

CGCM NEWS

Center for Global Christianity & Mission

Lecture Series: Global Christianity, 1910 to Today

09.25: Roman Catholicism (Sr. Meg Guider, Boston College) STH 115, 6:30 pm

10.02: Orthodox Christianity (Fr. Luke Veronis, Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Seminary) STH 115, 6:30 pm

10.16: Pentecostals in Africa (Nimi Wariboko, Boston University) STH 115, 6:30 pm

10.23: Middle Eastern Christianity (Razek Siriani, Syrian Orthodox Archdiocese of Aleppo), STH 115, 6:30 pm

10.30: Protestants (Richard Haney, Frontier Fellowship) STH 115, 6:30 pm

11.06: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Kristine Haglund, *Dialogue* magazine) STH 115, 6:30 pm

11.13: Anglicanism (Titus Presler, Principal-in-Exile, Edwardes College, Pakistan), STH 115, 6:30 pm

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Robert chosen for High Honor

Dana L. Robert, Truman Collins Professor of World Christianity and History of Mission at Boston University, has been elected to the American Academy of Arts & Sciences (AAAS), the first BU School of Theology faculty member to be so chosen. The widely recognized pioneering scholar and teacher joins the academy's class of 2017, whose 228 members are among the world's most accomplished scholars, scientists, writers, artists, and civic and philanthropic leaders.

The academy was founded in 1780 and is one of the country's oldest learned societies and independent policy research centers. Nomination for membership comes from current members. It



ASM Lifetime Achievement Award

On June 17, 2017 Frances Adeney and Bonnie Sue Lewis awarded Dana L. Robert the American Society of Missiology's Life-time Achievement Award. In their remarks, they noted that Dr. Robert is "one of the most renowned and beloved women missiologists of our day. A devout Methodist, a leading mission historian, and a mentor to a generation of missiologists, she has served the church and academy faithfully and with distinction."

Besides her own trailblazing role in the ASM, and her outstanding publications, the organization recognized that one of her greatest contributions to the field is her students, many of whom serve in universities and churches around the world. "As supervisor of 70 doctoral dissertations, she has nearly single-handedly assured BU a position in the top 10 schools for number of doctorates in mission studies."

Twenty-two of her students were present at the ASM meeting, providing a visible display of the mark Dana Robert has left on American missiology.

convenes leaders from many fields to address pressing public problems.

"It's one of the highest honors for a professor in the arts and sciences," says Mary Elizabeth Moore, dean of the School of Theology (STH) and a professor of theology and education. "It's an academic honor for Dana and it's a huge honor to the school and it's also an honor to the field." Moore says Robert's election is a "recognition that outstanding scholarship can be done within any global religion, including global Christianity."

She says that Robert is "an extraordinary historical scholar and one who has brought to the foreground the global complexity of Christianity, with all of its flaws and contributions. She's also an outstanding teacher and leader. We're bursting with pride."

Robert, the founding director of the Center for Global Christianity & Mission at STH, has trained generations of doctoral students from all over the world, many who have gone on to become academics, teachers, and religious leaders in the United States, Africa, Latin America, and Asia. Despite a long list of academic awards and honors, including a 2016-17 Henry Luce III Fellowship in Theology, she was so stunned by the April 12, 2017, email informing her that she'd been elected that she asked Moore not to share the news until the academy's confirmation letter arrived.

"This was one of those things—maybe in the back of your mind you think, wouldn't it be nice," Robert says, "but then you think, no, I'm never going to be at the level of the people selected."

Extolling Robert's groundbreaking work in the field of world Christianity, colleagues and other scholars of the history of Christianity expressed elation—and no surprise—at Robert's election to the AAAS.

"Dana Robert has for years been among the world's most important interpreters of the new circumstances of world Christianity," says AAAS fellow Mark Noll, a leading scholar of North American Christianity and University of Notre Dame Francis A. McAnaney Professor of History Emeritus. Robert documented "the momentous demographic shifts of the last century—from Christianity as a primarily Northern European and North American religion to primarily a religion flourishing in the global South [Africa, Latin America, and Asia]," says Noll. She "interpreted that shift with real nuance, emphasizing themes like the attraction of Christianity to the poor, to women, and those undergoing rapid social and cultural change; the importance of friendship between Western missionaries and local Christian actors; the key role of women missionaries and local women

converts for the great transformations of recent decades.” Her election to the academy, he says, “represents a well-deserved honor for Professor Robert, but also significant American recognition of the dramatically new conditions now prevailing in the Christian world.”

“Dana Robert is the central, dynamic force in the study of missionary history in the United States,” says another AAAS member, David Hollinger, University of California, Berkeley, Preston Hotchkis Professor Emeritus of History. In addition to Robert’s scholarly work, adds Hollinger, who is known for his research on Jewish intellectual history and is now working on Protestant liberalism, “her leadership of the Center for Global Christianity & Mission has produced a steady stream of triumphs in archives, publications, and public programs. She is a revered teacher and has exercised great influence through her students. Her footprint is large, but she is the last person to call attention to it.”



