSKCC have now added two to sixty years of my marriage prior to my bout with a cancer akin to the one that killed Thomas.

The nurses at MSKCC testified that their patient Donald Shriver was more visibly "patient" when he was being visited by his wife Peggy. In my travels in Africa I noted during visits to hospitals how often they permitted family members to cluster outside the windows of a patient, sometimes for the service of cooking food. That impressed me as extraordinary therapeutic realism, suggestive of the possibility that family care and professional care are weaving the same promising cloak of healing. In contrast, I pondered the terror and degenerating influence of prison—especially solitary confinement—on the mental health of prisoners. Isolating human beings from other people who in some degree love them qualifies as severe punishment, but not for moral or physical regeneration. Here for me was the most memorable dimension of this, my nearest lifetime brush with death from disease: love, too, is a healer.

Thomas was not the only biologist to believe so. At the end of their remarkable little book on evolution, Columbia professor Robert Pollack and his wife Amy say that "the philosophers speak of four kinds of love, each having its place in the life of a person. Eros, for desire; Agape, for unconditional love; Filia, for family and friendship; and Caritas, for love and kindness to the stranger.... These four kinds of love are encoded [in our evolved genetic makeup]; and they can be expressed by any of us through our lifetimes."⁷ That we are "encoded" genetically for companionship with neighbors brought me back to remembering a line from the biblical book Genesis, where God the Creator ponders this human, Adam, and sees him as incomplete: "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." (Genesis 2:18) My experience of marriage has long since convinced me of the saving truth of these words. Their truth in these past months of life-threatening illness has deepened that conviction beyond my ability rightly to express it. At one critical moment in my oncologist's prescriptions for my treatment, she knelt beside the bed and said, "Your chances for survival with our ordinary drug for lymphoma is about 10%, but we have an aggressive experimental drug we would like to try if you are willing to undergo the rigors of an aggressive treatment for your aggressive form of lymphoma. We think that your wife and you should discuss it."

For all of five minutes we did discuss it. With assurance from Peggy that she would accompany me in a perilous journey, we consented to the treatment that would involve five or six cycles, each including weeklong intimacies with bags that fed the drug into my body on a five-day, 24-hour-a-day schedule. In those five minutes we agreed that the possibility of lengthening our companionship by even a few months was worth the rigor. It was clearly my chief reason for wanting to live. Two months



Peggy Leu Shriver, Donald W. Shriver Jr. and Serene Jones at the unveiling of Dr. Shriver's portrait on February 15, 2010.

later we reviewed that decision very seriously to see if, having experienced the ravages of that aggressive chemotherapy, we still agreed with it. That moment coincided with a visit from the Catholic hospital chaplain. Afterward he said, "I felt I was a witness to a sacred moment in your lives." That he was. The woman who had pledged, 60 years ago, to accompany me "in sickness and in health" was now willing to knock with me on death's door, in the hope that it could be a door to new life. If ever in 60 years I was sure that "it is not good for the man to be alone," it was in this moment when doctors' hope for my life became fortified with the hope of the person who had already shared more of that life than had any other human being.

Ever since that moment and the moment five months later when the PET scans showed that I was surviving cancer, I have been sure that the love of this "helper fit for me" was a powerful ally of medical science's commitments to my healing. Would that I could be sure that I have been equally a "helper fit" for her! (And would that the Scriptures had been written, "helpers fit for each other.") The fact that at least one other human being hoped so much for me to live gave me courage and determination to endure some rigorous treatment in service to that hope. To be sure, the hope of physicians was as vital. Once in her office, midway in all five of the weeklong drug treatments, our

oncologist, Dr. Noy, knelt in front of me in her office and said, "The tests show that we are making progress. We hope that you will summon your will to keep with it." She and we did so. Thus, when the procedures were ended, she could revert to religious language that was not her habit. "It is almost miraculous that those tumors have mostly disappeared."

Religious language was not habitual with Lewis Thomas, either. The closest he came to using it was in his tributes to the depths of great classical music. "If you are looking for really profound mysteries, essential aspects of our existence for which neither the sciences nor the humanities can provide any sort of explanation, I suggest starting with music.... Nobody can explain it. It is a mystery, and thank goodness for that. The Brandenburgs [of Bach] and the last quartets [of Beethoven] are not there to give us assurances that we have arrived; they carry the news that there are deep centers in our minds that we know nothing about except that they are there."⁸

Were we ever wanting to communicate something about ourselves to creatures in a far galaxy, he wrote, we should not choose our science; it would be out of date in a few light years. Instead, "I would vote for Bach, streamed out into space, over and over again. We would be bragging, of course."⁹

I regret that Thomas never discussed in writing how anyone

could interpret Bach's music apart from the Christian faith in the music's choral texts. What would he have made of my own feelings about those beloved Bach preludes and fugues and Beethoven's late quartets, in which—for me—there is present a Spirit who speaks “with sighs too deep for words”?¹⁰

Towards the end of my hospital months, a columnist for *The New York Times*, David Brooks, published a discussion on the theme of “what suffering does” to human consciousness, and in it he quoted theologian Paul Tillich who had said that “people who endure suffering are taken beneath the routines of life” into “an attuned awareness” of what others are enduring, too. In a jointly written letter to the *Times*, Peggy and I stated that this was indeed our recent experience in a hospital that occasioned “new depth of love for each other and new empathy with the human community worldwide.”¹¹ Now we understood better what we were once promising each other “til death does us part.” Soon after we also participated in new empathy for family members in West Africa left alone after deaths of a wife or husband from Ebola.

Turning one's personal experience of the world of modern medicine from preoccupation with the personal into a new realistic focus on public interest and the needs of the world's poor is no minor benefit for the mind and heart of this cancer patient. It is an ethical gain for an ethicist. I have left the Memorial Sloan Kettering Hospital with new gratitude to the world of scientific medicine, new gratitude for the staffs who care for the likes of me, and new gratitude to a Creator who created us to be neighbors to each other.

Lewis Thomas loved poetry. Recently, as this medical chapter in our lives takes a turn toward “remission,” my companion Peggy wrote a poem, “Death Growls Like Distant Thunder.” We have heard that growl more clearly than ever before. The poem ends with a nod to the death that has to come, in spite of all, to all of us:

Death growls like distant thunder from a gathering storm
It lurks on the horizon of our cancer-conscious minds.

My eyes glide lovingly across familiar landscapes
of your face,
the welcome hollows of your frame,
and lock upon the unfathomable depths of gaze
that retina your soul.

