

News of the Society

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



This issue includes:

- Information about the Annual Meeting of the Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies in Conjunction with the AAR
- The 15th Conference of the European Network of Buddhist-Christian Studies: A Buddhist-Christian Dialogue on the Body
- SBCS Participation in ICCGC & Visit to Sogang University Reports
- Living in Mutual Love: Jesuit Asia Pacific Conference
- Streng Book Award Winner
- Membership, Contribution, and Other Contact Info

**The Annual Meeting of the Society for
Buddhist-Christian Studies
In Conjunction with the American
Academy of Religion
San Antonio, Texas: November 2023**

Morning Board Meeting

Friday, 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Grand Hyatt-Texas Ballroom, Salon C (4th Floor)

Afternoon Board Meeting

Friday, 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM

Grand Hyatt-Texas Ballroom, Salon C (4th Floor)

**Celebrating Thich Nhat Hanh: His Influence
on Inter-Religious Thought and Practices**

Saturday, 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Marriott Rivercenter-Grand Ballroom,
Salon CDE

Presiding

Sandra Costen Kunz,
Trinity Theological Seminary, Ghana

Presenters

Julius-Kei Kato,
King's University College at Western
University, London, Ontario, Canada

Marc Handley Andrus
Grace Cathedral and the Episcopal Diocese of
California

Mathias Schneider
University of Munster

Victor Thasiah
California Lutheran University

Mobi Warren
Independent Scholar

Won Buddhism and Inter-Religious Thought

Saturday, 3:00 PM - 6:00 PM

Marriott Rivercenter-Conference Room 20

This panel brings together distinguished Won Buddhists, who are scholars, dharma teachers and ordained priests, social justice activists, and representatives to the United Nations, to discuss the theory and practice of Won Buddhism and its inter-religious goals for peace, reconciliation, and inter-faith dialogue.

Presiding

Leo Lefebure
Georgetown University,

Panelists

Doyeon Park
Manhattan Won Buddhist Temple

Chung Ohun Lee
Won Buddhism to the United Nations

Grace Song
Won Institute of Graduate Studies

Sungha Yun
St. Olaf College



**The 15th Conference of the European
Network of Buddhist-Christian Studies:
A Buddhist-Christian Dialogue on the Body**
St. Ottilien (near Munich),
June 27 – July 1, 2024.

Human existence is bodily existence. In their reflections on the body and their bodily-related practices, Buddhism and Christianity engage a crucial aspect of our being. In both traditions, the spectrum of views is extremely broad, ranging from outright condemnation of the body to its highest praise: “They have realized the deathless who have realized mindfulness directed to the body” (AN I 46), says the Pāli Canon. In the New Testament, we read, “Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?” (1 Cor 6,19).

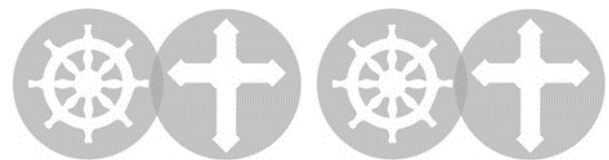
In this conference, scholar-practitioners from Buddhism and Christianity will be in dialogue

about central facets of the body as perceived in both traditions: The body and ecology, the body’s impermanence, its role in social relations, body, gender, and sexuality, the relation between body and mind, the body in contemplation, prayer, and ritual, and the embodiment of transcendence. The dialogues will not only explore spiritual wisdom connected to the body but also explore how both traditions may learn and benefit from the insights of the other.

As always, the conference will also have two open sessions for papers regarding all aspects of current research on Buddhist-Christian relations.

To register for the conference or view the program/list of speakers, please visit our website:

<https://www.buddhist-christian-studies.org/ottilien2024>



**SBCS Participation in ICCGC & Visit to Sogang
University Reports**
Leo Lefebure

On August 21-22, 2023, Mark Unno, Carolyn Jones Medine, Kunihiro Terasawa, Grace Song, and Leo Lefebure participated in the historic first in-person meeting of the Interfaith Coalition Conference for Global Citizens in Seoul, organized by our Won Buddhist colleagues with support from the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism of the Republic of Korea and the United Religions Initiative in collaboration with SBCS, Wonkwang University, and the Focolare Movement Korea. Leaders from NGSs affiliated with the United Nations, as

well as Religions for Peace and Rissho Kosei-kai also participated.



Grace served as a most gracious host for the program. Before the official opening of the conference, Mark chaired a panel discussion on interfaith dialogue, and Leo chaired a session on work for peace. Leo served as co-chair of the conference and offered opening remarks welcoming former UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, who delivered the keynote speech on "Global Citizenship Now." Mark, Kuni, Carolyn, and Kathy Matsui participated in a panel discussion of global citizenship and the path to peace. Leo gave a talk on the role of religion in a fragmented world and participated in a panel discussion on the place of religion in education for global citizenship.

After the ICCGC meeting had ended, Mark, Carolyn, Kuni, Grace, and Leo traveled to the headquarters of Won Buddhism in Iksan, where we met their Head Dharma Master Ven. Jeonsan and other leaders. Mark delivered cordial remarks on behalf of all of us in SBCS.

