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 Velvet ashes

VELVET ASHES
PODCAST



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The Center for Global Christianity and Mission



Casting the Net Far and Wide

Regularly, Laura Chevalier Beer ('20) sits in front of her computer and a microphone to record an episode of the Velvet Ashes Legacy Podcast. She is determined to capture the history of women who have been ministers of the gospel around the world, believing that their examples can inspire a new generation of women to go. The lives of these female missionaries are amazing, but their legacy depends on their stories being told.

This is not where Dr. Chevalier Beer imagined she would be after finishing her studies at Boston University. However, graduating in the midst of a global pandemic upended more than her own life. She began to volunteer

"I really love to put these women in context: they are part of larger mission movements and historical events."

with Velvet Ashes, an organization dedicated to the “encouragement of women serving overseas,” recognizing that many women in ministry are not just temporarily isolated but regularly alone and in need of community.

She could speak from experience. Dr. Chevalier Beer had worked for three years in child development with Food for the Hungry in Kenya, and worked and taught for nine years in various other cross cultural settings before beginning her studies at BU.

When the team at Velvet Ashes approached her to join their Board of Directors, she understood the mission and was intrigued by a group that was totally focused on women in mission, but hesitated because she had not heard of the organization. When she reached out to friends and colleagues to ask if they knew anything about Velvet Ashes, she got overwhelming responses from various corners of the globe: “Absolutely! I have participated in their retreats.”

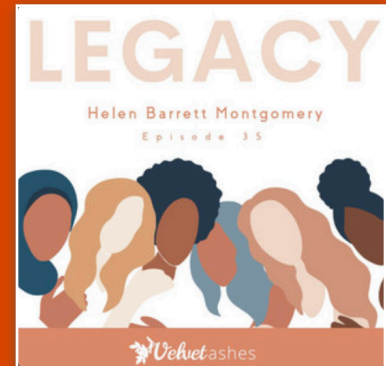
Chevalier Beer became the first academic to join the Velvet Ashes Board, so saw opportunities to connect what women experience now with the lives of female missionaries in the past. She has been a main presenter since the second season of the Velvet Ashes Legacy Podcast, and develops historically-focused episodes.

Many people, for instance, know the devotional classic, *Streams in the Desert*, but few are aware it was written by a missionary, Lettie Cowman, who co-founded the Oriental Missionary Society and led it for twenty years after her husband’s death. Dr. Chevalier Beer and her co-host interviewed Michelle Ule, who had written a biography on Cowman. In conversations like this Chevalier Beer uses her experience and education to draw out themes that are relevant to listeners and help place figures like Cowan in their larger historical and missiological contexts.

“These stories are not meant to be normative,” Beer explains, but they can be transformative. Deep calls to deep, and the stories of suffering and victory that other missionary women have experienced can create a community of understanding. They bear witness that no one is entirely alone; listeners can recognize similar patterns in their own journey of faith.

Laughing, Beer acknowledges that this is not the traditional academic position. “This requires me to reflect on how these stories intersect with my own experience in mission. Historians usually avoid that.” That may be true, but listeners appreciate it. Listeners tune into the historical episodes on the Velvet Ashes Legacy Podcast more than any others.

Velvet Ashes Legacy Podcast



Each month, the Legacy Podcast highlights the life of a woman or a group of women. Some of them are famous while others are not. What they all share in common is a common faith in Jesus Christ and the unique calling to cross-cultural ministry. Each episode is approximately 60 minutes and are available on all major podcast platforms. If you have a story to share, please contact Laura Chevalier Beer at: laura.chevalierbeer@velvetashes.com.



Kip Mobley ('04), Professor of Religion at Johnson C. Smith University, was recently featured on the podcast. The author of *Helen Barrett Montgomery: The Global Mission of Domestic Feminism*, Mobley could share about her work in maternalist reform in Rochester, New York, and her leadership role in the ecumenical woman’s missionary movement. His conversation with Dr. Chevalier Beer is available at: <https://tinyurl.com/cgcm2025>.

