

News of the Society

Greetings from the Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies! The spring newsletter contains important information about the society and its activities. (Check out our [website](#), [blog](#), or [facebook](#) page).



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**Balancing Depth and Breadth
in Our Conversations:
Denver 2022 Face-to-Face SBCS Annual
Meeting**

Sandra Costen Kunz
SBCS Secretary

In 2020 and 2021, due to the corona virus pandemic, the SBCS held our annual board meeting, members meeting, and paper sessions online. This year, in 2022, we were delighted to meet face-to-face again on November 18–19 in conjunction with the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion (AAR). Because we are an AAR “related scholarly organization” (RSO), all of our events were scheduled through, and publicized by, AAR’s staff. President Mark Unno not only presided at the board’s table but also graciously ran a video conference, primarily to accommodate board and committee members who were outside the US or dealing with travel-prohibiting health issues.

The 2020 and 2021 fully online governance meetings, led by then-president Leo Lefebure, had been well-organized, well-run, highly effective and a lot of fun. But as I watched the attentive eyes around the table this year, and listened to the laughter, empathetic sighs, and

plans for follow-up conversations, it seemed to me that meeting in person, in some ways, more powerfully supports the society’s aim to foster **in-depth** Buddhist-Christian dialogue and comparative studies. Mark, then vice-president, had organized the 2020 and 2021 online paper sessions carefully for online audiences. We were thrilled that these beautifully crafted and moderated presentations drew audiences that were amazingly **broad**, in terms of both size and diversity. Planned as emergency extensions of the society’s efforts to create, through our blog and Facebook page, safe online spaces for Buddhist-Christian dialogue and comparative studies, the international reach of these sessions astounded us. Conversations that had begun in sessions could not, however, be quickly continued over a meal or coffee. In some ways, they did not appear to me to spark the same depth of ongoing conversation that the SBCS has developed over four decades of face-to-face meetings.

As the board continues to discuss how to balance our desires for both depth and breadth of conversation among our board, our members, and nonmembers who attend our events, we sincerely welcome the wisdom of members and

other readers. You can submit suggestions to:
<https://www.society-buddhist-christian-studies.org/contact>

Board of Governors Meeting

President's Opening Remarks

Calling this year's board meeting to order a little past 9 AM, Mark Unno said that he sensed "his father, Taitetsu Unno, is with us, encouraging and congratulating the society on how far we've come in the past 40 years." He recalled his father's participation in the Cobb-Abe dialogues and the network that evolved into the SBCS, and that these initial conversations were often highly theological – and testy – and often involved a translator. Mark is convinced, however, that this early debate was a necessary foundation for developing a more robust mutual learning community. Describing two significant ways the society is modelling collaborative learning, he said:

1) We're providing a model of interreligious engagement for other people in our various traditions.

2) Although we do have impacts on scholars and general audiences through our AAR sessions, journal, and online resources, our greatest impacts as board members have been on each other! Furthermore, any impact of lasting value will come through our embodiment of deep dialogue and mutual learning.

Mark explained that we'd begin with the online European Network report, move to the Japan Society's report, and then to the treasurer's and the secretary's reports, both of which would be presented online.

International Advisor Report from Europe

Elizabeth Harris, representing the European Network of Buddhist Christian Studies, explained that since its formation in the 1990's its main work has been to hold a conference every other year and publish the papers. EOS

Verlag has now published the papers that she and Perry Schmidt-Leukel edited from the 2020 conference titled "A Visionary Approach: Lynn A. de Silva and the Prospects for Buddhist-Christian Encounter." The 2022 conference titled "Euro-Buddhism and the Role of Christianity," whose papers are now being edited, explored how Buddhism in Europe has related to Christianity and how Christianity has influenced how Buddhism manifested in Europe. The upcoming 2024 conference at St. Virgil's in Salzburg will focus on the body in Buddhism and Christianity, but the call for papers and panels has not yet been issued. The network heartily encourages SBCS members to submit a proposal for a panel.

The UK Association for Buddhist Studies will hold a 2023 conference 21-23 June at University of St. Andrews in Scotland in tandem with the European Academy of Religion on "Negotiating Boundaries." These include gender, religious, and disciplinary boundaries. Liz is still co-moderating the Buddhist Christian Dialogue Forum in the UK, which has taken a bit of a break but will relaunch this March in London.

