



SAN FRANCISCO
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
Whole Leaders for the Whole Church

105 Seminary Road
San Anselmo, CA 94960
415.451.2800
www.sfts.edu

SFTS Contact
Holly Woolard
Communications Associate
415-451-2823
hwoolard@sfts.edu

SFTS graduates 85 during May commencement service

SAN ANSELMO, Calif., May 23 – Internationally renowned as an ecumenical faith learning center, San Francisco Theological Seminary graduated 85 students on Saturday, May 23, from nine countries.

The 2009 graduates came to SFTS from throughout the United States, hailing from 22 states. But the Seminary's ability to draw students from around the globe is even more impressive.

This year, SFTS graduates call such places as South Korea, Switzerland, Nigeria, Philippines, India, Tonga, Vietnam and South Africa home. International students accounted for 25 percent of the 2009 SFTS graduating classes.

"We are gratified that our tradition as a truly international faith learning community continues," said Rev. Wendy Tajima, associate dean of enrollment. "Our students learn so much from that incredible richness of backgrounds. And once they graduate, our students go out into the world on nearly every continent."

During the 2009 Commencement Service, SFTS awarded 22 Master of Divinity degrees, the basic professional degree for Christian ministry. The Seminary also presented 36 Doctor of Ministry degrees, six Master of Arts in Theological Studies degrees and 14 Diplomas in the Art of Spiritual Direction.

The Graduate Theological Union, a consortium of nine theological seminaries including SFTS, awarded one Master of Arts degree to a SFTS student and six Doctor of Philosophy degrees to SFTS affiliates.

Special recognition was bestowed on several students based on their outstanding achievements while attending SFTS. The Seminary Fellowship was presented to Jacoba Vermaak, the Alumni Fellowship went to Scott Clark, the Surjit Singh Essay Award in Christology was given to Jennifer Warner and the Samuel P. Robinson Shorter Catechism Prize was awarded to Kyung-A Park.

For the first time in its 138-year-old, SFTS faculty and trustees awarded an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree to Rev. Leon Faniel for his outstanding Christian leadership. Recognized as one of the most outstanding African-American

leaders in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Fanniel has shared his wisdom, insight and expertise with the church at all levels for four decades.

Fanniel has served as pastor of St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Los Angeles for 21 years. He has also held key leadership positions, such as membership on both the General Assembly Mission Council and the General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission.

Affectionately known as "the Bishop" among friends and peers, Fanniel has been on the boards of both SFTS and McCormick Seminary and is currently a Senior Trustee of SFTS. As a founding member of the advisory committee and its vice-chair, he was highly instrumental in the establishment of the H. Eugene Farlough Chair in African American Christianity and the raising of its first \$1 million.

Blaine Clarke Vestal (B.D., M.A. '65) was presented the 2009 Distinguished Alumnus Award in recognition of his ministries for low-income communities. Vestal's first call was the Mt. Laki Community Presbyterian Church in Klamath Falls, Ore., where he was active in civil rights causes and worked closely with the Migrant Ministry, NAACP and Human Rights Commission.

He was director of the Denver Inner City Parish, an ecumenical community program helping low-income persons in the predominantly Hispanic/Latino neighborhoods. After receiving his Doctor of Ministry degree from McCormick Theological Seminary in 1985, Vestal returned to Denver to accept a call to another inner city ministry at First Avenue Presbyterian Church. Vestal has been a volunteer chaplain and leader in various retreats for prison ministries, spanning more than 25 years.

###

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.