My lips and hands traverse repeatedly your mottled skin,
shrunken, fragile, precious alive.

Some days the storm seems closer, darker,
threatening us both,
for your eyes scan my body, too, for signs of finitude.

Silently we both etch memories,
ignore the bustle of the hospital,
and cling to fleeting moments
receding from a future vulnerable.


I do not know the source of my strange certainty.
Perhaps it is the calming touch of prayer.
That this is not the time for storms, for death, not yet.
Our hands unite; strength flows between us.

Some days I glimpse the sudden sparkle in your eyes,
the incandescence of your smile,
and feel the firmness of your grip
responding to determination in my own.

The sun breaks through and glory wreathes your room
with gratitude and joy, my certainty fulfilled.

The storm will gather once again for both of us,
Death will rumble its own certitude,
Our love has garnered unknown gifts of time
to treasure, savor, even to prepare.

To which I have only to add a prayer: Thank God for our creation, our partnership, and neighborly care in New York and worldwide!

Coda, as of January 4, 2016: Subsequent to the writing of this essay, Peggy is undergoing an illness, a stroke, whose effects are as debilitating as were those in my own case. She is slowly healing, and we hope for her restoration. In any event, the message to me now is clearly: “Time for you to reciprocate, Donald Shriver.” I am doing my best to do so. 

NOTES

1. Roger Rosenblatt, “Lewis Thomas,” *The New York Times*, 21 November 1993. Rosenblatt interviewed Thomas two weeks before Thomas' death in December 1993.
2. Marilyn Berger, “Lewis Thomas, Whose Essays Clarified the Mysteries of Biology, Is Dead at 80,” *The New York Times*, 4 December 1993.
3. Lewis Thomas, *The Youngest Science: Notes of a Medicine-Watcher* (New York: The Penguin Group, 1983), 222.
4. Lewis Thomas, *The Fragile Species* (New York: Simon & Schuster, Touchstone Books, 1992), 144, 152.
5. Lewis Thomas, *Late Night Thoughts on Listening to Mahler's Ninth Symphony* (New York: Penguin Books, 1995), 160.
6. *The Youngest Science*, 234-237.
7. Amy Pollack, *The Course of Nature: A Book of Drawings on Natural Selection and Its Consequences*, with Commentary by Robert Pollack, (New York: Stonycreek Press, 2014), 111.
8. *Late Night Thoughts*, 162-163.
9. Lewis Thomas, *The Lives of a Cell* (New York: Penguin Books, 1974), 45.
10. The Apostle Paul's Letter to the Romans 8:26. Cf. Isaiah 61:1-4.
11. Donald W. Shriver and Peggy L. Shriver, “The Value of Suffering,” *The New York Times*, 15 April 2014, Editorial Desk; LETTER; p. A 22.

Documenting the History of Union's Chapel Program

BY TROY MESSENGER

“I think that worship in James Chapel is an amazing gift. If I have any hope for what happens here, I would say it is the hope of the incarnation. The word becomes flesh here. I've seen it happen. I've touched it.... It is a theological commitment that the Word become flesh, and not remote, but real in the midst of us.” —Barbara Lundblad, *Joe R. Engle Professor Emerita of Preaching*

In the fall of 2012, Professor Janet Walton '79, former Director of Worship Susan Blain '86, and I began to chronicle the history of James Chapel worship to produce a 40-minute video documentary and accompanying book. Our hope has been to record the remarkable encounters made possible by the renovated James Chapel.

Research for this project has included reading through more than 3,500 worship programs and interviewing several dozen former students, faculty, and administrators. The project not only documents transformative moments in Union's life, but also details a practice of collaborative planning and leadership that can be a model for congregations trying to meet the urgent needs of this day.

In the late 1970s the chapel organ needed substantial repairs. The ensuing conversations about replacing the organ led to a remaking of both James Chapel and the worship that takes place in it. In our interviews, Dr. Donald Shriver, President Emeritus of Union Theological Seminary, described the resistance to removing the pews along with a stained glass window. Throughout the process, the Board of Trustees also supported that this was a necessary change whose time had come. As President Shriver has observed, “It meant destroying some things in order to create other things. Perhaps the most important innovation was clearing out the space, not to make it empty, but to require the leaders to decide how to fill it.”

To imagine how to fill it, Shriver hired Janet Walton to teach worship and guide the community to imagine new models for daily worship. Together with Preaching Professor James Forbes '62 and Professor of Communications Robert Seaver, they developed a model of planning that included faculty, students, and staff. Often faculty members would take responsibility to plan a full week to connect worship with the work of their courses.

Early on, the Worship Office hired student “space coordinators,” whose job was to move the chairs every day. To this day, we continue to explore the possibilities of utilizing this space. One day we might gather in a circle in the center of the space. The next day we might walk a pilgrimage to stations around the room. The next we could be seated reclining on cushions or around small tables for a simple meal, stories, songs, and prayers as the earliest Christians did.

Designs for the space have always gone hand in hand with the possibilities of worship. As the student body has incorporated a wider diversity of traditions, cultures, and faiths, the James Chapel worship program has continued to stretch to find a home for each. The Chapel History film gives a small taste of multiple traditions and perspectives as we hear the sounds of well-known hymns, chants, gospel, fiddles, oud, and oboe. We see dancers on the ground and in the air. We see hands kneading bread, passing peace, writing names,

and placing crosses on chicken wire fences. We hear concrete expressions of domestic violence, racial injustice, poverty, and war. Throughout we witness a community that comes together, week after week, around a sacred meal as we look for the words and actions to live into the people we are called to be.

Seth Pickens '06 has noted that when you want to try something different in your congregation, “James Chapel gives you courage... because you have seen it done in the lab, and you can say, ‘come on, we’re going to do it,’... and it allows us the same transformation that we’ve received—to share that, to teach it.” Trustee Marian Warden '98, '04, adds, “If there’s anything I’ve learned in this chapel, [it’s that] there’s more than one way to do almost anything, and God doesn’t seem to mind a bit.”

This year Janet Walton retires after 36 years of imagining worship anew in Union's classrooms and James Chapel. Our documentary film tells part of that story, and Union's many alums tell even more as they extend the experience of James Chapel into communities around the world.

We look forward to the next step in our journey with the arrival in fall

EDITOR'S NOTE: The documentary film about Union's Chapel and worship program will be shown during Union Days October 6-7 when we will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Class of 1966.

