From September 30 – October 1, Vancouver School of Theology was pleased to co-sponsor with Green College a visit from philosopher of religion Dr. John Caputo, Thomas J. Watson Professor of Religion and Humanities at Syracuse University. Professor Caputo gave three lectures at Green College, VST, and the Chan Centre on topics relating to the place of deconstruction in the study of religion, the philosophy of religion and the study of theology, and the place of the study of religion in the contemporary secular university.

Professor Caputo is best known as a commentator on the work of the late French Deconstructionist, Jacques Derrida. He has developed Derrida’s ideas with particular attention to how they contribute to the contemporary understanding of the study of religion. His recent book, *The Weakness of God: A Theology of the Event* (Indiana University Press, 2006), furnished the backdrop for his lecture in VST’s Chapel of the Epiphany where he reprised his book’s leading ideas and received questions from the audience. Caputo seeks to understand “Religion after Religion” – that is, he wants to think about how we may do theology in the midst of a secular world that has largely abandoned belief in God as anything meaningful. Instead of seeking a metaphysical God as a supernatural reality “out or up there,” Caputo invites us to consider religion as a form of “theopoetics” – a way of quickening and enlivening the human imagination to think and live beyond the confines of the secular, and to practice the ethics and vision of Jesus’ proclamation of the Reign of God.

At Green College and at his lecture at UBC, Professor Caputo’s focus was on the place of religion in the contemporary secular university. Far from being disqualified as a topic of academic enquiry and research, Caputo argued that the questions of religion and religious identity have a vital role to play in the contemporary secular university, especially because religion at its best urges thinking beyond limits. As such, it shares a commitment with the best of academic pursuit for extending the limits of knowledge and for imagining the as yet waiting to be imagined. God as “impossible possibility” becomes companion in the quest for ever deeper and broader knowledge of the world and of human interaction.

*by Harry Maier*
A Healing Season

by Wendy Fletcher

I was twenty years old at the time. My M.Div. education was just beginning. I had come to theological study because of my own experience of the healing presence of God in a wounded life. And yet as with most of us, there were places in me which remained raw and open.

The Dean of my theological school was widely regarded as a wise mentor. One day early in my education he said to me, “Don’t you realize that there are some wounds which will never heal?” I was completely non-plussed. My expectation of the in-breaking of the reign of God had a broader vision of the possibility of healing in a broken world than his words imagined. But he was known to be wise. Well, I thought, my expectation of the power of God to remake me and the world I inhabit must be exaggerated.

His words remained for the next two and a half decades, troubling me... and limiting me. Twenty-five years later, in the wake of an autumn full of astonishing grace, I approach Advent knowing deeply and fully that he was wrong. Of course, it is the case that healing is contextual. It does not mean movement toward perfection. It does not mean becoming a normativity that others have named. I suppose in the final instance it does mean becoming who we are; it means finding a way to move beyond that which has harmed and oppressed us; it means moving toward our knowing of ourselves and our communities as deeply beloved and lovingly held. In this hour, I know that the possibility for healing which the meaning of incarnation invites is deep and limitless and absolutely immeasurable.

On the 4th of November, I along with much of the world watched as the results of the American election unfolded. I watched as a still and visionary mid-life man strode to the centre of a platform surrounded on all sides by bullet proof glass, and took his place in history. I watched as men and women, young and old, black and white waited and then listened with tears streaming down their faces, to the voice of the one they had chosen to lead them into a terrifying and unknown future. Who knows if we will see the change which so many have hoped for – we cannot read the future. However, we can read the past and we can read the text of this present. From that moment on November 4th, after a history of 200 years of slavery and another century of racially motivated trauma and injustice, the tears flow and healing is begun.

On September 26th, the VST Board of Governors met. After several years of trauma and dislocation in the story of our school, our Board adopted audited financial statements from the preceding budget year which confirmed an operating surplus, after two decades of deficits. At the same meeting, our Board then acted with one voice, to confirm the unified vision of our Faculty to create a new centre committed to the project of healing in this broken world, beyond the boundaries of religious tribalisms. Iona Pacific: Inter-Religious Centre for Social Action, Research and Contemplative Practice was born.

I know that the possibility for healing which the meaning of incarnation invites is deep and limitless and absolutely immeasurable.

Healing beyond our wildest expectations is begun.
Healing beyond our wildest expectations is begun.

In October, a visiting team from our accrediting body, the Association of Theological Schools of North America, came for a focus visit. The ATS Commission on Accreditation will act on the team's recommendation in February and can be shared with you in our next edition of Perspectives. However, at this juncture I can express something of their experience with us, through their parting words: "VST's financial position is strong; its systems are healthy; its long range plan is viable; the overall position of the school is enviable."

And the promise of God for a new day is born in this place.

Healing is begun.

On October 9th, I made my way to the Nisga’a village of Laxgalts’ap. I made the journey to attend the funeral of Bradley Martin, son of Willard Martin, VST alum and Nisga’a hereditary chief. Bradley had ended his own life. Over a century before, Christian missionaries had brought their own view of the world to the Nass Valley and had insisted that suicides should be given no proper burial. The Nisga’a adopted that teaching and have continued to follow it, even as the Church changed its thinking and practice. Willard insisted on giving his son the dignity of a Christian burial and settlement feast. I went to support him in his courage and his wisdom, and to honour the life of his son. Willard, as with many of his people, has survived the trauma of the residential school experience and all of the dislocation that that has engendered for so many. I was very aware of the fact that I carried with me the weight of our history, a colonizing church, a legacy of harm. I felt shame.