International Advisor Report from Japan

Kuni Teresawa reported that Yutaka Tanaka, president of the Japan Society and a process theologian at Sophia University, is continuing to guide their society towards "generational change." The enormous contributions of the Kyoto School will continue to be honored while giving increased attention to the significant global growth during this century of nationalism and grief. The society's next meeting will address religion, violence, and war.

A continuing collaboration among Risshō Kōsei Kai, the Unitarian Church, and other groups in Japan is addressing two issues in ongoing, practical ways:

1) the continuing suffering initiated by the 2011 Tohoku earthquake and tsunami,

2) religious freedom.

Kuni noted that the latter issue is very much a part of current Japanese politics and therefore is extremely important to the Japan Society. Along with other SBCS board members, he's been involved with the Won Buddhist ICCGC meetings in South Korea that draw widely from East Asia and beyond.

Treasurer's Report

John Sheveland reported that "We're still in a trend where we're spending a little bit more than we're bringing in." He noted that our increased expenses are due primarily to AAR's increased meeting room, microphone, and now internet access fees. Happily, when he emailed AAR asking if it would be possible to waive the internet fee, they responded by cutting it in half.

He commented on our cash flow: "This doesn't look sustainable to me. My sense is that we need more memberships." He reviewed some past board conversations around the tension between raising membership fees and the possibility that this might discourage new memberships.

John reported that we're in good shape with the IRS in terms of our non-profit status, but noted that the agency itself has acknowledged that their current e-filing software has problems uploading their forms for non-profits. He's called several times, but the fact that IRS' call center is currently responding to less than a quarter of their calls only adds to the agency's communication issues.

He'll be handing over the treasurer's position at the next annual meeting (November 2023) and repeated the suggestion he made at the 2021 annual meeting that the board decide on a replacement as soon as possible so he can orient the new treasurer before he leaves the board.

Nomination Committee and Secretary's Report

Presenting via Zoom, Sandy Kunz summarized the board and committee vacancies report that she had emailed the board the night before because she was worried that the "emergency

network repairs" that T-Mobile said were "fully resolved" might resurface during the board meeting. Much to her remorse, they did: significantly impeding communication and demonstrating the perils of hybrid meetings.

When Insook Lee resigned her at-large board position in the summer of 2022, the nomination committee agreed unanimously to ask Grace Song, chair of the Department of Won Buddhist Studies at the Won Buddhist Institute outside Philadelphia, if she would be able to accept (if elected) a two-year term that would cover the remainder of Insook's term. Happily, Grace said she would.

Past president Leo Lefebure and now Mark have been guiding the nominating committee to get the election of at-large board members back to electing two people every year for four-year terms, barring surprises. Finalizing this bylaws-driven adjustment this year meant electing two people to regular four-year at-large board terms and electing two people to "irregular" two-year terms.

Because we had so many positions to fill in 2022, the nominating committee used Survey Monkey to poll the entire board for suggested names. The committee was delighted to receive many fine suggestions.

When the nominating committee contacted these scholars, Trent Pomplun (Notre Dame) was able to serve a two-year term, and Victor Gabriel (University of the West) and Gloria Chien (Gonzaga University) were able to serve four-year terms. With the addition of Grace, this gave us the four people needed. The board unanimously approved them as the slate to present to the Saturday members meeting.

Sandy then reviewed the positions the board will need to fill at its 2023 meeting:

1. The treasurer's position, which has repeatable four-year terms.
2. The six-year sequence of vice-president, president, and past president.
3. Two regular four-year at-large positions.

Thomas Cattoi will be finishing his second four-year term as editor. Since this position has unlimited terms, we're all fervently hoping he'll be able to continue the beautiful work he's been doing! We're hoping the same for John Becker, who edits the newsletter and the News & Views section of the journal.

The minutes from the 2021 annual meeting were unanimously approved. The lovely cake that Mark brought and shared during the break that followed was also unanimously approved, it appeared to me, and enjoyed!

Past President's Report

Following up on Mark and Liz's references to the society's earliest days, Leo began by paying tribute to the founding generation that he met in 1987 at the first formal meeting of the society. He noted that Ty Unno, in particular, "greatly encouraged me as a junior scholar coming into this whole world."

