

# Society for Buddhist- Christian Studies



Vol. 61

Spring 2018

## *News of the Society*



*SBCS Members at Foguangshan Boston, November 2018*

### **In this Newsletter**

Our Newsletter includes information that will appear later in *Buddhist-Christian Studies*:

- An overview of the 2017 Annual Meeting, including board and members meetings and panels
- Reports on Conferences

In this issue we also include:

- Information shared on upcoming events (Parliament of the World's Religions, a Georgetown Dialogue, Programs, Partner Organization Events)
- Streng award info



### **The Annual Meeting of the Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies**

**Concurrent with American Academy of Religions Annual Meeting  
Boston, November 2017**

Sandra Costen Kunz



### **Learning from Muslims, Thinking about Anger, And Enjoying Fo Guang Shan's Hospitality:**

Four highlights of this year's annual SBCS meeting were the Friday evening session "What Buddhists and Christians Can Learn from Muslims," our visit to Fo Guang Shan's Cambridge temple that evening, the Saturday morning session "Uses and Misuses of Anger in Buddhism and Christianity" and, immediately afterwards, the election of Leo Lefebure (Georgetown) as our new vice-president and John Makransky's handing over the presidency to current vice-president Kristin Largen. The SBCS vice-president is in charge of planning the sessions at our annual meeting and – after two years – takes over as president. Each year the SBCS, a "Related Scholarly Organization" of the American Academy of Religion, holds our annual meeting concurrently with AAR's annual meeting.

### **Friday Board of Directors Meeting**

#### *Officer's Reports*

After President John Makransky called the meeting to order at 9 AM, the board approved the proposed agenda and then last year's minutes and the treasurer's report.

Journal Co-editor Thomas Cattoi reported that the 2019 volume of the Journal will publish the papers from the 2017 conference in Pistoia, Italy which honored the scholarly work of 17<sup>th</sup> century Jesuit missionary Ippolito Desideri, most notably his writings about Tibet. Noting that not all the papers submitted for publication are in his and co-editor Carol Anderson's areas of specialization, he asked that the Society's board members, the Journal's editorial board members, and others who are asked to peer review papers respond in a timely manner. Sid Brown, book review editor, asked to be alerted about books that should be reviewed. Journal Co-editor Carol Anderson thanked her for her consistently timely and careful contributions to the Journal. Newsletter Editor Jonathan Seitz reminded us that it's now being published only online. He asked board members to submit articles and to remind colleagues and students to do so as well.

#### *International Advisor Report*

Elizabeth Harris reported on the plans for the European Network for Buddhist Christian Studies' conference June 27 – July 1, 2019 at St. Ottilien Monastery in Emming, Germany, near Munich. It will honor the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Lynn de Silva, the Sri Lankan Methodist theologian and leader in Buddhist-Christian dialogue. The theme will be considering the future of Buddhist-Christian dialogue in the light of five major emphases in de Silva's work. The first paper will be presented by Wesley Ariarajah, emeritus professor of ecumenical theology at Drew who, like De Silva, was ordained in the Sri Lankan Methodist Church and who has contributed greatly

to interfaith dialogue and Christian ecumenism globally. The call for papers will probably close the end of February 2019.

### *Committee Reports*

Social media committee chairperson Judith Simmer-Brown first reported that the new website has been up and running for a year and a half. She explained that renewing Society membership through the new GoPaywall membership service involves first creating a “membership portal” with a credit card number and password, and then actually renewing one’s membership. GoPaywall will automatically renew one’s membership yearly after that, but will send a notice first. She noted that the new system can produce a tax receipt at any time.

After passing out the web analytics, she pointed out we now have fifteen new members since switching to GoPaywall. This gives us a total of 145 members, double the number we had this time last year! Clearly the new website is helping us reach a larger audience and draw them into our conversations. Alicia Brown was appointed to take over the weekly website tasks that social media committee member Ayo Yetunde had been doing. Blog co-director Abraham Velez announced that the blog is live, noting how helpful Alicia Brown has been with this. He reported that he and blog Co-director Karen Enriquez have come up with four tabs: Teaching Materials – which Karen will moderate, News – which Jonathan Seitz will moderate, Books and Articles – which Abraham will moderate, and Timely Issues – which Justin Whitaker (PhD, University of London, 2017) and Jason Von Wachenfeldt (PhD, Georgetown, 2014) will moderate.