When I arrived, Willard cautioned that there might be very few attending the funeral, as it was breaking with cultural practice. He then asked me to participate in the liturgy which would honour his son. However, hundreds of Nisga’a came. When the Eucharist was celebrated, every single person came forward to receive. When James, the Nisga’a priest, asked me to walk with him ahead of the casket to the graveside, I looked back. Ten beautiful young Nisga’a men carried their friend, refusing to put him down until the grave was reached. With tears streaming down their faces they walked and walked; behind them hundreds of Bradley’s people walked with him his last mile. We stood around the open grave and then James turned and handed me his prayer book, “You commit him to God for us,” he said. As I said the words of committal, and we all stood there suffering together, hoping together past the stain of an incredibly wounding history, I saw that the healing of God was begun. I saw that the healing water of God’s grace was pouring out to all corners of the earth and nothing was beyond its reach.

Healing is begun.

Twenty five years later… I see clearly. My former mentor was not right. There is no harm which is beyond the reach of God’s healing grace. All around us in these hours, the signs of a new world struggling to be born paint themselves across the backdrop of former desolations. Mercy abounds and deliverance remakes us.

My friends, as we move toward the season of Advent, may the God of love enfleshed meet you with open arms and a healing touch.

Wendy Pitts
At its September meeting, the Board of Governors received the audited financial statements for the fiscal year that ended on April 30, 2008. They were pleased that VST met its goal to bring in a balanced budget. Here is how VST’s revenue and expenses break down.

**INCOME:** Our income is relatively evenly split between grants, donations and denominational support; income from investments; tuition; and accommodation and conferences. With the downturn in the economy, our investments have been hard hit. We will need to seek creative ways to replace that income in the coming year through increased donations and enrollment. Fortunately, our student numbers are on the rise. Accommodation and conferences operates close to capacity, and we are very fortunate to be blessed with our beautiful buildings.
EXPENSES: Over the past three years we have worked hard to reduce expenses and keep them down. All our staff pays close attention to budget, and as a result we have seen significant reductions in spending.
Dr. Gabor Maté
Highly acclaimed, national bestselling author, psychotherapist and medical practitioner Gabor Maté is widely recognized for his unique perspective on the connection between the body, stress and human wellness, and his groundbreaking work on addictions. Currently staff physician at the Portland Hotel in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside, Dr. Maté is the author of four books, including When the Body Says No, and In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts: Close Encounters with Addiction.

May 10, Sunday
LECTURE 1,
Title TBA 7pm

ConEd Day, May 11, Monday
LIVING WELL
9:30am-12:30pm,
Lecture and Discussion with Gabor Maté
1:30-4:30pm,
Seminar: Wellness and Spiritual Practice for Thriving Leadership, invited guests. Registration required. $150 individual / $135 team (per person, 2 or more at time of registration) / $120 retired (65+). Lunch included.

May 12, Tuesday
LECTURE 2
Title TBA 12:30pm

Location for the G. Peter Kaye Lecture series will be at Vancouver School of Theology 6000 Iona Drive. More information and registration will be posted soon on our website at www.vst.edu.
Mainline Protestant Christianity in Canada historically has distinguished itself as an advocate of a humane and just society. However, recently it has turned its attention inward, and former commitments to engagement with the social issues of our day have waned. A re-imagined Protestantism for the 21st century demands re-engagement with God’s world in the context of the religious and ethnic diversity that is Canada today.

At its September meeting, VST’s Board of Governors unanimously supported the development of a new project for VST, the creation of Iona Pacific: Inter-Religious Centre for Social Action, Research and Contemplative Practice. The School has begun a search for a Director of the new Centre, and you can view the job description on our website at http://www.vst.edu/about/jobopportunities.php.

Iona Pacific will augment VST’s core work – preparing leaders for today’s churches – by researching and implementing new ways of relating to the challenges of our contemporary context: poverty, the social alienation of youth, climate change and environmental degradation. The social problems of this era do not belong to one religion or denomination, but affect all God’s creation. They cannot be addressed by Church leaders in isolation from other voices in our contexts. Iona Pacific will tackle these problems in Vancouver’s multicultural, multi-religious (and secular) context, in relationship to First Nations, to poverty on the Downtown Eastside, and to the environment.

Iona Pacific:
INTER-RELIGIOUS CENTRE FOR SOCIAL ACTION, RESEARCH AND CONTEMPLATIVE PRACTICE

SHARE YOUR CREATIVE SPARK!
We want to develop a logo for Iona Pacific and you can help. Send your original image to Corinne Rogers at corinne@vst.edu by January 30, 2009. We will display all entries in the Rotunda and let people vote on their favourite.

The social problems of this era do not belong to one religion or denomination, but affect all God’s creation.
Her Divine Countenance
BY BARBARA BICKEL
MIXED MEDIA, 2007

Monica Brammer

We donate this collaboratively created piece of art with love and gratitude for the fifteen years of co-sponsorship with the Vancouver School of Theology and for support of the women of the Chalmers Institute...

Her Divine Countenance was co-created through the hearts and hands of the Women’s Spirituality Celebration Planning Team, as part of Barbara Bickel’s arts-based Ph.D. study in the Faculty of Education at The University of British Columbia.