2016 of Dr. Cláudio Carvalhaes '07 as Associate Professor of Worship and Dr. Lisa Thompson as Assistant Professor of Homiletics. Carvalhaes, a native of Brazil, earned a Master of Divinity from Independent Presbyterian Theological Seminary in São Paulo, Brazil, and a Master of Philosophy degree in Theology, Philosophy, and History at the Methodist University of São Paulo. In 2007 he earned his Ph.D. in Liturgy and Theology from Union. He currently serves as Associate Professor of Homiletics and Worship at McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago. Dr. Thompson, recently elected as the President of the African American Caucus of the Academy of Homiletics, received her undergraduate degree from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, earned a Master of Divinity from Fuller Theological Seminary, and an M.A. and Ph.D. from Vanderbilt University in Religion. She currently serves as Assistant Professor of Homiletics at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. Much remains to be learned at Union's chapel program, and we are excited to have these two new colleagues soon walking alongside us.

At the conclusion of the chapel film, Professor Walton offers these words: "It is in the nature of Union Seminary to ask questions about what is important now. And these chairs, and the arrangements that were made possible in this chapel, helped us prepare ourselves *to live*, which is really the reason we worship in the first place." 🙏



▶ You may view *James Chapel Worship: Practice for Life* at utsnyc.edu/jameschapel

Did you know? Some Union Seminary Facts

- Allen Wright was the **first Native American to graduate from Union**, in 1855. After the Civil War he was appointed one of five delegates from the Choctaw Nation to undertake treaty negotiations with Washington, D.C. The treaty of 1866 set out special provisions for what would become the territory of Oklahoma, a name Wright suggested.
- John Bunyan Reeve was Union's **first African-American student**. He graduated in 1861. He later became the first dean of what is today the Howard University Divinity School.
- In 1897 Emilie Grace Briggs became the **first woman to graduate** from Union. That was the first year Union awarded the Bachelor of Divinity; graduates previously received a diploma. Because her name began with B, Ms. Briggs, the daughter of Professor Charles Augustus Briggs, was also the first person to be awarded the new Bachelor of Divinity degree from Union, and she did so *summa cum laude*.
- Elizabeth C. Morrow was the **first woman to serve on the Board** (1936-1950).
- The **first African-American member of Union's Board** was William Lloyd Imes in 1915. He was the president of Knoxville College.
- Eunice Jackson was the **first African-American woman to graduate** from Union. She received an M.A. in Christian Education in December 1940. This was a joint degree with Columbia for work done "under the Faculty of the Seminary."
- It's sometimes thought that Rabbi Dr. Abraham Joshua Heschel was the first Jewish professor at Union in the 1960s. However, **Dr. Isaac Nordheimer taught Hebrew and the cognate languages** at Union from 1838-1842. He was a professor at New York University and today would probably be considered an adjunct.
- Rosalind E. Havemeyer became **the Board's first chairwoman** in 1970.
- William H. Hudnut III, M.Div '57 was a U.S. Congressman representing Indianapolis from 1973-1975. He then served as mayor of Indianapolis from 1976-1992, serving four terms as **Indianapolis' longest serving mayor**. He later served six years on the Chevy Chase, MD, town council, two years as mayor.
- At Commencement 1999, **all members of the platform party (handing out the degrees) were women**. Mary McNamara was interim president, Rosemary Keller was dean, and Anne Hale Johnson '56 was chair of the Board. The other two women were Professor Janet Walton '79 and Barbara Wheeler, President of Auburn.
- In 2007, Serene Jones became the 16th and **first female president** of Union. 🙏

Four Named as Distinguished Alumni/ae for 2015



Union alumni/ae (L-R) William L. Wipfler '65, '78, Gay Byron '92, '99, John Curtis Raines '59, '67, and Sally N. MacNichol '87, '05 received Unitas distinguished alumni/ae awards at an October 9 ceremony in James Memorial Chapel that marked the close of the 2015 Union Days.

ESTABLISHED IN 1994, the Unitas awards bear witness to the faith and perseverance of Union alumni/ae who exemplify the Seminary's academic breadth, its diversity and inclusiveness, and the range of vocations its graduates follow. Unitas recipients offer exemplary leadership in church, society, and the academy. Each year several alumni/ae are selected. Some are near the end of their ministries while others may be at mid-career.

Unitas recipients represent all those Union graduates who have distinguished themselves across the country and, indeed, around the world.

The Rev. Dr. Gay L. Byron, M.Div. '92, Ph.D. '99, an ordained minister of Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church (USA), is Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Professor of New Testament at the Howard University School of Divinity. Previously, she was the Baptist Missionary Training School Professor of New Testament and Christian Origins and Dean of the Program of Black Church Studies at Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School in Rochester, NY. She is the author of *Symbolic Blackness and Ethnic Difference in Early Christian Literature* (Routledge Press, 2002) and recipient of a Luce Fellowship through the Association of Theological Schools for

her research which identifies and examines ancient Ethiopic (Ge'ez) sources for the study of the New Testament and other early Christian writings. She has also received fellowships and grants from the Ford Foundation, Lilly Foundation, and the Fund for Theological Education. Byron has published commentaries on the book of James which are included in *True to Our Native Land: An African American New Testament Commentary* and the latest edition of the *Women's Bible Commentary*. In all of her writings, she analyzes the intersection of gender, race, and ethnic identity in the New Testament and early Christianity.

Dr. Byron's Unitas citation reads: "Gay Lynne Byron, '92, '99: Professor, pastor, trailblazer, mentor; for her invaluable research into gender, race, and ethnic identity in the New Testament and nascent Christianity, and incisive articulation of her findings; for her identification and examination of ancient Ethiopic sources and their influence on early Christian writings; and for her lasting influence as role model and mentor to the women who follow her into ministry and the academy."

The Rev. Dr. Sally N. MacNichol, M.Div. '87, Ph.D. '05, is an educator and impassioned advocate against domestic

violence. She currently serves as co-director of CONNECT, a New York-based nonprofit organization dedicated to preventing interpersonal violence and promoting gender justice through transformative education, community mobilization, and legal advocacy. She has counseled hundreds of victims of domestic violence of all colors and faith traditions, run empowerment groups for survivors, worked with batterers, and has trained staff from child-welfare programs and community-based organizations as well as clergy across New York City's five boroughs. MacNichol serves tirelessly on numerous committees working to strengthen public policy, to reform New York City's institutional practices, and to transform opinion concerning women and children struggling with violence. In 2004 she created—and now directs—CONNECT Faith, a series of innovative multi-faith initiatives which provide education and technical assistance to religious and lay leaders and their congregations. She also leads

The Unitas awards bear witness to the faith and perseverance of Union alumni/ae who exemplify the Seminary's academic breadth, its diversity and inclusiveness, and the range of vocations its graduates follow.

the CONNECT Faith CSA collaborative dedicated to helping faith communities prevent child sexual abuse—and hosts a monthly interfaith theological round table for people of faith who are working to end intimate violence.