Streng book award committee chair Abraham Velez reported that the committee decided not to make an award this year. He asked for suggestions for new ways the SBCS could make this award more rewarding, in addition to the certificate and the Society’s publicity.

Nomination committee chair John Makransky announced that Leo Lefebure (Georgetown) was the committee’s recommendation to replace Kristin Largen as vice-president when she takes over as

president. He was unanimously elected, with much gratitude for his willingness to serve. The committee also unanimously elected Mark Unno (University of Oregon) and Karen Enriquez (Loyola Marymount) as new board members to replace Abraham Velez and Sallie King, whose terms end this year.

Program committee chair Kristin Largen collected suggestions for panel topics for next year. During the discussion, the question was raised about the extent to which pastoral issues related to congregations and sanghas might be addressed in our sessions. Also raised were the two somewhat related issues of whether or not non-academic religious practitioners should be asked to present papers, and the extent to which first-person accounts about religious practice are appropriate in light of our status as one of AAR’s “related scholarly organizations.”

Sallie King recounted that historically we’ve tried to appeal to a larger audience than AAR. Since we no longer meet outside AAR, this has been curtailed. Judith Simmer-Brown noted that our panels often include more first person voice than other AAR panels and that practitioner-scholar issues have been key to the Society since its beginning. Navigating the borders between scholars and practitioners was an early concern for the Society and has continued to be, to some extent. Jonathan Seitz suggested that we could be more creative about inviting non-academics to take a role in our sessions and other activities. Kristin Largen suggested that we think about designing some sessions around issues that would lend themselves to discussion and expertise by non-academics, such as gun control.

### *New Business*

Ruben Habito reported that Leo Lefebure, an emeritus member of the Parliament of the World’s Religions’ board, sees the upcoming Parliament as an opportunity for the Society to engage corporately in first-person/practitioner discussions without having to bear the financial burden of organizing and funding our own international conference. The Society could organize sessions within the Parliament around topics we propose. Ruben recalled that SMU sent several students and

two faculty to the Melbourne Parliament, and that this year's location would certainly make it easier for schools to organize something similar. After some very positive discussion about the possibilities the parliament offers the Society, we agreed to return to the topic online, after AAR. Having no further business, John Makransky made a motion at 2:32 to adjourn, which Ruben Habito seconded and the board unanimously approved.

#### *Friday Evening Panel*

The theme of the Society's Friday night session was "What Buddhists and Christians Can Learn from Muslims." In the first paper, "Tawhid and Surrender: Islamic Challenges for Buddhist Modernism" board member Glenn Willis (Misericordia University) examined how Buddhist understandings and practices of "surrender" to both emptiness and interdependence might be contrasted to, and enriched by, Islamic understandings and practices of surrender to the oneness of Allah. Traditional Buddhist and Muslim understandings and practices of voluntary, disciplined surrender both stand in contrast to involuntary, undisciplined surrender to contemporary media influence.

Society treasurer John Sheveland (Gonzaga University) presented "Radicalization and Mercy: Christian Theological Learning from the Open Letter to al-Baghdadi." He investigated what Christians might learn about addressing systematic violence (including Christian violence) from the rhetorical and theological moves that 122 Muslim leaders made in addressing the leader of ISIS. He interpreted these leaders' decision to critique innocent killings on classic Islamic grounds, and their choice to call Isis to conversion instead of threatening excommunication, in light of Jesuit Paul Crowley's comment that Pope Francis' invitation to a Year of Mercy calls Christians to "consider the degree to which the church itself is in need of God's mercy, of the grace of conversion." (Address to the Catholic Theological Society of America, 2016)

The paper of Kunihiro Terasawa (Wartburg College), "A Buddhist Fascination with Islamic Mysticism: In Case of Toshihiko Izutsu," briefly reviewed Japanese philosopher and linguist Izutsu's 20<sup>th</sup> century exploration of Islamic

philosophy. Having grown up practicing Zen, Izutsu taught Islamic philosophy at McGill and in Tehran. Terawasa focused on Izutsu's study of Ibn Arabi, a 13<sup>th</sup> century Sufi in Spain who was Dogen's contemporary.