This art emerged from a series of circles in which the women explored, with honesty and vulnerability; their religious and spiritual stories, trance journeying, and sacred practices in their various traditions. This led to the art-making as a shared expression of their experience of the Divine Feminine. Individual face casts were created of the fourteen women. In seeking ways to bring the women’s faces together, the inspiration came for the larger mask representing she who is divine.

We donate this collaboratively created piece of art with love and gratitude for the fifteen years of co-sponsorship with the Vancouver School of Theology and for support of the women of the Chalmers Institute, Cathy Bone, Ginger Shaw, and Katie Snikvalds.

Co-creators
Mary Bennett, Barbara Bickel, Cathy Bone, Monica Brammer, Melodie Chant, Sophia Freigang, Tannis Hugill, Nané Ariadne Jordan, Valerie Lys, Medwyn McConachy, Ingrid Rose, Annie Smith, Shirin Theophilus, and Catherine Wilcox

Barbara Bickel’s full dissertation, which further documents, in writing and video, the full creative process can be found in the VST library.
Axix Mundi
BY JAMES CEASER

James Ceaser’s newest sculpture, entitled ‘Axis Mundi’, is currently on loan to VST and is installed in the H.R. MacMillan Theological Library. This piece, at its heart, is a passageway full of questions. The materials – glass, metal and ceramic – along with the colours and forms are all carefully chosen to challenge emotional and intellectual exploration and to be aesthetically arresting.

Leaders Training Seminar

Friday, February 6th, 2009
9am to 5pm
Cost: $100 per person
At Vancouver School of Theology
6000 Iona Drive, Vancouver, BC V6T 1L4

This workshop is for anyone wishing to lead a DISCIPLE Bible Study program in their church. You will learn how to start a program and how to lead a group effectively. Lunch and all resources included in the registration cost.

Register online:
www.vst.edu
Tel 604-822-9815 • Email: chalmers@vst.edu

Registration deadline: January 23
(for minimum enrollment numbers)
Come stay with us!

Elaine Young, Accommodation and Conferences Coordinator

With its beautifully restored building, Vancouver School of Theology is able to offer lovely, modern guest rooms and meeting spaces to a wide variety of individuals and groups. As word of our space spreads, our guest rooms are increasingly fully booked by delegates attending conferences on the UBC campus, visiting faculty, researchers, and scholars.

We welcome guests from around the world—many are very distinguished in their fields. In addition, we offer rooms to parents who are visiting children at university or attending graduation, out-of-towners who await surgery at UBC Hospital, and individuals here for courses, meetings, and cultural events. One recent group of alumni from a British university booked all our rooms a year ahead for a “Vancouver experience” reunion before they left on an Alaskan cruise! Not only are we close to world-famous museums, gardens, parks, beaches, hiking trails, performing-arts centres and recreational facilities, we are also easily accessible to downtown Vancouver by express bus.

Our guest rooms are very comfortable—they all contain double beds, private bathrooms, large TVs, bar fridges, phones with free local calls, and wireless internet. A third-floor studio room is pictured in the photo, while fourth-floor studios are cosily tucked up under the gables. One of our suites has two bedrooms, a living room and equipped kitchenette.

If you need extra sleeping space for visiting friends, or live outside Vancouver and plan to come into the city for meetings or events, keep us in mind (and book early to avoid disappointment). Our rates are very reasonable—if you are affiliated with one of VST’s supporting denominations, you will receive a 15% discount. This means a studio room is currently $75 per night plus tax (5% GST and 8% Room Tax). The rooms are in a separate wing of the building and have their own entrance and elevator. We have information in each room about nearby eating options.

In addition to guest rooms, the Iona Building has amazing meeting spaces. We offer a 50% discount on your congregation’s first booking with us and give you a discount from then on as a supporting denomination. Board rooms on the fifth and sixth floors have 25’ high ceilings and sweeping views of the ocean and North Shore mountains. With adjoining kitchens and washrooms,
they are ideal spaces for retreat groups, board meetings, or planning sessions. Board rooms are available to book year-round, and we are now taking bookings as far as the fall of 2009.

Six classrooms at VST are available for smaller meetings, retreats, or break-out sessions. All have wireless internet capability; two have built-in audiovisual equipment. Classrooms are available to book on Fridays and weekends during the school year and throughout the summer (apart from July, when our summer school is in session).

Since the opening of the restored Iona Building in 2006, we have booked rooms for a wide variety of external groups—examples include homeopathic medicine training, spirituality workshops, Buddhist retreats, family constellation weekends, trauma healing and therapy workshops, national and local church committee meetings, medical staff retreats, faculty luncheons, writers & editors workshops, and student-run outreach conferences. Some groups use our outdoor labyrinth during their sessions.

Our Epiphany Chapel, located just steps away from the Iona Building, is renowned for its beautiful view and acoustics. It is popular for weddings, choir retreats and concerts. The chapel is available to book except on Sunday mornings and when it is use by VST during the school year.

For more information about our guest and meeting rooms, see “Accommodation and Conferences” on VST’s web site (www.vst.edu). You can book individual guest rooms online using our secure reservation form, or enquire about group availability by phone, fax or email as shown below. We look forward to welcoming you to VST!
WHAT’S NEW AT THE VST LIBRARY?
Protecting our video past!
Gillian McLeod

Prior to moving from the Chancellor Building in 2006, the Library staff inventoried the VST media collection and decided that some preservation was needed. We found titles in several video formats (reels, Betacam, U-Matic, and VHS) and wanted to protect these decaying media for future users.