The organizers hope to convene the next meeting of ICCGC in Manhattan in late August 2024 in cooperation with the NGO leaders attached to the UN.

Visit to Sogang University in Seoul

In August 2023 Kunihiko Terasawa and Leo Lefebure visited Sogang (Jesuit) University in Seoul. Bhikshu Do Sun of the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism, who is a doctoral student in

Buddhist-Christian studies at Sogang University, graciously met Leo at the airport and accompanied him to the university, where they had dinner with Kuni and a Georgetown University graduate student, Mideum Hong, who is from Korea. Do Sun later accompanied Leo on a visit to the main Jogye Temple in Seoul and to the fine collection of Buddhist art at the National Museum of Korea. The following day Kuni and Leo had an extended conversation with retired Archbishop Hyginus KIM Hee-jong, and Sogang Professor Kim Chae Young. Archbishop Kim discussed both his extensive interreligious experience with Buddhists and shamanic practitioners, and also his work for more peaceful relations between North and South Korea. The next day Leo and Kuni met with the leaders of the Woori Theology Institute in Seoul, Balbina Lee and Paul Hwang, who discussed their interreligious efforts in pursuit of social justice and peace.

On August 18 and 19, Kuni and Leo participated in a conference on How to Teach Religious Diversity at Christian Universities or Colleges, organized by Kim Chae Young. On the first day of the conference, Leo offered an overview of recent Buddhist-Christian relations in the USA, including activities of SBCS such as the 2021 Statement of Solidarity with Persons of Asian and Pacific Island Descent; and Kuni offered a presentation on interreligious dialogue figures in Japan. On the second day, Kuni spoke about Buddhist-Christian double belonging and Leo spoke about methods in the comparative study of religion. There were participants from the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints and also from Fu Jen Catholic University in Taipei, Won Buddhism, the Assemblies of God in Korea, and the Korean Council for University Education.

On August 20, Kuni and Leo had an extended discussion with Seil Oh, SJ, the vice president of Sogang University for international relations. Seil Oh expressed the intense interest of Sogang University in developing international contacts, including with regard to developing Buddhist-Christian relations. SBCS members who are

interested can contact Leo or Kuni for more information.

Kunihiko Terasawa's Report

A week before Leo Lefebure and I joined Won Buddhism's ICCGC, along with Mark Unno and Carolyn Medine, we attended Sogang University's conference entitled "How to Teach Religion and Religious Diversity at a Christian Colleges/Universities," a weeklong conference with scholars and graduate students from Korea, Taiwan, Japan, and USA. Since my sabbatical took me to Sogang University in 2019-20, I was able to reunite with faculty and graduate students. Leo presented Buddhist-Christian Dialogue paradigm and methodologies, and I presented on Buddhist-Christian figures, who are resisting Ultrnationalism in Japan. I also presented on Buddhist-Christian double belonging. We had dynamic discussions with Korean graduate students and scholars, creating a transnational collegiality in East Asia.



In terms of the ICCGC, Leo's report is exemplary. My focus for this gathering was on how to make transnational solidarity among youths, illustrating how I bring my Wartburg students to Japan in order to visit Buddhist colleges and Rissho Koseikai high school. I desire is to expand this network with Won Buddhist and other religious youths in Korea. I was fortunate to talk with Won Buddhist youth leader Yeowon Kim and others in order to work together for future programs.



Living in Mutual Love: Jesuit Asia Pacific Conference

Fr. Aristotle C. Dy

After meeting online during the pandemic, the Buddhist Studies and Dialogue Group met in person at the Seven Fountains Jesuit Retreat Center in Chiang Mai in the first days of June. Chiangmai was the site of the group's first meeting in 2010, so it was meaningful to gather there again after the pandemic.

Fourteen past participants joined the meeting, including Marist priest Fr Hermes Sabud and Maryknoll priest Fr Lo Dam. Also present was Ven Vy Sovechea, a Cambodian Buddhist monk who serves as the President of the Preah Sihanouk Raja Buddhist University, Battambang Branch. A lay Korean graduate student, Teresa Kwon Yohn-Dam, also joined the gathering.

Among the new participants were members of Focolare in Chiang Mai: George Pierluigi Vencato and Dina Yutitham, who are Catholics, and Buddhist Tom-taem Preeyanoot. They facilitated the group's visit to a meditation center, and it was through their efforts that the renowned Thai monk, Ven Pittaya, was able to participate fully in the meeting.

The gathering was also enriched by the presence of lay coordinators of interreligious dialogue, namely Gerald Kong of Singapore and Yuthachai NgernLa of Chiang Mai, who shared valuable insights about the programs in their dioceses.

Jesuit participants from Asia-Pacific and South Asia affirmed the importance of the group for deeper sharing and companionship in a ministry that is often "lonely" and open to various misunderstandings in their local communities. The fellowship, apart from what is learned in formal presentations and dialogue activities at temples have been a key motivation for the annual meeting since 2010.