Reporting on the society's connections with Won Buddhists, he recounted that while teaching at Fordham he'd gotten to know Chung Ok Lee who was the organization's representative to the United Nations. Several years ago she, Venerable Sangwon Hwang, and Leo were involved in a dialogue in Italy where they had an audience with Pope Francis. The Won Buddhists launched the Interfaith Coalition Conference for Global Citizens (ICCGC), which has the support of the Ministry of Culture of the South Korean Government. They're gathering partners to consider issues such as religion after covid and racism, including anti-Asian bias. Mark was the keynote speaker at their conference this past year where Leo offered opening remarks as an ICCGC co-president and chaired an online discussion involving Carolyn Medine, JK Kato, and Kuni. They all hope to attend the meeting in South Korea in August 2023, and they envision long-term conversations between Won Buddhists and SBCS members.

Leo also updated us on the Buddhist-Catholic dialogue on climate change that's affiliated with

the Parliament of the World's Religions. They periodically host webinars and plan to meet in person in Chicago next August. The parliament is hoping to meet every two years.

Program Committee Report

Vice-president and thus program committee chair Carolyn Medine began by describing the two 2022 weekend sessions. Friday's late afternoon session following the board meeting was titled "Becoming Buddhist; Becoming Christian: Religious Formation in a Buddhist Christian Context." This panel examined questions about conversion, intensified religious identity, and dual religious identity inspired by Carolyn Chen's book *Getting Saved in America*. It traces the religious adaptations and journeys of Taiwanese immigrants to the US. In addition to the author, both Allison Marshall (Brandon University) and Leo presented, the latter reading a paper contributed by his Georgetown colleague Peter Phan. Carolyn moderated this session that she'd organized and offered her own response to Chen's book.

Carolyn thanked Duane Bidwell for helping her pull together the Saturday panel. As governments, healthcare institutions, and courts increasingly frame "spiritual care" as a human right and public good, chaplains are emerging as the religious-spiritual leaders many North Americans are most likely to encounter. The participants addressed the question "What resources does Buddhist-Christian studies offer to providers of spiritual care?" in light of theories and practices of spiritual care that draw on the methods of inquiry from pastoral and practical theology and from Christian and Buddhist perspectives. The panelists were Duane Bidwell (Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences), Monica Sanford (Harvard Divinity School), and Victor Gabriel (University of the West). Carolyn moderated and read remarks by Thomas Cattoi (Santa Clara University).

We're grateful that Carolyn was able to schedule all of our meetings and sessions in the same

hotel! She described three ideas for our 2023 sessions:

- 1) Won Buddhism as an inter-religious phenomenon.
- 2) A successor to the panel the SBCS hosted more than a decade ago which generated the widely-cited Womanist-Buddhist papers published in the 2012 issue of our journal. Carolyn has already recruited Deborah Rogers, Judith Simmer-Brown, Chera Jo Watts, and Pamela Ayo Yetunde, and will contribute herself.
- 3) A panel on children caught in violent inter-religious conflict and nationalist battles.

Before Carolyn began her report, Mark remarked that he sees her work, Ayo's work, and the work of other African American Buddhists as finally breaking through the dominance of white and Asian scholarship in the SBCS. He noted that only in the last few years have the largest general-audience Buddhist journals hired associate editors of color, e.g., Ayo's position at *Lion's Roar*.

Post-meeting update: The panel on children caught in violent inter-religious conflict and nationalist battles did not work out. Instead, Carolyn has organized a panel about Thich Nhat Hanh's contributions to Buddhist-Christian dialogues featuring: Mark Andrus, author, *Brothers in the Beloved Community: The Friendship of Thich Nhat Hanh and Martin Luther King Jr.* Julius-Kei Kato, King's College, Ontario on Nhat Hanh's outreach to the "spiritual but not religious," Victor Thasiah, author, *Collapsing Space and Time: Thich Nhat Hanh's Ecological Humanism*, and Mobi Warren, artist and translator of Nhat Hahn's books.

Journal Co-editors Report

Kristin Largen, reporting after having just completed her first issue as co-editor, stressed how much she and co-editor Thomas appreciate

the work of board members and others who peer-review articles - and how vital this work is for the journal. She said that Thomas has noticed a significant decline in the number and quality of submissions over recent years. In spite of this, the past two issues have been very full because they contained the papers from conferences pertinent to Buddhist-Christian studies sponsored by other organizations. The upcoming issue will be thinner.