In 2008, we arranged the transfer and copying of a few VST video titles to DVD. Four Knowledge Network titles were designated as a priority for this transfer project: *Introduction to the Old Testament* (1982), *Portraits in Spirituality* (1983), *Portraits* (1989), and *God and a Suffering World* (1986). The *Consecration of the Anglican Church in Greenville, B.C.* (1989) videotapes were also transferred from Betacam, after being inaccessible in that format since 1989.

For each title, two DVD copies have been made for the library collection; one copy to circulate and one for library use only. Four copies of the Consecration of the St. Andrews Church were made for the Church and northern community of Greenville for their historical records. They were very grateful to receive them.

Completion of the above work is expected later in November of 2008 and there are future plans to include other titles in this conversion and preservation project.

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SUPPORTING THE WORK OF VST...
Gifts of stock in these trying times?
Corinne Rogers

Stock markets around the world are still reeling in response to failures of large financial institutions in the United States and Europe. If you have supported or considered supporting VST or other charitable institutions in the past with gifts of appreciated stock, you may feel that this type of giving is now out of the question. Wait, though, there can be advantages to donating depreciated stock as well.

When stock prices are rising, many people take advantage of the tax breaks that come from donating shares to offset capital gains in their portfolios. Today, investors are looking at portfolios that have decreased significantly in value, but they can still offset gains in previous years by donating depreciated stock today. Capital losses realized in this tax year can be carried back three years and forward indefinitely to offset gains.

By donating depreciated securities, you can realize the capital loss and apply the loss against past and future capital gains. As well, VST will provide you with a charitable tax receipt for the value of the donated securities, which you can use to offset taxes you would otherwise pay.

And there is another benefit. You may then repurchase some or all of the same securities after the minimum waiting period of 30 days. If the cost of the stock is still lower than when you bought originally, your Adjusted Cost Base will be lower, allowing for greater growth potential when the markets recover.

*For more information, contact Corinne Rogers at corinne@vst.edu or 604-822-9813.*
A total of 10 courses will be offered centered on two general themes: “Truth & Reconciliation” and “Healing”.

We welcome the opportunity to work with the following faculty this summer: Dr. Harry Maier, The Rev. Dr. Raymond Bucko, Mrs. Merle Andersen & The Rev. Lily Bell (shared course), The Rev. Dr. Gerald Hobbs & The Rev. Dr. Lynne McNaughton (shared course), Father Michael Oleksa, Bishop Carol Gallagher, The Rev. Dr. Larry Norris, and The Rev. Hagar Head.

Updated details and registration will be available on the VST website soon.

For several years, VST has offered a children’s program as a companion to the Native Ministries Consortium summer school. As children who have attended this program have reached adolescence the question of “what next?” has emerged. This natural evolution in our journey with the children has been met by a clear invocation for response from our First Nations partners.

Adolescence is a time of trauma and dislocation in every culture within contemporary societies. Most notably among the communities of our First Nations partners, rates of teen suicide have skyrocketed. As governments cut back on support for mental health and addictions programs, and the challenge of meaning-making in adolescence grows deeper in the face of the alienations of contemporary culture, this pandemic grows in all segments of our plural society.

VST is not content to fiddle while Rome burns! We have heard the cry of our First Nations partners that something must be done. For us to sit idly by in apathy or despair means more lost children. Despite the inadequacy of its own resources to speak into this crisis, VST stands with its partners and insists, no more children lost. Together we must discern a way to respond and to engage, even when others are throwing up their hands.

From July 11-18, 2009 VST will host an inter-religious youth leadership program. This program will bring together First Nations, Jewish, Muslim and Christian youth to work with elders, facilitators and peer mentors around the theme of leadership and our journey toward adulthood. With story, the arts, play and work we will engage the questions of our becoming and our thriving as citizens of a world which bears the mark both of beauty and of horror. Together we will see, we will journey, we will learn, we will move forward.

Already there has been a great deal of interest in this program. Children will be nominated from their communities in the Nass Valley and beyond, and a group of young people will travel from Florida with their church youth leaders to take part.

You can be part of this exciting new venture too – please consider sponsoring the travel and / or accommodation of one or more children to attend, many of whom will not be able to attend without financial support. Sponsorship opportunities range from $200 - $1000. Please contact Corinne Rogers at 604-822-9813 or corinne@vst.edu for more details.
VST's Chalmers Summer School

JULY 6-24, 2009

VST's Chalmers Summer School is happy to welcome a rich and vibrant group of faculty that will allow the textures of their teachings to tend your soul with generous care, revealing a surprising new energy and re-growth. Plant some seeds, join us!

VST will be at Sorrento Centre with two of our faculty in June. Richard Geoffrey Leggett will teach God’s Love Made Visible: Foundations in Liturgical and Sacramental Leadership, June 7-12; and Shiella Fodchuk will teach The Skilled Listener, June 21-26.

During the three weeks of the Chalmers Summer School there will be classes that teach us how to tend the needs of many gardens, including: our youth with the Reclaiming Youth at Risk program with Martin Brokenleg and Larry Brendtro offering Circle of Courage and RAP training; our place in Cascadia with Douglas Todd; our relationships with Gabor Maté, Pat Dutcher-Walls, Michael Oleska, and Anita Fast; our spirit with Jay McDaniel; and our churches with training in leadership from Bethan Theunissen. We are especially thrilled to welcome our music faculty to VST this summer, Cheryl and Bruce Harding during Week one, and Marty Haugen in Week three.