Two Muslim scholars responded to the papers: Bahar Davary, associate professor of theology and religious studies at University of San Diego and Amir Hussain, professor of theological studies at Loyola Marymount University. A lively conversation ensued.

#### *Friday Evening Field Trip*

Following the evening session, many Society members rode a chartered mini-bus to Fo Guang Shan's temple in Cambridge. The new abbess, Venerable Jue Qian, and several other nuns and temple members, welcomed us to a delicious – and beautiful – dinner. She led us in a brief sitting meditation before showing us around their lovely new building and telling us a little about their history and mission. We were especially impressed by the 20-volume *Encyclopedia of Buddhist Art* that Fo Guang Shan recently published, replete with page after page of full color plates. They're planning to donate sets to local universities. We left grateful for the temple's warm hospitality and Jonathan Seitz's work to organize the visit.

#### *Saturday Morning Panel*

The Saturday morning session, "Uses and Misuses of Anger in Buddhism and Christianity" was described this way in the AAR program book:

The role of anger in both Buddhism and Christianity is complex and multivalent. Both religions teach the need to combat anger and its destructive consequences, particularly the way it fractures relationships. However, at the same time, anger can be a powerful tool for advocacy and action, particularly for the sake of justice. In this session, different aspects of anger are explored, with an eye both to anger's constructive role and also to its dangers.

Carolyn Medine (University of Georgia) presented the first paper, "Claude AnShin Thomas: Pausing at Hell's Gate and Undoing Anger," which

focused on Thomas' biography tracing his journey from suffering from PTSD as a decorated Vietnam veteran to ordaining as a Zen monk devoted to teaching nonviolence. Anger is one of the six Abhidharmic root afflictive emotions that create a false sense of mental clarity. Its positive side is that it signals problems. Stopping patiently to recognize and care for our anger creates space to address the problem. So can following Shariputra's advice in "The Discourse of Five Ways of Putting an End to Anger."

"Searching for Holy Anger: Voices from the Philokalia and the Tibetan Buddhist Tradition" was presented by Thomas Cattoi (Graduate Theological Union) and drew on the work of Evagrius and Shantideva. The writings of both present cartographies of inner states. Evagrius holds that although the roots of anger can be injustice, there is no righteous anger towards our neighbor, and it clouds our discernment. Shantideva taught that the perfection of patient endurance can undo anger and is the stepping stone to compassion.

Rod Owens (Dharma Boston Sangha) presented "The Wrathful Guru: Exploring the Vajrayana Understanding of Anger." He recounted working with his own anger in his relationship with his dharma teacher, saying that his goal is to develop a noncompulsory relationship with his anger. Anger can be a result of not embodying our own power effectively. When the forceful use of energy is used in order to advance *our own* agenda, it is harmful; when used for someone else, it can be an expression of compassion.

Carol S. Anderson (Kalamazoo College) began her paper, "Anger Makes Us Ugly: Reflections from Pali Buddhism," with several of the teachings in the suttas which illustrate that anger should always be avoided, including:

- 1) the seven ways anger undermines us as our worst enemy might wish,
- 2) the image of an anger-eating demon who vanishes when not fed,
- 3) the Buddha's declaration that even if bandits were to saw off one's limbs, to succumb to anger would be a departure from his teachings.

At the end of her paper she considered the perspectives of feminists. Martha Nussbaum recounted that Catherine MacKinnon convinced her that anger can be a "sign that self-respect has not been crushed, that humanity burns even where it is supposed to have been extinguished." Anderson concluded her paper by noting that bell hooks wrote that "anger helps us become subjects," and that "to arrive at alternate states of being I have needed my anger."

In his paper "The Wind of the Spirit Blows Gently and Fiercely: A Pentecostal Perspective on Love and Anger," Joel Daniels (Georgetown) noted that the Azusa Street movement initially endorsed pacifism. Since then, some Pentecostals have interpreted some biblical texts as examples of "righteous anger," such as Jesus' cleansing of the temple. These Pentecostals, he noted, counterpose righteous anger and indifference. Drawing on Nussbaum, like Anderson above, Daniels compared this "anger/indifference" contrast with her description of "transitional anger" as the sense that "something should be done," i.e. an emotion that can break through our "busyness."