Dr. MacNichol's Unitas citation reads: "Sally Noland MacNichol, '87, '05: Advocate, educator, counselor, interfaith collaborator; for her ardent quest to prevent interpersonal violence, and to empower healing among survivors; for her dedication to promoting gender justice through transformative education, community mobilization and legal advocacy; and for building the capacity of religious leaders and communities of faith to work to end intimate partner abuse and co-occurring forms of family violence."


The Rev. Dr. John Curtis Raines, M.Div. '59, Th.D. '67, is Professor Emeritus of Religion at Temple University where he taught for 45 years and where Temple's honor students elected him "Professor of the Year" in 2004. Raines takes most satisfaction in having helped establish the Consortium for Religious and Cross-Cultural Studies at Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. He has authored many books and articles dealing with issues of economic, racial, and gender justice. Among other notable achievements, he was the Project Director for an award-winning PBS documentary, "When a Factory Closes" (1983). Active while a student in the Civil Rights movement, Raines was arrested as a Freedom Rider in Little Rock, AR in 1961; he also helped organize the Seminarians Vigil

against the Senate filibuster that threatened the passage of the Civil Right Bill in 1964. He and his wife, Bonnie M. Raines, revealed in 2014 that they had participated in the now-famous 1971 burglary of FBI offices in Media, PA, making off with nearly every document inside. According to *The New York Times*, the burglars "were never caught, and the stolen documents that they mailed anonymously to newspaper reporters were the first trickle of what would become a flood of revelations about extensive spying and dirty-tricks operations by the FBI against dissident groups."

Dr. Raines' Unitas citation reads: "John Curtis Raines, '59, '67: Professor, Freedom Rider, social justice activist, burglar; for his impassioned interrogation of Globalization; for courageously breaching the so-called peace of legalized segregation; for his eloquence in articulating the plight of working class and middle class Main Street, and galvanizing the fight against Big Money Wall Street; and for his heroic participation in the 1971 burglary of FBI offices in Media, PA."

The Rev. Canon William L. Wipfler, S.T.M. '65, Ph.D. '78, is Priest Associate at Trinity Episcopal Church in Hamburg, NY, and chaplain of the Education for Ministry community. He is the former director of the Latin American Department of the National Council of Churches and has been a leader in the movement to end torture and repression throughout Latin America. He was declared *persona non grata* by the military government of Argentina, and once survived an attempt to assassinate him. Wipfler was the last person to receive communion from Archbishop Oscar Romero—and witnessed the Archbishop's assassination. The Rev. Dr. Robert McAfee Brown '45, '51, Professor of Ecumenics and World Christianity at Union from 1976 to 1979, wrote, "When a human life was at stake, or the future of a people was threatened, you were always there giving us the data, the tactics and the passion to respond. I guess the folks who *really* thank you are the ones who are still alive because of what you did—publicly or behind the scenes—to call attention to their plight and give them a future they thought they had lost." In 2006 Wipfler celebrated the 50th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood. On May 23, 2015, he was invited to participate in the Mass of Beatification of Oscar Romero in San Salvador.

Dr. Wipfler's Unitas citation reads: "William Louis Wipfler, '65, '78: Priest, missionary, human rights activist, witness; for his zealous and heroic leadership in the campaign to end torture and repression in Latin America; for his tenacious documentation and publication of abuses, despite enormous personal risk; for his inspired orchestration of the emerging liberation movements in the churches; and for his advocacy on behalf of refugees, political prisoners, the disappeared and the powerless."

To nominate a Union alumna or alumnus for a Unitas award, please submit a letter of nomination to the Unitas Committee of the Union Alumni/ae Council, which makes its recommendation to the Seminary's President. Ordinarily, four alums are recognized annually at a Unitas ceremony on campus. A nomination form can be found on the Union website at utsnyc.edu/unitas-award. The deadline for submissions is January 15. 

Alumni/ae Council Offers Leadership and Service


Twice a year, at the close of Union Days in October and again in late February, the twenty members of Union's Alumni/ae Council meet on campus to promote the Seminary's mission, support its leadership, and help strengthen Union's ties with its nearly 5,500 U.S. and international alums.

The Rev. Dr. Seth Pickens '06, the Council's co-chair and pastor of Zion Hill Baptist Church in Los Angeles, will be stepping down from the Council later this year after finishing his second three-year term. "Council members seek to be good ambassadors for Union and to encourage as many alums as possible to be better connected to the school and with each other," Pickens observed recently. "And, in good Union fashion," he added, "they also want to serve as constructive critics who try to provide sound advice and encouragement to the President so that Union remains true to its progressive, social justice values. We need all of us working to that good end, together."

Current Council members are engaged in a variety of ministries. A majority are serving congregations or offering denominational leadership. Others are teaching in the academy or working for non-profits, and still others fill multiple, overlapping roles in church, academy, and the non-profit sector. Roughly half the members are alums of color, the gender mix is evenly divided, and a quarter identify as LGBTQ. Current Council members include Union graduates from the 1960s to the present with half the Council's membership drawn from more recent graduates. Geographically, a majority of Council members reside in the Metro New York area, and others live on the West Coast (Seattle, San Francisco Bay area, and Los Angeles), the Midwest (Chicago, Minneapolis, and St. Louis), the Southeast (Kentucky and Georgia), and the Mid-Atlantic region (Washington, D.C. and Pennsylvania).

The Council's mission includes helping to develop Union's Alumni/ae Network chapters as these continue to emerge in various cities across the U.S., along with several non-geographical networks for connecting with Latino/a, Unitarian Universalist, and African American alums. Sindy Morales Garcia '15, recently elected to the Council, received her M.Div. and Master of Social Work degrees last spring and has now returned to her hometown of Minneapolis where she hopes to organize a Network chapter in that area. In her statement of interest that she submitted after being nominated to the Council, she wrote, "I feel honored to be invited to join the Alumni/ae Council! I greatly look forward to gaining a deeper understanding of Union's history and hope to contribute a fresh perspective as a recent graduate in the dual masters program at Union. I also spent this past year working closely with the Dean of Admissions and Vice President of Institutional Diversity and Community Engagement, greatly expanding my understanding of Union's organizational nature and structure. I hope to contribute my knowledge as both a student, intern, and employee

at Union to help strengthen its relationship with its alums." One way that Sindy has already contributed is by engaging in a major research project, a Latino/a climate study that surveys the experiences and perspectives of its Latino/a students and alums throughout the student life cycle from recruitment and admission to coursework and advisement, financial aid and community life, and alumni/ae relations.