The Visiting Distinguished Scholar series will include the esteemed scholar Marcus Borg for an evening lecture and a one-day workshop; the annual Thomas Merton Lecture; and we will continue to highlight Conversations with Faculty once a week over the lunch hour.

For more information on the final program offerings as it becomes available, check back often to our website: www.vst.edu.
## Summer School 2009

### WEEK ONE • JULY 6-10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Presenter</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Singing in the New Creation: A Crossroads in Congregational Song</td>
<td>Bruce Harding</td>
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<td>Contemplative Retreat Design &amp; Leadership</td>
<td>Jane Vennard</td>
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<tr>
<td>Circle of Courage: Reclaiming Youth at Risk</td>
<td>Martin Brokenleg</td>
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<td>Cascadia: The Elusive Utopia: Exploring the Spirit of the Pacific Northwest</td>
<td>Larry Brendtro</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monastics &amp; Mystics: Through the Eyes of Thomas Merton</td>
<td>Douglas Todd</td>
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<td>Creativity and the Labyrinth: Spiritual Practices for a Busy World</td>
<td>Pat O’Connell</td>
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<tr>
<td>Creativity and the Labyrinth: Spiritual Practices for a Busy World</td>
<td>April Stanley</td>
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**Public Lectures: 7:30pm at VST**
- Tuesday July 7 • Douglas Todd & Sallie McFague
- Thursday July 8 • The Thomas Merton Society Lecture with Pat O’Connell

### WEEK TWO • JULY 13-17

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Presenter</th>
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<tr>
<td>Voices for Justice: Prophet and Reformer</td>
<td>Pat Dutcher-Walls</td>
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<tr>
<td>When the Body Says No: Mind/Body Unity and the Stress-Disease Connection</td>
<td>Gabor Maté</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inter-religious Youth Leadership Program</td>
<td>Wendy Fletcher and others</td>
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<td>Communication Across Cultures <em>(in conjunction with NMC Summer School)</em></td>
<td>Fr. Michael Oleksa</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hebrew Bible: Women and Justice <em>(to be confirmed)</em></td>
<td>Dora Mbuwayesango</td>
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<td>Starting Week July 13-16</td>
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<td>In partnership with The Centre for Clergy Care and Congregational Health TST</td>
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**Visiting Distinguished Scholar: Marcus Borg**
- Public Lecture: Friday, July 17, 7 pm
- One-day workshop: Saturday, July 18 - Registration required
- Location: To Be Announced

### WEEK THREE • JULY 20-24

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Presenter</th>
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<tr>
<td>Blessed are the Peacemakers? The Politics and Possibilities of Christian Peacemaking</td>
<td>Anita Fast</td>
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<tr>
<td>Music Course <em>(title pending)</em></td>
<td>Marty Haugen</td>
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<tr>
<td>Christianity &amp; Buddhism <em>(title pending)</em></td>
<td>Jay McDaniel</td>
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<td>Metaphors for Leadership</td>
<td>Bethan Theunissen</td>
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<td>Habits of Hope for Today’s World</td>
<td>Flora Keshgegian</td>
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<td>Sufi Wisdom <em>(to be confirmed)</em></td>
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<td>Islam Course <em>(to be confirmed)</em></td>
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**Public Lecture: 7:30pm at VST**
- Tuesday, July 21 • Jay McDaniel
On November 6th Dr. Patricia Dutcher-Walls, Professor of Hebrew Bible, gave her inaugural lecture on the occasion of her promotion to the rank of Professor, entitled ‘On Being a Latter-Day Deuteronomist… or Not’. Dr. Dutcher-Walls writes her reflections on this occasion.

In this talk, I addressed the question, “How shall we read?”

I am by training and inclination both a Hebrew Bible professor, and a “doctor of the church” simultaneously within Presbyterian, ecumenical and inter-religious contexts, so I feel called to accomplish two tasks. First, to think deeply in a scholarly manner about the meanings of writings that, by their very age, are far removed from contemporary life. Second, to help communities make sense of those writings.
As I write this, we are now officially midway through the term, and how it has flown by! I win hands down the award for whirling dervish of the month (also known as “still point in a turning world.”) While here in Vancouver, I’ve been working three tracks at once: teaching the Theology and Practice of Prayer class here at VST on Thursday mornings, keeping up a full schedule of teaching and retreat work mostly around my most recent book, The Wisdom Jesus, and continuing to write and research my upcoming book on Mary Magdalene. It is fabulous to have the best theological library within a thousand-mile radius literally beneath my feet (one floor below me here in my Iona Castle apartment.) I have also been much delighted, after a long, long spell of circuit riding the wilderness, to once again enjoy the blessings of a true academic collegium. Particular thanks to Harry Maier, Sharon Betcher, and Sallie McFague, who have each welcomed me warmly as a colleague and generously shared their respective fields of expertise as resources for my own work in progress.