Board member Judith Simmer-Brown responded to the papers, and a varied and enthusiastic discussion followed.

### *Members Meeting*

Immediately following this session, President John Makransky called us to order at 11:36. He noted the Society's deep gratitude to Alice Keefe for her excellent leadership as past president of the Society during the past two years, after her two as president and, before that, her two years as vice-president. He also thanked Sallie King and Abraham Velez for their fine work for the last four years as board members.

After announcing the board's happy recommendation that Leo Lefebure be elected vice-president, John introduced him. He then reported the good news that Mark Unno and Karen Enriquez were willing to fill the vacant board seats. All three were elected unanimously by the members present.

Reporting how much the new website has been benefitting the Society in terms of new members, John announced that the Society's blog went live two days ago, with Karen and Abraham as co-directors. After a brief discussion of topics for next year's sessions, Ruben Habito and Leo reported on the Society's developing plans to participate in the Parliament of the World's Religions in Toronto this coming November.

As John passed the presidency of the Society on to Kristin Lagen, she and the rest of those present expressed our great thanks to him for all his work leading the society for the last two years, noting especially the great improvement in our online presence. We adjourned at 11:53.



### European Network of Buddhist-Christian Studies

**European Network of Buddhist-Christian Studies Biennial Conference 2019 (in partnership with the World Council of Churches)**

**27 June - 1st July 2019**

Buddhist-Christian Encounter - a Visionary Approach: A Conference inspired by Lynn de Silva (1919 -1982)

To be held at the Archabbey of St Ottilien, Nr. Munich, Germany.

Invited speakers include: Wesley Ariarajah, Andre van der Braak, James Fredericks, Elizabeth Harris, Jude Lal Fernando, Kurt Krammer, Gudrun Lowner, Joseph O'Leary, Perry Schmidt-Leukel, Annewieke Vroom and Amos Yong.

Registration will open soon and proposals for papers on Buddhist-Christian relations are invited for the parallel sessions. The conference plans to include a panel organized by SBCS.

Further information can be found at: [www.buddhist-christian-studies-europe.net](http://www.buddhist-christian-studies-europe.net)

(Lynn de Silva was a Sri Lankan Methodist minister and a scholar of Buddhism, who pioneered Buddhist-Christian dialogue in Sri Lanka, and inter-religious encounter at the World Council of Churches)

The next conference will be at St. Ottilien in 2019 and the theme is "A Visionary Approach: A Conference inspired by Lynn A. de Silva (1919-1982).



### Georgetown University Shin Buddhist-Muslim-Christian Dialogue

**June 27-29, 2018**

Leo Lefebure shares the following:

Georgetown University will host a Shin Buddhist-Muslim-Christian dialogue on June 27-29, 2018, in collaboration with colleagues from Ryukoku University in Kyoto, the Institute of Buddhist Studies in Berkeley, CA, and the University of Muenster. Dennis Hirota and Leo Lefebure will give public lectures on "Saving Action in Shin Buddhism and Christianity" on Wednesday, June 27 at 5:30 p.m. All are welcome.



### 2018 Parliament of the World's Religions, Toronto

**November 1-7, 2018**



**THE PROMISE of INCLUSION,  
THE POWER of LOVE:**

Pursuing Global Understanding, Reconciliation, and Change

This year we are grateful to have the Parliament of Religions in Toronto, and SBCS members plan to participate in a variety of ways (we have submitted some panel proposals, some schools are bringing students, other are attending individually). Our point person has been Leo D. Lefebure.

The Parliament anticipated more than 500 sessions. This is the 7<sup>th</sup> Parliament following earlier ones in Chicago (1993), Cape Town (1999), Barcelona (2004), Melbourne (2009), and Salt Lake City (2015).