Kristin was happy that, throughout the pandemic, University of Hawa'i Press had no problems getting paper, ink, and other supplies. She reminded everyone that she and Thomas want to publish all the papers presented at our sessions and urged us to nudge session participants to send them finalized versions.

Book Review Editor's Report

Jason VonWachenfeldt began by saying that, after having started the book review editor position online a year ago without having met the community, he's really been looking forward to meeting everyone this year. He already has in hand a review of John Keenan's *Earthing the Cosmic Christ of Ephesians* and one from Leo for this year's Streng Award book, Peter Baekelman's *The Hidden God: Towards a Christian Theology of Buddhism*. He has reviews promised for the *Routledge Handbook of Buddhist-Christian Studies* and one more book. He's just received three new releases and has a backlog of books that haven't been reviewed.

Jason concluded by recounting the decision made by Lawrenceville, the Princeton, NJ-area boarding school where he teaches, to hire on an interim basis the first non-Protestant chaplain in the school's 213-year history. He's a Zen Buddhist who trained in Japan. Mark noted that the highly respected lineage in which this chaplain was trained has a history of social engagement, including hospitality to delinquent youth.

Post-meeting update: Unfortunately, Jason has informed the board that his increasing duties as Assistant Dean of the Faculty at Lawrenceville

will make it impossible for him to continue in his role as Book Review Editor after this year's issue of the journal. He plans to continue his engagement with the Society as times allows and expresses his deepest appreciation for his experiences with us.

Request for Endorsement

Ayo Yetunde reported that the Fetzer Institute contacted Ruben Habito about organizing one of 9-10 "Sacred Story" projects. Ruben recruited Mark, Judith Simmer-Brown, Sarah Shaw and Ayo as collaborators. They chose the Kisa Gotami/mustard seeds story. Fetzer is allowing each "Sacred Story" group to retain its book's copyright and is asking all of the groups to work together to craft a unified story in addition to their group's story. Inspired by their work together, Ayo is now creating a contemporary screenplay adaptation entitled "Songbird" and was seeking the society's endorsement. She has already procured endorsements and contributions from Sakyadhita, the Buddhist Film Foundation, and the Unno Family Fund. The board voted unanimously to endorse the project.

Streng Book Award Committee

Giving his first report as the committee's chair, Peter Feldmeier led a discussion about the committee's decision-making process this year, wanting to improve it. After supplying some historical perspective, Kristin applauded his efforts to clarify the process, noting the importance of aligning it with what's posted on our website in the award nomination form and the bylaws. After much discussion, the decision was made to retain the current March 1 deadline for external nominations received through the website. Elizabeth Tyler and Duane were appointed to the committee.

Peter said the committee felt very good about giving the 2022 award to Peter Baekelman for *The Hidden God: Towards a Christian Theology of Buddhism* (Brooklyn, NY: Angelico Press, 2022). He's a Belgian priest in the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, which was founded

to serve the poorest of the poor in China. While a missionary in Japan for two decades he earned a PhD at Nanzan University and was initiated into the Shingon Vajrayana order. He now directs the Vatican II-founded Service of Documentation and Studies on Global Mission (SEDOS) in Rome while teaching theology at the Catholic University of Louvain. He had hoped to attend AAR this year to receive the award but was unable to do so.

Peter read to the board the first sentences of the award statement he'd written:

Peter Baekelman's *The Hidden God: Towards a Christian Theology of Buddhism* considers patterns, associations, and confluences on a large scale. Baekelman addresses the question of divinity from the perspective of functional analogies, that is, how certain categories actually work in practice, from the functions of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to the eternal interpenetrating nature of emptiness and form, to the quality (and dynamic) of "thusness" (*tathatā*) and, most importantly, to the status of Buddha-nature (*tathāgata-garba*). (For the entire statement see:

<https://www.society-buddhist-christian-studies.org/frederick-j-streng-award>)

Earlier in the meeting Mark had commented that, in contrast to the broad "universal religious themes" approach of many early book award winners, Ayo's book that received last year's award "addresses, at first glance, only a narrow slice of the world's population" because it involves "sexual identity and orientation issues related to transgender as well as race." He pointed out, however, that like other specific cultural concerns, "what initially seemed to be on the periphery turns out to be of central concern for so many, as heated contemporary debates evince." So, Ayo's work does in fact deal with issues of broad engagement because they are among the issues most hotly debated within and between religious communities and the larger society.