The presentations this year included introductions to the Jesuits in Thailand by Fr Miguel Garazaibal SJ and Buddhism in the Thai context by Dr Boonchuay Doojai and Fr Daniele Mazza PIME. Fr Petrus Puspobinatmo SJ, an Indonesian missionary in Myanmar, gave an update on the situation in the country.

The group felt especially privileged to have the presence and participation of Fr Leo Lefebure of Georgetown University. His overview of issues in Buddhist-Christian dialogue in the United States was quite enlightening for the participants who are all working in Asia.

All the presentations were followed by lively discussions. As in the past, the annual workshop always includes dialogue experiences with local Buddhists. The Focolare members arranged a visit to the Wat Ram Poeng, a meditation center renowned for its long-standing practice of welcoming foreigners to experience vipassana meditation for periods ranging from 10 to 26 days. The Abbott, Ajahn Supan, personally met the group and patiently answered questions, working through Fr Paolo Kriangyot SJ, who served as the interpreter.

The group also visited the famous Doi Suthep mountain temple, where a relic of the Buddha's hair is kept. The visit happened to fall on the feast of Vesak (the Buddha's birthday), and the sight of hundreds of pilgrims walking up the mountain to join the evening services was a moving experience for everyone involved.

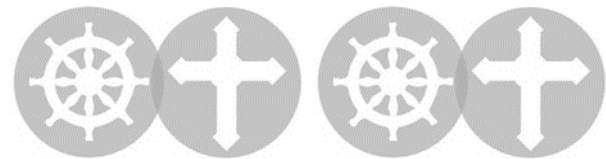
After the official meeting ended on 3 June, most of the group stayed on to visit more temples and travel to Chiang Rai to see the Xavier Learning Center. The superior, Fr Tom Michel, along with the local Jesuit community, graciously hosted the group.

One of the most memorable reflections at the workshop came from Tom-Taem, a Thai Buddhist member of Focolare, who shared how she came to understand the Four Noble Truths of Buddhism better by learning about

the suffering of Jesus on the cross. It is not the differences in beliefs that stand out but the power of love. Dialogue helps people of different faiths to live in mutual love, she said, and that is the spirit that animated this year's gathering.

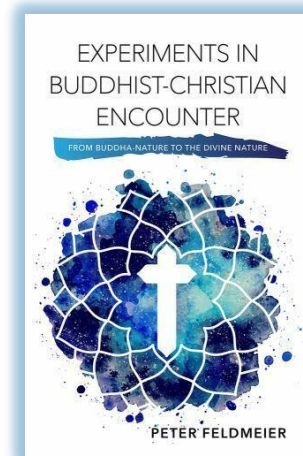
[Originally published by *Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific* on June 7, 2023:

[https://jcapsj.org/.](https://jcapsj.org/)]



Frederick J. Streng Award for Excellence in Buddhist-Christian Studies

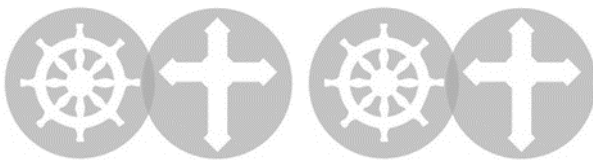
The awardee for this year's Frederick Streng J. Streng Award for Outstanding Book in Buddhist-Christian Studies is Peter Feldmeier, *Experiments in Buddhist-Christian Encounter: From Buddha-Nature to Divine Nature* (NY: Orbis, 2019).



This monograph is highly sophisticated in covering a wide range of topics from Early Buddhism through the Mahayana, including Zen and Pure Land, the latter of which is often either underrepresented or poorly represented. The mastery and presentation of Christian theology and praxis are superb. As a Christian theologian, Peter Feldmeier demonstrates extensive first-hand knowledge of Buddhist practice, and this is evident in several ways, including a sophisticated presentation of praxes along with religious thought, featuring the differences

between the formal logic behind much of Buddhism, the Mahayana in particular, on the one hand, and Christian thinkers, on the other. The author includes discussions of both primary scripture and commentarial/exegetical literature in ways that are accessible, appropriate, and inspiring for undergraduates as well as specialists. Much of the book is dialogical in ways that negotiate differences and similarities in both engaging and nuanced terms, with apt and vivid illustrations/examples. The treatment of the *Heart Sutra* towards the end represents a more synthetic, constructive turn, one that is all the more effective as Feldmeier has already established the foundations for informed, knowledgeable dialogue beforehand.

[Click here](#) for more information about the book.



Membership



If you haven't renewed for 2023-4, 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 it to our webpage (for instance, it includes the last 13+ years of newsletters), and continue to work on ways to connect scholars.

Write for us! (Submitting a Blog Post)

A long-term goal of 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

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

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- 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

The book must have been published within the last five years. Nominations can be made by any person using the [online form](#). The completed form may be sent electronically to Peter Feldmeier, (Peter.Feldmeier@utoledo.edu), who will respond to all nominations.

Nominations are now welcomed. 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 Spring issue is March 15.

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 significant 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@csulb.edu.



SOCIETY FOR BUDDHIST-CHRISTIAN STUDIES NEWSLETTER

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