Sung-Deuk Oak (STH '02)

Robert has been a dissertation advisor for 70 doctoral students. Among them is Sung-Deuk Oak (STH '02), who holds the University of California, Los Angeles, Dongsoon Im and Mija Im Endowed Chair as associate professor of Korean Christianity, and is a leading scholar of Korean Christianity. Oak says that

since outside Korea his field was a new venture, he could not have earned his current tenured position without Robert’s “constant encouragement and inspiration” and “unwavering guidance.”

The Right Reverend Ian T. Douglas (GRS '93), the Bishop Diocesan of the Episcopal Church in Connecticut, says Robert is the reason he came to the University. “This was at a time when there were very few places within mainline Christianity or liberal Protestantism where there were professors researching the history of Christian movement and the global church,”



Ian Douglas (GRS '93)

Sanctuary Movement



“A Storybook of Civil War,” *Northeast*, May 31, 1987. Child’s drawing of home burned by Guatemalan soldiers.

In the 1980s, New England became an important node in the Sanctuary Movement. Churches and synagogues moved families from El Salvador and Guatemala to the area not only to provide them safety, but also that the refugees might act as witnesses to the brutality and injustice of US-sponsored dictators. Often living in the basements of local houses of worship, these “missionaries,” as they were sometimes called, were specially selected and prepared for the arduous task of converting the American political imagination. With support from congregations, asylum-seekers addressed a variety of audiences about the human toll of the Cold War. Under the direction of Rady Roldan-Figueroa, the Center for Global Christianity & Mission is documenting and analyzing the regional networks that collaborated in the Sanctuary Movement. Findings will be made available in both print and digital formats. The Sanctuary Movement was one way mainline congregations reimagined mission in the post-colonial age.

Lecture Series: Global Christianity, 1910 to Today (cont.)

11.20: South Asian Christian Theology (Fr. Felix Wilfred, Wesley Ariarajah, Fr. K.M. George) *STH 115*, 6:30 pm

11.27: Independents (Xiyi Yao, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary) *STH 115*, 6:30 pm

12.04: Ethnodoxology (Robin Harris, International Council of Ethnodox-ologists), *STH 115*, 6:30 pm

Douglas says. “Dana was pushing the boundaries. She is a visionary—in a very self-effacing, humble, and quiet way. If the American Academy recognizes leading thinkers who have had strategic and seminal roles in changing whole fields of study, then Dana has done that.” And, he adds, “I wouldn’t be the scholar or the academic, or for that matter the bishop, that I am if it wasn’t for Dana’s mentoring and her friendship and her witness.”

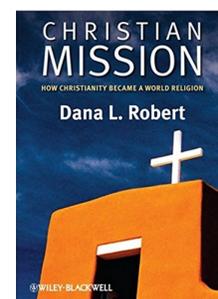
While Hollinger and Noll have conducted research in the field, Robert says she may be the first person elected to the academy in recent history who focuses primarily on world Christianity. Having earned an MA, an MPhil, and a PhD at Yale University, she began her career at STH in 1984 as a non-tenure track junior faculty member charged with reviving the school’s long tradition of cross-cultural mission and ecumenical studies, which had collapsed amid the upheaval of the student protests of the 1960s and ’70s.

In 2001, Robert founded the Center for Global Christianity & Mission, then one of two or three such centers in North America. “There were other research centers in world Christianity in Europe, but not in North America,” she says.

In partnership with Jack Ammerman, the associate University Librarian for digital initiatives and open access (at the time he was the STH librarian), the center created BU’s first open access website, which made research material available to scholars around the world. Its digital projects website supports the Dictionary of African Christian Biography, considered the most important source of information on the founding and expansion of African Christianity, among other resources.

“The people who work in ministry are communicators,” Robert says, “and if you work in a world church, or world Christianity, you want to communicate around the world.”

Robert’s books include *Christian Mission: How Christianity Became a World Religion* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), now in its tenth printing, and *American Women in Mission: A Social History of Their Thought and Practice* (Mercer University, 1997), which was viewed as groundbreaking research on the importance of a group of women who had been previously overlooked and led to an outpouring of work by other scholars on women in mission as cross-cultural leaders and bridge builders. Robert, who holds core faculty positions in BU’s African Studies Center and the Graduate Division of Religious Studies, is using her Luce fellowship to conduct research for her latest book.



Members of the AAAS 2017 class include philanthropist and Grammy- and Academy Award-winning singer-songwriter John Legend, actress Carol Burnett, Fields Medalist mathematician Maryam Mirzakhani, immunologist James P. Allison, historian Naomi Oreskes, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Jane Mayer, and Nigerian novelist and short story writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. The new fellows will be inducted at a ceremony in October 2017 at the academy, in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

“I’m deeply humbled and honored to be selected,” Robert says. “And I’m amazed by it. I’m amazed that anybody noticed, I suppose.”

Article adapted from Sara Rimer, “STH’s Dana Robert Elected to American Academy of Arts & Sciences,” *BU Today*, May 9, 2017