I have journeyed with VST off and on for twelve years now (I can hardly believe it was November 1996 when I first arrived on these shores to give the David Somerville lectures!) These have, of course, been times of tremendous change, good years and bad years, and times when many of us wondered if we would ever see light at the end of the tunnel. This fall I am feeling the light returning (surely an odd message for November!). There is a gentleness here now: a new spirit of hope and deep caring for each member of the community beginning to make itself evident: not just faculty and students, but support staff, librarians, hotel managers and housekeepers. I have been personally welcomed and supported by all of you and I am deeply grateful—particularly to Elaine Young, to Lucy, and to Faye. While the pace has been a bit hectic, I feel blessed to have shared the journey with you all this fall, and to have seen with my own eyes this autumn light.

Contemplative in Residence
Cynthia Bourgeault

especially communities who consider these texts revelatory of God’s ways.

In the many ways to read the Hebrew Bible today, there are seemingly as many interpretations as there are interpreters or maybe more, since some of us read more than one way at any given time. My lecture made some observations about the many ways of construing texts that have been used in biblical scholarship and, more generally, in worldwide biblical interpretation in the last three decades. That variety was indeed part of my point. In particular, my focus was on Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History, which refers to the books of Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings. By examining the ancient writers of these texts and the contemporary readers of these same texts, I came to some meditations about how we might go about responsible reading and interpretation amidst the multiple voices in the contemporary world.

GRATITUDE FOR FRIENDS AND PARTNERS

As we celebrate the occasion of Pat’s promotion, we remember and honour with gratitude the friendship of our partner St. Andrew’s Hall. The ongoing support of the Hall has made our journey toward this present, including the celebration of Pat’s ministry possible.
Faculty Updates

At this year’s American Academy of Religion conference in Chicago, Sharon Betcher presented a paper entitled, “Fearful Symmetry: Between Theological Aesthetics and Global Economics.”

This fall, Martin Brokenleg addressed the Episcopal Church’s Province VII Multicultural Ministry Conference at St. Agnes’ Anglican Church, North Vancouver, and addressed several teachers’ professional development days and parent conferences in various locations. On October 31 he spoke to the United Church of Canada’s Behold Conference on intercultural ministry. He continues as the superior of the Benedictine Community of St. Michael at St. James Anglican Church, Vancouver.

In addition to his regular teaching and mentoring of students as Presbyterian Director of Denominational Formation, Glen Davis has served as interim minister at Kerrisdale Presbyterian Church for the past year. He has given lectures on mission at local churches and has been guest preacher at churches in BC and Nova Scotia. In October, Glen made a presentation to the Synod of BC about VST and St. Andrew’s Hall. His focus is on encouraging churches to be vigilant in discerning gifts for ordained ministry among congregational members, to help those identified to respond to God’s call, and to support them during their theological studies.

This past summer, Patricia Dutcher-Walls finished editing the manuscript for her forthcoming book, In Life and in Death: The Family in Ancient Israel, Archaeological and Sociological Perspectives. In October, she was the speaker for the Presbyterian Young People’s Society conference, where she entertained and engaged 25 university-age young adults with current movies and discussion exploring themes of “Jesus in the movies”. She was also the judge for an air band contest staged by the participants – Simon Cowell, watch out!

Stephen Farris has returned from a sabbatical leave in which he completed much of a manuscript on storytelling in preaching and teaching. He is presently working on entries for The New Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible on “Theophany in the New Testament” and “Transfiguration,” to accompany his completed entries on “Hymns in the New Testament” and “Thanksgiving.” His sermon, “The Andrew Option” was included in the recently published Preaching John’s Gospel: The World It Imagines (Chalice Press, 2008). His sermon, “Beyond Belief,” will appear shortly in a collection of sermons preached at Timothy Eaton Memorial United Church, Toronto.

Wendy Fletcher has developed a new course entitled “Re-Mapping Social Christianity: An Exploration of Contemporary Mainline Religion” in which she and her students have explored the assumption that a re-imagined social Christianity is the most viable and authentic path for mainline re-making in Canada. Wendy has published articles in two recently released texts: “Canadian Anglicanism and Ethnicity” in Christianity and Ethnicity in Canada (U of T Press, 2008) and “The Garden of Women’s Separateness: Women in Canadian Anglicanism” in Seeds Scattered and Sown: Studies in the History of Canadian Anglicanism (ABC Press, 2008). Recent travels
have taken her from Toronto where she and VST faculty participated in the Collegium on Leadership Outcomes Pedagogy for Theological Programs in the United Church of Canada Context, to preach in the Nas Valley, to speak at the ATS Presidents’ Seminar in Sante Fe. She has also been appointed to the ATS Commission of Accreditation Appeals Committee. Along with writing, teaching, and traveling for VST, Wendy has hosted many guests at the School, most recently Philosopher of Religion John D. Caputo and his partner Kathy.

Janet Gear’s call to a ministry of teaching and formation at VST was recognized at a covenanting service with the Vancouver Burrard Presbytery during VST’s Community Worship on September 25. Members of the presbytery on the faculty, student body and Board of Governors participated in the service. Continuing in her third year as Director of Denominational Formation, Janet’s ministry involves work beyond the School at both the Conference and National level where the church is engaged in questions concerning preparation for pastoral leadership in response to the changing social and ecclesial context. Closer to home, Janet is grateful to colleagues on the First United Church board and staff for their partnership with VST in offering a class in public and pastoral leadership at First United this spring.

