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Whole Leaders for the Whole Church

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SFTS chimes ring 350 times to call attention to climate change

SAN ANSELMO, Calif., Nov. 23 – The 77-year-old San Francisco Theological Seminary chimes sounded 350 times during a 10-minute period on Nov. 23, to call attention to climate change.

SFTS joined a growing number of religious organizations and churches that are employing the ringing of chimes to stress the immediate need to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. The current concentration of carbon dioxide is approximately 390 parts per million; scientists believe that the concentration should be lowered to 350 parts per million, so Christians are ringing their bells 350 times as an alert.

The national movement has been timed to precede the United Nations Conference on Climate Change in Copenhagen Dec. 17-18. The United States is the only industrialized country that has not developed targets for greenhouse gas emission reductions.

"To ring the chimes 350 times, people are going to pay attention to that and they are going to wonder what is going on," said Dr. Carol Robb, the SFTS Margaret Dollar Professor of Christian Social Ethics. "We need to urge our governmental leaders to make some agreements to lower our greenhouse emissions from its current rate."

The 10-minute ringing of the chimes was followed by SFTS's regularly scheduled Monday service at Stewart Chapel. Robb and SFTS Chaplain Charles Marks spoke, stressing that the urgency of climate change is a matter of Christian concern.

"Carbon increases when we do everyday things like drive, turn on the lights, cook dinner, heat or cool our homes," Marks said. "Each of us has a carbon footprint equal to the amount of carbon we add to the atmosphere every day. All of us can reduce our carbon footprint. Individuals, groups, congregations and corporations have carbon footprints and have the power to reduce their footprint. In this way we can reduce the number 390 and move toward the healthy number 350."

The SFTS chimes have been a part of seminary life and the community since 1922, when Captain Robert Dollar, who owned the historic Falkirk House in San Rafael, donated the carillon. At its dedication in 1923, "Blest Be the Tie That Binds" rang

across Ross Valley. The chimes were originally placed in Montgomery Hall before being moved in 1953 to Geneva Hall, which sits atop the SFTS campus.

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San Francisco Theological Seminary, a Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) graduate school, has prepared whole leaders for the whole church since 1871. One of the founding members of the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, it offers theological degrees at two campuses, in San Anselmo and Pasadena. Its innovative Program in Christian Spirituality is open to clergy and non-ordained individuals. For more information please call SFTS at 1-800-447-8820 in San Anselmo or 1-800-473-8772 in Pasadena. Also find information on our Web site: www.sfts.edu.