Expectations of Council members include attending on-campus Council meetings, serving on committees, and attending Union events whenever possible, including Convocation, Union Days, and Commencement. Council members also offer leadership in their local Network chapters, as well as help to recruit prospective students and mentor current students and recent graduates. Another way they give back to Union is by contributing to the Annual Fund and supporting other funding opportunities, most especially in recent years the Jackson-Mitchell Endowment fund to support Womanist scholars on the Union faculty. 

If you are interested in Council service or would like to suggest another alum for this important leadership role, please submit a short bio and a statement of interest to the Director of Alumni/ae Relations, Marvin Ellison, mellison@uts.columbia.edu. All nominations will be considered by the Council's nominating committee and then acted upon by the full Council.

UNION ALUMNI/AE COUNCIL

Karen S. Byrne '07	Washington, DC
William Critzman '14	New York, NY
Mary Foulke '89, '96	New York, NY
Richard S. Hong '04	Englewood, NJ
Christopher Jones '13	New York, NY
David Lewicki '04	Decatur, GA
Sharon L. Moe '86	Seattle, WA
Cynthia Moe-Lobeda '01	Berkeley, CA
Kimberly Lucas '95	Washington, DC
Kymberly McNair '08, '09	Bedford Hills, NY
Sindy Morales Garcia '15	Coon Rapids, MN
Maureen M. Morgan '63	Ossining, NY
Emily Enders Odom '90	Louisville, KY
Thomas J. Philipp '62	Brookhaven, NY
Seth Pickens '06	Los Angeles, CA
Valerie Ross '14	Westwood, NJ
David A. Sánchez '06	Pasadena, CA
Storm Swain '99, '09	Philadelphia, PA
Ben Sanders '08	St. Louis, MO
Linda E. Thomas '81	Chicago, IL

ALUMNI/AE PROFILES



Rev. Gregory L. Brown, M.Div. '80

What do you do?

I am Senior Pastor at Miracles of Faith Community Church (ELCA). I am blessed to serve a wonderful and diverse community in East Oakland, CA, with loving support and practical services that include, uplift, and unify all of God's people.

What's the best thing about your job?

Our community is extraordinarily diverse. We have church members representing a wide spectrum of countries, various social backgrounds, economic status, race, sexual orientation, gender identity, and age. The young members of our church community know that diversity is to be embraced and celebrated rather than a cause for discord. These youths learn from the example of their church mentors that we can talk openly about our differences and conflicts, using compassion to elevate our understanding above violence. I know that the faith, love, and support of our church community have helped unite our neighborhood even when circumstances have been less than favorable. The work of our united church community carries on with future generations. Detrimental cycles have been broken, hope has been restored, and the youth of our church community are harbingers of the new East Oakland.

“My experience at Union set the stage for me to be open and inclusive as a leader in my own church and community.”

How did Union prepare you for this?

I came from Indiana where diversity was scarce. My 1978 Master of Divinity class had the highest numbers of women and African Americans to date. I was awed and personally moved to see so many minorities as students as well as in teaching and faculty positions. Having instructors and mentors at Union who were some of the greatest intellectuals, theologians, and activists for social justice of that time, many of whom were also African American and/or women, lit the fire within me to advocate for social justice. I learned how to execute liberation theology as a powerful instrument to uplift and transform people, congregations, neighborhoods, and society. My experience at Union set the stage for me to be open and inclusive as a leader in my own church and community.

How have you stayed connected to Union?

In addition to following Union events and publications, I enjoy collaborating with alumni/ae in my own Union class and beyond. Our shared experience of Union Theological Seminary helps to define us beyond being Christians and theologians. Union empowered us to be change-makers, uplifting God's people through liberation theology and activism for social justice.

What would you say to someone considering going to Union?

If you have a desire to make real-world change and uplift humanity in God's love, then Union will prepare you in ways you can only begin to imagine.

We invite you to contribute your own voice to this important collection by filling out the very easy form on Union's website, found at utsnyc.edu/alumniae-profiles. Or, to be interviewed, contact Marvin Ellison '81, Director of Alumni/ae Relations, at mellison@uts.columbia.edu.



Jacqueline Rider, M.Div. '83

What do you do?

I'm the Digital Archivist at the Princeton Theological Seminary library. I process and provide access to the physical and electronic records of people and organizations that were and are part of the history of the Seminary and the Reformed tradition in America. I help researchers and the general public discover a wealth of resources and hidden materials documenting faith at work in the world.

What do you like best about what you do?

It is most rewarding to witness the revelation of previously untold stories about remarkable people when someone digs into primary source materials that had been hidden for many years. I also love the fact that Princeton Seminary faculty includes several Union alums. It's a blessing to be connected to two outstanding institutions preparing all kinds of people to serve.

How did Union prepare you for this?

I was privileged to work with and learn from outstanding faculty such as Beverly Harrison '56, '75, Roger Shinn '41, '51, Tom Driver '53, Cornel West and others, brilliant, warm, and available scholars who love their subject areas and love to teach.

How do you stay connected to Union?

David Rider '80, '01, and I have "cycled" in and out of the Upper West Side of Manhattan several times over the last 35 years. We attend alumni/ae events when we can, as well as talks given by Union scholars. Gary Dorrien '78 comes to Princeton Seminary next month!

What would you say to someone considering going to Union?

Be bold and open to rigorous work, new ways of seeing and engaging the world, and one of the most stimulating and challenging communities of learning and praxis. It never stops, and that's the best part.



Rev. Mike Waltner, M.Div. '03

What do you do?

I currently work as Head of Initiatives at KAICIID Dialogue Centre in Vienna, an international, inter-governmental, multi-faith organization specializing in interreligious dialogue for peace and reconciliation. I am currently working on developing capacity-building tools and trainings for religious leaders and interreligious dialogue practitioners in the areas of media and education. Additionally, I serve as assistant curate to the Chaplaincy of Christ Church Vienna in the European Diocese of the Church of England.

What's the best thing about your job?

The best thing is working with a talented team of people to address pressing issues of the manipulation and misuse of religion to justify violence. It is also a great privilege to serve my religious vocation in a way that addresses some of the most pressing issues in today's world.

How did Union prepare you for this?