The Parliament website is:

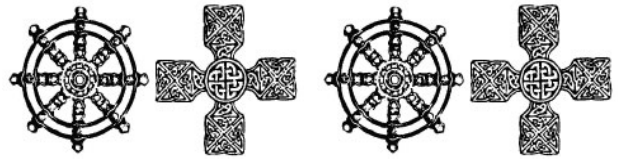
<https://parliamentofreligions.org/>

The Parliament describes its approach this way:

“The Parliament of the World's Religions seeks to promote interreligious harmony, rather than unity. The problem with seeking unity among religions is the risk of loss of the unique and precious character of each individual religious and spiritual tradition; this understanding is key to our framework.”

“Interreligious harmony, on the other hand, is an attainable and highly desirable goal. Such an approach respects, and is enriched by, the particularities of each tradition. Moreover, within each tradition are the resources (philosophical, theological and spiritual teachings and perspectives) that enable each to enter into respectful, appreciative and cooperative relationships with persons and communities of other traditions.”

Registration remains open until the Parliament.



## Japan Society

For information on our sister society, see The Japan Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies

<http://nirc.nanzan-u.ac.jp/en/activities/jsbcs/>

A report on their annual meeting is provided in the Fall newsletter.



## United Theological Seminary Launches Buddhist Chaplaincy Certificate Program

Pamela Ayo Yetunde shares the following news:

United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities has launched a Buddhist Chaplaincy Certificate Program. For more information, contact Program Director Dr. Patrice Koelsch at [patrice.koelsch@unitedseminary.edu](mailto:patrice.koelsch@unitedseminary.edu).

## Membership



If you haven't renewed for 2017, please do so now. Membership includes our newsletters, our journal, and other benefits. [You can renew via our website.](#)

Some of you have asked about how membership works. Here is a brief Question & Answer

### What are current dues?

Dues range from \$10 for students to \$25 for Adjunct Professors, Independent Scholars, and Assistant Professors and \$45 for Associate and Full Professors.

### What are the terms of membership?

You may join or renew at any point during the calendar year, although it is more convenient to join at the start. Membership is for the current year (2017), but regardless of when you join you receive the same benefits for that year.

### What is included in annual membership?

Membership includes an annual print copy of *Buddhist-Christian Studies*, inclusion on our email list (two e-newsletters), and voting rights in member meetings.

### How does membership contribute to broader Buddhist-Christian cooperation?

Our dues support a variety of recent efforts. We have worked to make the Journal more easily available, have added to our webpage (for instance, it includes the last 12+ years of newsletters), and continue to work on ways to connect scholars.

### Website, Facebook, Blog

Our website is:  
<http://www.society-buddhist-christian-studies.org/>

Check out our Facebook page and give it a like:  
<https://www.facebook.com/BuddhistChristianStudies/>

Our blog is up! The two main moderators are J. Abraham Velez de Cea or Karen Enriquez. Feel free to contribute news, opinion, educational resources, or other info.



### To Nominate a book for the Streng Award

*Note: In 2017 the board did not make an award, but we welcome nominations for 2018*

The book must have been published within the last five years. Nominations can be made by any person other than the author(s) or editor(s), using the [downloadable nomination form](#) or the [online form](#).

The completed form may be sent electronically to J. Abraham Velez de Cea ([abraham.velez@eku.edu](mailto:abraham.velez@eku.edu)), who will respond to all nominations.

Self-nominations are not permitted. Publishers of books must be willing to supply review copies to members of the committee for evaluation in order for the book to be considered.



### CONTRIBUTE A REPORT TO THE NEWSLETTER

The *Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies Newsletter* is published twice annually: in the spring and the fall. Please contact the Editor to share information with our readers. The deadline for the fall issue is September 1.



In addition to reports on our annual meeting (concurrent with the American Academy of Religion) and calls for the Frederick Streng Book Award for Excellence in Buddhist-Christian Studies and for the Graduate Student Essay Prize, the *Newsletter* also publishes information on conferences, retreats, lectures, and other events. We welcome obituaries and reports on major figures in the field of Buddhist-Christian Studies.

We are always grateful for information, news, or other submissions that members and others can share with the Society. Submissions may be edited for clarity and length. Send items to newsletter editor Jonathan Seitz  
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**SOCIETY FOR BUDDHIST-  
CHRISTIAN STUDIES  
NEWSLETTER**

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