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Program in Christian Spirituality partner in nature apprenticeship

SAN ANSELMO, Calif., Feb. 10 – The Program in Christian Spirituality at San Francisco Theological Seminary is a key partner with a new faith-based center reaching out to young adults who have a passion for nature.

Teaming with Westminster Woods Presbyterian Camp and Conference Center, about an hour north of its campus in San Anselmo, Calif., SFTS will offer weekly classes and housing to help empower adults age 22 to 30 to engage in caring for and restoring creation as part of the Center for Nature and Christian Spirituality.

“Far too often, people have profound experiences in nature that refresh and transform them, but they do not connect those experiences with the powerful presence of God acting in and through creation,” said Rev. Dr. Nancy Wiens, a graduate of SFTS’s renowned Diploma in the Art of Spiritual Direction program. “The nature focus of the program includes a hands-on approach to practical skills in nature, a theology of nature shaped by Christian hope, and an understandable way to live as a Christian with a world view shaped by contemporary science.”

Wiens is co-founder and director of the Center for Nature and Christian Spirituality. Other members of the center’s leadership team include Rev. Dr. Sam Hamilton-Poore, director of the SFTS Program in Christian Spirituality, and Dr. Elizabeth Liebert, SFTS dean and vice president for academic affairs.

The Center for Nature and Christian Spirituality will offer an 11-month apprenticeship starting in September 2010 for four to eight young adults. Program components include the following:

- Environmental education apprenticeship
- Permaculture training and certification
- Spirituality concentration at SFTS
- Christian spiritual formation and living in an intentional community
- Holistic financial planning
- Sacred Quest wilderness rite of passage
- Westminster Woods’ summer staff counseling

During the fall and spring semesters, participants will spend a night a week on the SFTS campus to experience seminary life and attend Liebert's regularly-scheduled spirituality classes with other SFTS students the next day. In exchange for these opportunities, participants will help with ecological projects on campus, including removal of invasive species, restoring native habitats, harvesting rainfall for watering the landscape and further development of the community garden.

Participants will live at Westminster Woods in Occidental, Calif., during the apprenticeship, excluding weekly visits on the SFTS campus. Tuition is \$7,200, including room and board. The center will help participants with fundraising through mission support letters and ideas.

The application deadline is April 10. For further information, call 707-874-2426, ext. 613. Also see the Web site at www.westminsterwoods.org/cncs/

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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.