Duane commented that Ayo's training in the field of practical theology (which emphasizes

interdisciplinary work among multiple academic fields and reflection on one's own ministry experience) prepared her well to draw on Buddhist, Christian, and legal resources to address, quite practically, a highly divisive social issue. Peter remarked that Baekelman's book definitely takes a "universal religious themes" approach. Such broad "universal themes" have definitely been key resources for both Buddhist and Christian SBCS authors who've also addressed highly divisive social issues.

The society looks forward to continuing to call attention to books that engage both broad, "universal" themes as well as narrow, more focused concerns from the perspective of comparative and dialogical Buddhist-Christian studies or books that draw attention to Buddhist and Christian resources for healing social conflicts.

Social Media and Website Committee

Chair Jonathan Seitz, who couldn't travel from Taiwan this year to attend, emailed his report to the board's members. Chera Jo Watts, SBCS executive associate for digital services, was also unable to attend. New committee member Alaina Keller read the report. She's a PhD student of Leo's at Georgetown who's studying Mariology as informed by Buddhism.

Jonathan reported that the blog had six new entries this year, which has been about the yearly average since it began. He expressed gratitude to the authors: Thomas Cattoi, JK Kato, Kristin Lagen, Leo Lefebure, and John Sheveland. Blog articles are reposted on the Facebook page to increase views, since its audience is broader. Jonathan encouraged board members to think about a topic they could write on quickly and then submit it. He also requested photos from pertinent events. SBCS members are also very welcome to submit blog posts and photos. For submission information, see the bottom of this webpage:

<https://www.society-buddhist-christian-studies.org/about-the-blog>

Two interrelated problems Jonathan reported are, first, that he hasn't received the current membership statistics and second, that the mailing list for the print copies of the journal doesn't seem to include all current members. He said that the new plan for journal distribution is for Chera Jo to submit the membership list directly to the journal's editors who will send it on to the publishers when a new volume is ready. Kristin reminded us that the composition of the journal's mailing list is affected by the timing of people's membership renewal, which is now automatic unless someone opts out.

Commenting on the membership-related issues, Mark said that, in light of our cash flow, it might wise be not only to expand our membership but also to raise membership fees.

Our current membership fee categories and rates are:

Assistant, Associate, and Full Professors
\$45

Adjunct Professors, Independent Scholars,
Practitioners, and Retired Professionals
\$25

Student \$10

Duane suggested we add a category for members from economically stressed nations using the UN's categories. Jason suggested we offer some sort of introductory fee, e.g., a lower rate for the first three years. Mark proposed we raise every level by \$5 except for tenured professors, who would pay \$10 more. He also proposed we offer a one-year \$10 introductory fee for students and the general public if Chera Jo can work that out on the website. When the question was called, Mark's proposal passed, unanimously.

Jonathan summarized his report by noting that he and Chera Jo have been doing the basic online work along with a small committee, which he thinks should be expanded modestly. He reminded us that his four-year term as chair ends at the 2024 annual meeting.

In response to this report, Alaina said she and Chera Jo will test the Streng Award nomination form to make sure the website emails them to the Streng Committee chair. They'll also add to the book award webpage a note explaining that if someone wants an award nomination to be reconsidered the following year they must resubmit the nomination.

Ideas for Expanding Our Membership

Board members are considering several proposals for expanding our membership. These include organizing:

- 1) an emerging scholars' group, ideally with foundation funding,
- 2) an online conference for and by graduate students,
- 3) a works-in-progress group,
- 4) an online event every two or three years that's in addition to, and separate from, our regular annual meeting at AAR,
- 5) a simple reception at larger conferences that draw scholars and practitioners interested in Buddhist-Christian studies, e.g., Boston College's comparative theology conference.

Having worked through our agenda, Mark invited Alaina, Elizabeth Tyler, Anh Tran, and Jason VonWachenfeldt to share any impressions of the society they'd gained from their first board meeting – plus their initial and current interests in Buddhist-Christian studies. In the ensuing discussion, having noted the positive synergy that meeting face-to-face had generated, Mark closed by asking us to consider, in the coming months, two possibilities:

- 1) clarifying formally the expectation that, if at all possible, board members will attend our board meetings in person,
- 2) organizing a simple 1–2 day board retreat.