Union challenges its students to think critically about the world and to envision ministry that is informed and connected to the issues and concerns of the world.

How have you stayed connected to Union?

I've stayed connected to Union mainly through the alumni/ae that I met during my seminary studies.

What would you say to someone considering going to Union?

I think Union is definitely a special place full of opportunity to grow and develop, but it requires students to take initiative during their studies. If I had to do it all over again, I would have focused much more on spiritual formation in addition to my studies.



Rev. Sandie Richards, M.Div. '95

What do you do?

I'm the full-time pastor of the First United Methodist Church of San Fernando, CA, and I also serve as the volunteer coordinator of Peace with Justice for the California-Pacific Conference of the United Methodist Church, which means I have at least one and a half jobs. Right now, my organizing efforts are focused on bringing a faith voice to the debates about gun violence. Since leaving Union in 1992 and returning home to California, I've served congregations in Huntington Beach, Santa Monica, downtown Los Angeles, East Hollywood, and for the past six months in San Fernando.

What's the best thing about your job?

For me, the sacred is located within the bonds of community and expressed in and through the ways in which we as the human community care for one another. The best thing about my work is that it gives me opportunities, both in the congregation and out in the wider community, to make a difference. That may sound trite, but it's true. It's amazing to prove a much-needed public faith voice about issues ranging from living wages to affordable housing and, more recently, ending gun violence. No one's yet organized religious communities nationwide about gun violence, but we're working on it in Los Angeles and eager to have others join in.


How did Union prepare you for this?

I first found out about Union from Frank Wulf '97, who was working at the time on his degree in Old Testament studies at Union. I was living in California, took a course on women in the Bible at Fuller Seminary, and through that course fell in love with Phyllis Tribble '63 and her literary-critical method of study. While engaging in Union's M.Div. program, it was all those iron-on-steel conversations with students and faculty that prepared me to speak up and be ready for a life of public activism as a faith leader. Union teaches you invaluable skills, including how to be clear, concise, and focused as a speaker, which really helps when you're advocating with hotel owners about living wages or speaking at a rally. There's a certain sharpening and toning that takes place at Union, something not so available at other seminaries.

How have you stayed connected to Union?

I served for several years as a member of Union's Alumni/ae Council, but I don't stay as well connected as I would like to except by Facebook. I know there's an emerging Alumni/ae Network chapter in the Los Angeles area, but to be honest, what's helped me stay connected to other Union alums is not Union, but rather the living wage movement, where I met and worked with a number of Union folks.

What would you say to someone considering going to Union?

Union is not for everyone, but if you're looking for faith in action, for faith "with shoes on its feet" and out in the world, then Union's the place for you. Union offers incredible diversity and opens you to new ways to look at the world. I have a fairly traditional ministry day in and day out: preaching, teaching, and pastoral care. I feel very prepared for that by Union, so Union is not only about marching in protests. That said, if you want to be sure not to miss out on a social justice emphasis in ministry and study in a place that is inclusive of LGBTQ and the "other," Union is the seminary for you. 

“For me, the sacred is located within the bonds of community and expressed in and through the ways in which we as the human community care for one another.”



PROFILES OF ENTERING STUDENTS

This past fall, 85 new students entered Union, including the four students who write here about their backgrounds and the reasons they have elected to pursue their studies at this seminary. Two are currently Master of Divinity students, and two are Master of Arts candidates. In addition, a doctoral candidate in her third year of studies speaks about her own unique reasons for coming to Union.



Jessica Halperin
M.DIV. STUDENT

My road to Union has been a long one! As friends and mentors have gleefully reminded me recently, many people have been telling me for at least 15 years that I should consider seminary, so my call to ministry has been reverberating in me for about half my life. I put it off for good reasons. Though I hope I have not totally laid aside my curiosity about other career paths, I have finally acquiesced to (and joyfully embraced) the path that last summer brought my moving truck and me from Washington, D.C. to the doors of McGiffert Hall.

My seven years in Washington, many of which were spent doing faith-based policy advocacy and organizing for the Quakers and Unitarian Universalists, significantly inform my ministry. Working on a range of progressive issues, I discovered a calling among the visionaries and strategists who insisted that a racially inclusive approach is integral to integrity and success in any field. This bedrock

awareness became the basis for my advocacy work within these predominantly white religious institutions, especially on reproductive justice and environmental justice, as well as the career I envision for myself.

Working with attorneys at the Quaker lobby and in reproductive rights/justice coalitions, I noticed that the contributions of lawyers and clergy were very different from each other, though both vital. Over my years with the Unitarian Universalist Association, I realized that I might be able to hold onto both skill sets—compassion and strategy, imagination and pragmatism. I have been interested for a long time in both law and ministry, and now I would not want to do one without the other.

While Union was the seminary I knew I wanted to attend, it did not offer the concurrent law program I've wanted to pursue, but my leap of faith to seminary has been rewarded because of the hard work of the Academic Dean's office. Last semester the Union faculty passed a joint law and ministry program that will

enable me to transfer elective credits and integrate my seminary and legal studies as I had long hoped. Though I never wavered in my interest in Union, based especially on the ethos of justice-making and visionary religious leadership, the willingness of our accomplished faculty to engage with students and help them negotiate their aspirations has only deepened my gratitude for traveling along this path.

Completing seminary and law school will be a long haul, but if last semester was any indication, these five years will fly by. Though I would be glad to return to Washington and a career in advocacy, I'm especially fascinated by the professional possibilities of mediation and conflict transformation. How might I use the pastoral and prophetic skills of ministry, combined with the rigorous tools of law, to help communities heal from conflict, especially when conflict crosses barriers of race, class, and gender? I have to tell you that I am very excited to find out.

“[Union’s] ethos of justice-making and visionary religious leadership, the willingness of our accomplished faculty to engage with students and help them negotiate their aspirations has only deepened my gratitude for traveling along this path.”



Medina Ouida

M.A. STUDENT

This past year I graduated from Hampton University. During my time there I held a congressional internship and interned as a victim-witness advocate for the Hampton Commonwealth's Attorneys' Office. In recognition of National Crime Victims' Rights Week, I helped plan a symposium to empower survivors and victims of sex trafficking. It was important to me that we challenge efforts to re-victimize, criminalize, or shame the exploited and that we sought also to avoid placing marginalized voices in further captivity. While holding space for survivors' voices and stories, I found myself awakening to my Blackness and to the power of Black Sisterhood. This awakening was further catalyzed by the increased focus on the killing of Black males by white police officers. While this crisis attracted national attention, white supremacy and misogyny enabled many to turn a blind eye to the victimization of Black women.