Richard Leggett has been appointed to a task force of the Faith, Worship and Ministry Committee of the Anglican Church of Canada charged with preparing a theological rationale for the blessing of same sex marriages. He will also serve as the Church’s sponsored representative to the International Anglican Liturgical Consultation to be held in Auckland, New Zealand in August 2009. In February he will give the Bayard Jones Lectures at St Luke’s School of Theology of the University of the South in Sewanee Tennessee. His two lectures are entitled ‘Liberty or License: The Liturgical Authority of the Bishop’ and ‘It is not good for the Adam to be alone’: The Blessing of Same-Sex Relationships.

Working with Rabbi Dr. Robert Daum, Assistant Professor and Diamond Chair of Jewish Law and Ethics, UBC, Harry Maier is embarking on a three-year joint research project entitled, “Disturbing Images: Picturing Power and the Abject in Roman Imperial, Early Jewish, and Ancient Christian Visual Cultures.” This project will interpret Jewish and Christian religious and political identities against the backdrop of Roman imperial imagery. Christians and Jews drew on the repertoire of imperial imagery as a means of self-definition and cultural resistance. In November, Harry gave a paper at the Society for Biblical Literature entitled, “For here we have no lasting city...: Flavian Iconography, Roman Imperial Sacrificial Iconography, and the Epistle to the Hebrews.” In January, Harry will begin a six-month sabbatical during which he will lead a seminar on the Apocalypse, American Fundamentalism, and Eco-Theology and give a lecture entitled “The Greening of American Fundamentalism and it Detractors” as research professor at the University of Exeter.

Over the summer months, Gillian McLeod enjoyed doing pulpit supply at her family’s new church home, Shiloh-6th Avenue United Church in New Westminster. She attended BC Conference for the United Church in May, the American Theological Librarians Association meeting in Ottawa in June, and the UCC Outcomes and Assessment workshop in Toronto in October. Gillian participated in a UBC panel on working as LGBT Faculty for the Queering the Academy forum in early November. She is also enjoying working on the design of a new 12 hour (4 module) Information Literacy workshop which will be offered to all incoming VST students. As research and technology change, so shall the contents of these modules to meet the challenges of academic intellectual development.
Faculty Updates, continued

November saw the launch of a new book edited by Douglas Todd – Cascadia: The Elusive Utopia Exploring the Spirit of the Pacific Northwest. This collection of essays, including contributions by VST’s Distinguished Theologian Sallie McFague – examines how the Pacific Northwest’s stunning wilderness and intricate ecology have inspired modern environmental movements, a self-reliant secular spirituality, ethnic pluralism and rugged independence, and explain how its “spirituality of place” could become a model for the planet.

Staff Updates

To assist our cleaning staff, VST has contracted Richard Budnikas who will be working primarily in the Chapel of the Epiphany and Somerville House.

Barry Egerton is our new part-time maintenance person working Thursdays and Fridays. As well as a first class fix-it guy, he is also a classically trained sculptor, so between James and Barry we have the most artistically vibrant theological maintenance department on the planet.

VST welcomes Iryn Vekay as our new Director of Finance. Iryn has been working as a Finance Manager for over 25 years, including 18 years in Ukraine and 7 years in Canada (Vancouver). She joins us after being the Finance Manager at Children’s Arts Umbrella. Iryn holds a PhD in Economics and has taught university courses in Finance Management, Planning and Budget, and Enterprise Management.

InterPARES 3 Project

International Research on Permanent Authentic Records in Electronic Systems

In October, Corinne Rogers submitted a proposal, which was approved, that VST be accepted as a Test Site in the International Research on Permanent Authentic Records in Electronic Systems (InterPARES) 3 at UBC. InterPARES 3 is an international collaborative endeavour composed of several regional, national and multinational teams. The direction of the entire Project is funded by Canada’s Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council’s Community-University Research Alliances (CURA) grant. The research will develop the knowledge essential to the long-term preservation of authentic records created and/or maintained in digital form and providing the basis for standards, policies, strategies and plans of action capable of ensuring the longevity of such material and the ability of its users to trust its authenticity. This particular case study will involve researching VST’s administrative records with emphasis on its electronic documents with the main objectives of devising policies for the creation, maintenance and preservation of authentic and reliable digital records.
The Rev. Dr. Thomas W. Bray passed away peacefully on October 26, 2008 at the age of 80 years. A graduate of St. Andrew’s College in Saskatoon and ordained by the United Church of Canada in 1953, he served pastoral charges in both Saskatchewan and Alberta before retiring in 1993. In that same year he received an honorary doctorate from St. Andrew’s College, in recognition for his exceptional service to the Church and to the communities in which he lived.

We mourn the passing of Craig Newell, who died of cancer of the esophagus and stomach March 27th, 2008 the day before his 58th birthday. Best friend and life partner to Gail Newell (2006), he was a wonderful father, teacher, learner, friend and colleague. Craig’s life long work in education is being continued through a scholarship for graduate students in Mathemetic Education at Simon Fraser University where he was a doctoral candidate.

The Rev. Paul Stewart was a Deacon in the Anglican Church in Gingolx, and an active participant in the NMC Summer School for over 20 years, sharing with us his gifts of deep faith, joy, music, and laughter. Paul died on Saturday, November 1st and will be sorely missed. He is survived by his wife, Arbutus and their family, including Jeff Stanley, a member of the VST community, for whom Paul was Grandfather, mentor and friend.