Mark asked Ayo to close us with a benediction and silence in which we dedicated the good effects of our work together for the alleviation of suffering.

Members Meeting

President Mark Unno presided at the members meeting which followed the Saturday afternoon paper session. The members elected Trent Pomplun for a two-year at-large board term and both Victor Gabriel and Gloria Chien for four-year at-large terms. Peter Feldmeier, chair of the Streng Book Award Committee, read a statement that congratulated Peter Baekelman on receiving the 2022 award for *The Hidden God: Towards a Christian Theology of Buddhism* and outlined the reasons for their decision. You can read an excerpt in the Streng Book Award Committee section above.



Laudatory Note: Ruben Habito

In early April, the American Theological Society announced that Ruben Habito, a longtime supporter and past president of SBCS, has been selected as the society's new vice president and president-elect. This is a significant recognition of Ruben's many contributions to the field of theology and beyond. Please join all of us at SBCS in congratulating Ruben on this momentous accomplishment.



Upcoming Events for SBCS Members

Leo Lefebure presented "Buddhists and Catholics Shaping a Culture of Encounter" at the Grand Opening Ceremony of the Amatavihara Meditation Center in Boyds, Maryland in April.

The Ven. Dr. Abbot Dhammadipa Sak invited him to speak at this event of the US Zen Institute.

Anh Tran and Leo Lefebure will attend a Buddhist-Catholic dialogue sponsored by the Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific in Chiang Mai, Thailand, at the end of May and beginning of June.

Mark Unno, Kunihiko Terasawa, and Leo Lefebure will participate in the next meeting of the Interfaith Coalition Conference for Global Citizens in Seoul, South Korea, August 2023 in collaboration with Won Buddhist colleagues.



The European Network of Buddhist-Christian Studies Upcoming Events

➤ The European Network of Buddhist-Christian Studies will contribute two panels at the European Academy of Religion in St. Andrews, Scotland on June 19-23, 2023.

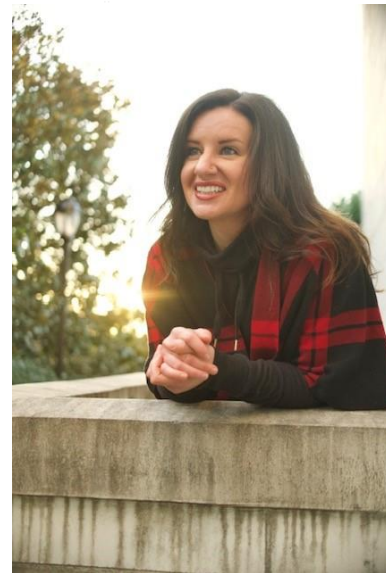
(1) Inter-/Transcultural Philosophy of Religion (with Hans Schelkshorn, Victoria Harrison, Markus Wirtz, Fabian Voelker, Mathias Schneider)

(2) Buddhist-Christian Perspectives on Death and Afterlife: Towards an Interreligious Eschatology (with Mathias Schneider, Mirja Lange, Perry Schmidt-Leukel, Achim Riggert, Melanie Barbato)

➤ The European Network of Buddhist-Christian Studies will have its next international conference from June 27 - July 1, 2024, in the Benedictine Archabbey of St. Ottilien (near Munich, Germany) on the topic: "A Buddhist-Christian Dialogue on the Body." More information to come.

➤ Stephen Harris (Leiden University) and Perry Schmidt-Leukel (Muenster University) are organizing a conference on "Śāntideva and the Dynamics of Tradition." It will take place at Muenster University from May 25-27, 2023. For more information: <https://www.buddhist-christian-studies.org/node/130>. For inquiries contact: perrysl@uni-muenster.de

Perry Schmidt-Leukel
ENBCS-President



Graduate Student Member Spotlights Blog for SBCS: Chera Jo Watts

My name is Chera Jo Watts, and I am a first-year doctoral student at The University of Georgia in the Department of Religion and Institute for African American Studies. I am a mother, writer, gardener, yoga practitioner, and artist striving towards what Darlene Clark Hines labels a "Black Studies Mindset." As a first-generation college graduate from a poverty class background, my degrees include a Bachelor of Science in Psychology, Master of Arts in Religion, and Graduate Certificate in African American Studies from The University of Georgia. My broad research interests include African American women's religion and

literature, focusing primarily on Womanism, and bridging the gap between the Academy and the everyday. I assert that we have much to learn from ancestors, and from each other, while living and operating among what Black Buddhist bell hooks labels imperialist white supremacist capitalist cis-patriarchy. These teachings facilitate personal and communal healing as we continuously dismantle white supremacy in the tangible ways we can from the spaces that we occupy. Also, I currently serve as the Graduate Teaching Assistant in the Institute for African American Studies at The University of Georgia.