As the racial climate began to heat up and expose the fallacies of claiming either a "colorblind" or "post-racial" America, I became increasingly horrified

by the collective, often strident responses to various protests, which only reinforced the further dehumanization and criminalization of Black people. The silence of institutions that I once held in high esteem, the anti-Black rhetoric spewed by people whom I once respected, and the overall response by white members of the community I served, prodded me onto the path toward Union. I selected Union because of its presentation of social activism, but ultimately Black Liberation Theology brought me here, and inevitably, Black women will keep me here.

Oddly enough, while studying Biblical History with Professor Brigitte Kahl, I became interested in Womanist biblical interpretations using Black literature as a vehicle to excavate stories and voices that have been ignored and devalued by the presumed white-male dominated culture. Although Womanist resources at Union are limited, I am dedicating all of my studies to this academic focal point. Upon completing Union I would like to pursue a doctoral degree. I am currently formulating the beginnings of *The Third Testament*, which will lift up not only the voices and writings of Black women, but also those who, like Abel, have found themselves lulled, lured, and killed by "man"—the creators of cities who do not see themselves as their brothers' and sisters' keepers. These stories, I find, are key to global issues of empire and indispensable for explicating capitalism, racism, and patriarchy as a lens through which other forms of oppression persist. Those of us in the 99% rather than 1% must come to the realization that we are still bound in slavery and that Baal still exists. My academic journey is dedicated to my daughter Alaina, in the hope that she will appreciate the Wilderness and follow her own path toward Black Mother, Earth Mother's gardens.

“I am currently formulating the beginnings of *The Third Testament*, which will lift up not only the voices and writings of Black women, but also those who, like Abel, have found themselves lulled, lured, and killed by ‘man’...”



Ayse Keskin-Saglam

M.A. STUDENT

Because of its history of religious activism and respect for many different faith traditions, I have always felt that Union Theological Seminary is the perfect place for me to pursue my academic interests. Growing up as a Turkish Muslim woman in Germany, a predominantly Christian country, I have a particular sensitivity towards different religions and their cultures, celebrations, values, and daily habits.

After I completed my Bachelors in German Language and Literature and Political Science at the University Hanover, my husband and I moved to the United States. When we arrived, I immediately began studies at the City College of New York for a Masters degree in Language and Literacy. While there, I became an active member in the Women's Club for the Turkish Cultural Center in Westchester County. Through the club, I gave Turkish cooking demonstrations, gave talks about women in Islam, and ran Women's Appreciation Days with over 100 multicultural and multireligious guests.

Growing up and living in a non-Muslim country, I recognize that a key role in my life is to be a bridge between Islam and different faiths. My interfaith work is inspired by the Turkish scholar Fetullah Gulen, whose philosophy is that all religions embrace all beliefs and races in brother-and-sisterhood while promoting love, respect, tolerance,

freedom, and peace through their prophets. I have greatly enjoyed being the bridge between Muslims and non-Muslims, and it has become my dream to transform this role into a career for myself.

This interest has allowed me to make sense of my own religious experiences as a Muslim woman and led me to formulate a new academic plan for myself: I have decided to pursue both a Masters and a Ph.D. in theology at Union. Once I received my letter of acceptance, I moved this past August from Westchester to an on-campus Union apartment with my husband and three children, Nese, Mahir, and Zakir. We are currently settling into our new life in Manhattan, and it has been a great adventure! After completing my academic degrees, my ultimate goals are to teach and conduct research as a scholar and activist at a university, gain more experience delivering important talks on Islam, and become more involved in nonprofit work that enables interreligious understanding. To achieve this goal, Union offers a rich environment where I can explore other religions and also gain academic confidence in my own tradition.

“Growing up as a Turkish Muslim woman in Germany, a predominantly Christian country, I have a particular sensitivity towards different religions and their cultures, celebrations, values, and daily habits.”



QuanTez Pressley

M.DIV. STUDENT

I arrived at Union by way of Detroit, Michigan, my hometown. I moved back to Detroit in 2009 after graduating from Morehouse College. Initially unsettled about what I would do after college, I chose to move back home because at the time Detroit was faced with some grave challenges. Communities were decimated by the foreclosure crisis, the auto industry was on the verge of bankruptcy, and the city's leadership was marred by criminal scandal. I moved back to help my city rebound.

I have spent the last seven years in Detroit working in various capacities aimed at improving the city. I worked on the executive management team for Detroit's summer youth employment program and served as chief of staff for the Detroit City Council President. Most recently, I served as the State Director of Community Schools for the Michigan Department of Human Services and was the Faith-based Director for the successful Duggan for Mayor Campaign. Concurrent with these governmental assignments, I have served as youth pastor for two local congregations, first at Hartford Memorial and presently at Third New Hope.

Last year, somewhat fatigued by my bi-vocational arrangement, I decided to commit myself to ministry full-time. Serving in the governmental sector gave me a sense of the limitations of policy

“Union was my only choice. Its urban location, exceptional faculty, and diverse student body made applying to Union a must for me.”

to drive the sort of spiritual transformation that I feel is needed to improve the quality of life for people in distressed communities.

As I looked for a place that would prepare me for this transition, Union was my only choice. Its urban location, exceptional faculty, and diverse student body made applying to Union a must for me. Moreover, Union's blending of theological education with social justice commitments provides the right context for engaging my interests in faith and public policy.

After only one semester, my experience has already been rich. Encounters both inside and outside the classroom have provided the kind of rich learning environment that is duplicated no place else. Lectures with Professor Cone, discussions with Cornel West, a symposium with Vice President Al Gore, and Union on the Hill with Congressman Scott are a few of the experiences that have confirmed Union as the right choice for me.

I am confident that when I leave Union with my Master of Divinity degree, I will be well prepared for pastoral ministry as I look to Union to help bolster my biblical comprehension, refine my theological positions, and strengthen my vocational aspirations. May Union be to me what the wilderness was for Jesus, so that I may leave here strengthened for the work of ministry and for the transformation of community through the work of justice and love.



Jennifer Haddad Mosher
DOCTORAL STUDENT,
RELIGION & EDUCATION

I often receive puzzled looks when I introduce myself to Union classmates. Behind the looks is a common question: why is an Eastern Orthodox Christian earning a doctorate in Religion and Education at a progressive, largely Protestant school? Several years ago, I might have been similarly befuddled. As a Palestinian-American born and raised in Kuwait, I'd never heard of Union, but then again, neither was I aware of how cut off Orthodox Christians in the West could be from our non-Orthodox neighbors and even, in critical ways, from our own roots. As a people called to make an offering of ourselves to God, in the words of Fr. Alexander Schmemmann, "for the life of the world," too often our understanding of how Christ inhabits that world is shockingly parochial and superficial.