1988

David A. Holmes (M.Div.) received The George and Sally Telford Award, given to an outstanding Doctor of Ministry graduate who shows exceptional ability for congregational leadership with an emphasis on social justice issues and vision for the church. David is pastor of McDougall United Church (United Church of Canada), in Calgary, Alberta. His D.Min. project, entitled “Sabbath Practice As a Resistance to Consumerism: A Lenten Experiment in Congregational Sabbath Practice,” explores the hypothesis that the practice of Sabbath might free a community from consumerism through the practice of an alternative spirituality.

1995

An article by George Abrams (M.Div.) is included in the book Disaster Spiritual Care: Practical Clergy Responses to Community, Regional and National Tragedy (Skylight Paths Publishing, Woodstock, VA (c) 2008.) His article, co-authored with Thomas H. Davis Jr., is titled, “Resources in a Disaster: Accessing them for the congregation and congregants – suggestions on ways for a congregation to get involved that strengthen it, not destroy it.”

Gladys Anderson (M.Div.) is settling into retirement in Neepawa, Manitoba following an extended trip to visit family and friends in Canada and the United States, after she retired September, 2007.

David Greenwood (M.Div.), a Canadian Forces military chaplain, was reassigned by the Chaplain General in August from his duties at NORAD Headquarters, Colorado Springs to take up studies in Rome, Italy. Padre Greenwood will be undertaking a ThM in Interfaith and Ecumenical Relations at the Pontifical University of St Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum) at the Vatican. Upon his and Cynthia’s return to Canada in 2010 he will be assigned to military chaplain recruiting duties at the Office of the Chaplain General in Ottawa.
VST Upcoming Events 2009

JANUARY

January 13 – 14
Free Public Lecture Series
Robert Alter, Ph.D., University of California, Berkeley
• LECTURE #1: Seeing the Bible through a Literary Lens
January 13 at 4 pm,
UBC, Liu Institute, 6476 NW Marine Dr.,
Reception to follow.
• LECTURE #2: How to read Biblical Narrative
January 14 at 12:00 Noon,
VST’s Chapel of the Epiphany, 6030 Chancellor Blvd.,
Reception to follow.

Mondays from January 19-April 6
5pm at VST
Global Cities
Social Justice: Amos, Urban Prophet and Reformer
Rev. Dr. Patricia Dutcher-Walls,
Professor of Hebrew Bible
Using the book of Amos, we will examine the theology and practices of social justice through the lenses of Prophet, the spokesperson of God’s justice and advocate for the poor, and Reformer, the one seeking to embody and institutionalize social justice.

January 30
Global Cities Free Public Lecture
7:00 pm at VST
“He and Paul on Location: Putting Empire in its Place”
Dr. Harry Maier, Professor of New Testament
Dr. Maier will explore how Empire matters in the interpretation of New Testament texts – the ways in which Jesus’ and Paul’s careers in imperial places shaped their visions of time and space, and how potent theologies of place challenged the Roman Empire’s representations of itself as a place for reconciliation and an eternal political order.

TUESDAYS FROM JANUARY 20-APRIL 7
8:30-11:30 am at VST
Global Cities
Rev. Dr. Stephen Farris, Professor of Homiletics

FEBRUARY

February 20
7pm at VST
Global Cities Free Public Lecture
“The Sustainable City”
Dr. Sallie McFague,
Distinguished Theologian in Residence
Considering the contemporary global city as a vital site for ecological theological reflection, Dr. McFague will explore Christian theologies of place and their implications for sustainability in the urban context.

February 6
DISCIPLE Leaders’ Training Seminar
9am-5pm at VST
$100 (lunch and resource materials included)
For those wishing to learn how to lead a Disciple Bible Study program in their churches.

MARCH

March 20
Global Cities Free Public Lecture
7pm at VST
More information to follow.
May 10-12
G. Peter Kaye Lecture Series at VST
Dr. Gabor Maté
Highly acclaimed speaker, national bestselling author, psychotherapist and medical practitioner Gabor Maté is the author of four books, including, When the Body Says No, and In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts: Close Encounters with Addiction.

May 10, Sunday, 7 pm • LECTURE #1
May 11, Monday
• Continuing Education Day, ‘Living Well’.  
  Registration required www.vst.edu
May 12, Tuesday, 12:30pm • LECTURE #2

Convocation
May 11 at 7 pm
Christ Church Cathedral, Vancouver

June 7-12
VST at Sorrento Centre
Rev. Dr. Richard Geoffrey Leggett
God’s Love Made Visible: Foundations in Liturgical and Sacramental Leadership
Designed for lay ministers of word and sacrament as well as presbyters and deacons who wish to develop and deepen their liturgical and sacramental leadership for the church in a time of mission. Course Registration through VST.

June 21-26
Sorrento Centre
Ms. Shiella Fodchuk
The Skilled Listener
This introductory counseling course is designed for those engaged in pastoral ministry and for anyone wanting to improve their listening skills. Course registration through VST.

June 17
Church Office Administrators / Secretaries / Volunteers Workshop
9am-5pm at VST
$150 (lunch included)
Join colleagues who share common work, learn and practice skills to engage in self-care and to receive support and blessing in your work and ministry.

July 6-24
Chalmers Summer School
‘From Seedling to Strength: Tending God’s Garden’
Registration and information at www.vst.edu

July 12-24
Native Ministries Consortium Summer School
‘Truth and Reconciliation’ and ‘Healing’
Registration and information at www.vst.edu

For more information, updates, and registration, go to www.vst.edu
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