Within SBCS I am a graduate student member, and I strongly encourage other graduate students consider membership with this organization. This community consists of imaginative and generous scholars, and you could make numerous international connections within the field of Religious Studies (along with other disciplines). As the current Executive Associate for Digital Services, I currently support the Society in a professional role through web updates, monitoring email, and various tasks as instructed by the governing board.

How do your research interests relate to the Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies? What are you working on at the moment?

I am currently learning from published Womanists-Buddhists, and SBCS published several journal articles focused on this thread of Womanist thought and scholarship (especially see Volumes 34, 2014, and 36, 2016). I am grateful to be in conversation with these folks through their work.

In May 2022, I finished my Master's Thesis ([published in ProQuest](#)) under the direction of Dr. Carolyn Jones Medine. My thesis focuses on Womanist Buddhist thought in the works of Alice Walker while paying special attention to her first novel, *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*, and then tracing the importance of her Buddhist practice across other works, such as essays and poetry. My first

peer-reviewed journal article was also published in 2022. [Reading Between the Times: An Ongoing Womanist Buddhist Project](#) may be accessed online through MDPI, and it was included as part of a Special Edition of the journal which focused on [Spirituality, Identity, and Resistance in African American Literature](#). At the moment, I have a few journal articles in process which extend this work, and I expanded analysis to include Black Buddhist bell hooks. For hooks, I am especially interested in her focus on living from a "love ethic," and I'm grateful for an upcoming panel presentation at the 2023 bell hooks Symposium hosted by Berea College this June. Finally, along with Dr. Carolyn Jones Medine, I am co-authoring an Oxford Bibliography entry for "Alice Walker" in which we acknowledge the importance of Walker's spiritual practices, including Buddhism, on her life and writings.

Contact information: cheraw@uga.edu | University of Georgia | Institute for African American Studies & Department of Religion

If you are a graduate student and a member of the SBCS, we want to feature you! Please [contact us](#).

Membership



If you haven't renewed for 2023, 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 (2023), but regardless of when you join you receive the same benefits for that year.

What is included in annual membership?

All memberships include 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.

Write for us! (Submitting a Blog Post)

A long-term goal in SBCS has been to offer community members a chance to interact and share news, opinions, and resources via our updated and improved website. We are looking for blog posts on a variety of topics:

- News updates about conferences, events, courses, or other resources
- Topical discussions of important issues
- Posts about pedagogy, teaching, syllabus development, creative exercises, or other topics
- Interviews, samples, or reviews of SBCS member books
- SBCS Graduate Student Member Spotlights (new series!)

Blog posts are vetted by our social media committee and will appear on the website. Typically, we will also post the blog to our Facebook page; we may ask for permission to use it elsewhere. An ideal post:

- Engages the intersection of Buddhist and Christian traditions
- Is approximately 800 words in length
- Includes an image
- Offers a short bio of the author (25-50 words) and contact info

Please visit our blog for more information:

<https://www.society-buddhist-christian-studies.org/about-the-blog>

Also, check out our Facebook page and give it a like:

<https://www.facebook.com/BuddhistChristianStudies/>

To Nominate a book for the Streng Award

Nominations can be made by any person, by contacting Peter Feldmeier (peter.feldmeier@utoledo.edu). Nominations should include book volume title, author's full name, publisher, year of publication, and a brief letter of support regarding the nomination. Also, full contact information should be included for the person making the nomination, including institutional affiliation (if applicable).

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. Additionally, the book must have been published within the last five years. Questions should be directed to Peter Feldmeier via email.

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 Oct 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 John.Becker@lyon.edu.



**SOCIETY FOR BUDDHIST-
CHRISTIAN STUDIES NEWSLETTER**

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