The short answer is that American Orthodoxy needs religious education at all levels—the church school, the parish, the diocese, the seminary—that brings the rich resources of our established tradition together with the realities of our 21st century context in an honest, creative, and fruitful manner. The responsive, challenging, and diverse environment of Union plays a critical role in my work of discerning and articulating pedagogical principles for a contemporary Orthodox church.

“Union harbors key academic and communal resources. With a rich history of supporting the engagement of Orthodox Christianity with the wider Christian community in the United States....”

The longer answer is that Union is uniquely equipped to support this complex endeavor. In part, I came to Union following the faculty. As someone interested in mapping and critically assessing formal Orthodox religious education efforts in the United States, I have the perfect advisor in Dr. Mary Boys '78. Additionally, the presence of Fr. John McGuckin ensures I have simultaneous access to an Orthodox scholarly perspective.

Further, Union harbors key academic and communal resources. With a rich history of supporting the engagement of Orthodox Christianity with the wider Christian community in the United States—housing St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary at Union in the 1950s and hosting the Sophia Institute currently—the holdings of the Archives in the Burke library are a significant component of my primary area of research: the influences and pedagogical principles of American Orthodoxy's foundational educator, Sophie Koulomzin. Using archival material, I am able to reconstruct the milieu Koulomzin trained in at Teachers College and Union, worked in as the first female professor at St. Vladimir's, her relationships with key figures in the fields of contemporary theology, religious education and ecumenism, and her evolution as an educator. With my dissertation, I am hoping to help secure for Orthodox religious education going forward an

ethos that mirrors her authentic engagement with her context.

In a delightful surprise, a secondary area of research has bloomed for me, brought about by Union's relationship with Jewish Theological Seminary. Discovering an area of common concern, Dr. Sarah Tauber and I began a formal research collaboration on teaching about persecution. In the last two years this collaboration has evolved into a working group within the auspices of the Religious Education Association we continue to co-chair.

With an almost three-hour commute from central Connecticut and the responsibilities of three children and denominational ministries, my involvement in campus life outside of academics has been limited. Yet in the camaraderie of classes and consultation, Union has given me a supportive and welcoming community of colleagues that I look forward to collaborating with for the duration of my professional life. ♫

ANNUAL FUND 2016

Your gifts to the Annual Fund help to strengthen the rigorous, interreligious learning experience that equips the Union students of today with the tools they need to become the leaders of tomorrow. The Annual Fund provides scholarship funding, faculty support, field study stipends, maintenance monies for our historic campus, and so much more that is integral to each student's success. Your gift to the 2016 Annual Fund will support the transformative work being done in and by the Union community.


There's still time to give for FY16. The Annual Fund closes on June 30, 2016. Please consider making your gift today.

Do it online at: myunion.utsnyc.edu/donate

A few notable statistics about this year's Annual Fund:

- Nearly half of Annual Fund donors have increased their gifts over last year.
- Alums have increased their Annual Fund gift amounts by an average of 20%.
- 100% of Union's Alumni/ae Council members have already made gifts to the 2016 Annual Fund!

Planned Giving—A Place for Union in Your Estate Plans

Many Union alums and friends have made bequests and other kinds of deferred gifts to the Seminary over the years. Just this past January, we were pleased to hear from **Hans Buehler '67** and his wife, Ann, that they would be establishing The Mrs. Regina Buehler Scholarship in honor of Hans' mother. We thank the Buehlers for their generosity and forward thinking, and we also thank those of you who have made provisions for Union in their estate plans. If you wish to make a planned gift to Union, please contact Martin Duus, VP for Development at mduus@uts.columbia.edu. 

Thanks to the Class of 1965, the Union Campus Gets Greener



Gail Morlan Hovey '65 stands adjacent to a water fountain installed in November 2015 as part of the Class of 1965 gift to Union. Union no longer sells plastic water bottles in vending machines. The fountain keeps a running count of bottles saved when we fill our own containers. (As the magazine went to press, that number had reached 6,661 and one other fountain was at 30,055!)

GIVE TO THE ANNUAL FUND

Please continue to be as generous as you can.
For further information, please contact:

- Kevin McGee, *Annual Fund Director*
kmcgee@uts.columbia.edu
212-280-1590
- Martin Duus, *Vice President for Development*
mduus@uts.columbia.edu
212-280-1426

UNION DAYS OCTOBER 8-9, 2015



CELEBRATING THEIR 10TH REUNION, CLASS OF 2005: (L-R) Amy Gopp Vigne, Ted Pardoe, Katie Givens Kime



CLASS OF 1965, 50TH REUNION: (TOP ROW, L-R) J. Howard Middleton '65, Howard Kimball Jones '65, Gail Morlan Hovey '65, William Nye '65, David Robb '65, Dale Ostrander '65, Tom Finley Brown '65; (BOTTOM ROW, L-R) Russell Haden Davis '65, Stephen Geckler '65, Glenn Bucher '65, William Polk '66, LuAnn Polk '66, Dane Smith '63



CONNECTING AT THE 50TH CLASS REUNION: (L-R) LuAnn Polk, William Polk, Wyndham Anderson, J. Riley McDonald, Tom Finley Brown



L-R: Gay Byron '92, '99, Sally McNichol '87, '05, and Betty Bolden, Burke Library Staff



Mark Juergensmeyer '65 (L) and John James, current student (R)



L-R: Kymberly Lucas '95, Marvin Ellison '81, Elizabeth Carl '90, and Victoria Hill, wife of Carl

Save the Date for (Re)Union Days: October 6-7, 2016

UNION

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WOMEN OF SPIRIT LECTURE 2016

On April 13 at 6:30pm, Dr. Katharine Hayhoe, climate scientist, evangelical Christian, and faculty member at Texas Tech University, will give the 2016 Judith Davidson Moyers Women of Spirit lecture at Union. Registration is open at: utsnyc.edu/hayhoe. Registration is required.

PHOTO: Ashley Rodgers



Like most of the Northeast, in late January NYC was hit with a blizzard that deposited 28" of snow. This is a photo of Union's clear sidewalk the next morning, thanks to the diligence of our Facilities staff, among them (L-R) Rudy Hoyos, Calvin Mason, and Maurice Samuel.