

For more information, contact:

Laurie Lattimore-Volkman

Media Relations

415-264-8105

llattimorevolkmann@sfts.edu

105 Seminary Road • San Anselmo • CA 94960  
415.451.2800 [www.sfts.edu](http://www.sfts.edu)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **SFTS VP travels to Israel for inaugural Christian Leadership Initiative**

The Rev. Dr. Judy Yates Siker, vice president of San Francisco Theological Seminary's Southern California campus, was one of 12 fellows selected to attend the Christian Leadership Initiative recently at the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem to study with renowned Jewish scholars and gain a better understanding of Judaism.

Sponsored by the Shalom Hartman Institute and American Jewish Committee, Christian Leadership Initiative is a comprehensive program that grounds its participants in the central ideas of Jewish ethics and faith, the diverse ideologies and practices of contemporary world Jewry, and the intellectual foundations of religious pluralism and inter-religious studies.

Siker, also a New Testament professor at SFTS, said it was a privilege to be among the group of scholars and religious leaders chosen for the inaugural two-week study.

"We have been introduced to a level of the study of Judaism that is unlike any we have ever experienced," Siker said, adding that fellows have had the opportunity to learn about the Jewish faith with leading rabbis. "I will be pondering the ideas and reflections of these scholars for many months to come as they have taken us under their wing and into their world."

Over the next year, Siker and her colleagues will continue to have lectures from the rabbis and discussions with one another through distance learning. The program for this first group concludes with a final 10-day seminar in Jerusalem next summer where participants will discuss Jewish people, community and politics.

The Jerusalem seminars enable fellows to encounter Jewish life in Israel and facilitates encounters with Israelis of different backgrounds who represent diversity and challenges inherent in modern Judaism.

"It has been an unbelievable privilege to be among this group of Christian scholars and religious leaders," Siker said. "I am anxious to share my experience with my fellow faculty at SFTS and with our students."

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**San Francisco Theological Seminary**, a Presbyterian Church (USA) 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](http://www.sfts.edu).