Where are they now? Updates on Recent Grads



Jeremy Hegi ('19) is Associate Professor of History of Christianity at Lubbock Christian University. He has just completed his second year as Faculty Senate President, and he is taking 20 students to Japan this summer.



Tyler Lenocker ('20) is Vice President of Global Research and Mission Theologian at Haggai International. His book, *Evangelicals in the City: Migration and World Christianity in Boston, 1960-2000* will be published by NYU Press at the beginning of 2026.



Alex Mayfield ('21) is Assistant Professor of History at Asbury University. He is the author of *The Kaleidoscopic City*, a history of early Pentecostalism in Hong Kong, and currently serves as the Senior Associate Editor of *Pneuma*.

Ground-Breaking Research: Piecing Together the Histories of YWAM and Protestant Social Action in Brazil

Over the last forty years, Boston University has produced more dissertations on World Christianity and Mission than any other research university in North America. Building on the scholarship and leadership of Dana L. Robert, the School of Theology has expanded in this area of specialization to include the expertise of seven other professors at the School of Theology, as well as five affiliated faculty in other departments. It is a premiere destination for studying the intersection of mission movements, world Christianity, and global community.

This spring, Allison Kach-Yawngwe and Morgan Crago Melkonian successfully defended their dissertations. Their work reflects how they used their creativity and ingenuity to build on the strengths of the PhD program.

Dr. Kach-Yawngwe did pioneering work on "The First Waves of a Rising Tide: The Early History of Youth With A Mission, 1956-1970." Since YWAM has no archive, she essentially had to create her own through collecting materials from those involved in the early years and conducting oral interviews.



Defense Committee (L-R): Daryl Ireland, Dana Robert, Allison Kach-Yawngwe, Bryan Stone, Chris Evans, Nicolette Manglos-Weber

By reconstructing the founding history and early development of the modern global mission organization, Youth With A Mission (YWAM), Kach-Yawngwe reveals the continuities, discontinuities, and relationships YWAM had with pentecostalism, entrepreneurial evangelicalism, the Charismatic Renewal, world Christianity, youth counter culture, and women's movements. She argues that because it built on the past while

innovating in dialogue with the youth culture of the day, YWAM expanded dramatically. It was active on every continent by 1970, mobilizing and sending untrained young people as evangelists and missionaries across the street and around the world.

Dr. Morgan Crago Melkonian showed how the Brazilian Protestants associated with the Confederação Evangélica do Brasil (CEB) promoted evangelical involvement in public health, literacy, and politics to make a case for Protestant legitimacy in a predominantly Catholic context.



Melkonian Defense Committee (L to R): Rady Roldan-Figueroa, Chris Evans, Alderi Matos, Morgan Crago, Dana Robert, Filipe Maia

Covering the first regime of Getúlio Vargas to the military coup of 1964, her dissertation argues that the CEB developed a cohesive agenda for Protestant social action in the 1930s and 1940s. This united vision, however, fractured during the period of democratic opening (1946 to 1964) over the question of supporting political revolution. Using archival sources from seminaries in São Paulo and Campinas as well as the USA, her dissertation illustrates the continuities in Brazilian Protestant social action across the 1930s through the 1960s, highlights the connections between Brazilian ecumenists and international ecumenical organizations, and expands scholarship on Brazilian Protestant perspectives on Brazilian Catholicism prior to the Second Vatican Council.

Commenting on her time at BU, Kach-Yawngghwe spoke with gratitude for the way her experience was “grounded in the supportive and life-giving scholarly and spiritual fellowship of the CGCM.” Melkonian added, “Thanks to the CGCM, I made friends with colleagues across cohorts and departments who were also studying world Christianity. We traveled together to academic conferences, discussed our academic work over lunches, and periodically gathered together in each other's homes to share meals.” They both spoke warmly of the gift of “collaborative, collegial, and considerate relationships,” and emphasized the indispensable role of “consistent, methodical, and encouraging faculty mentoring.”

Dr. Kach-Yawngghwe will continue as both a scholar and missionary with YWAM. Dr. Melkonian has accepted a position at Lexington Christian Academy, where she will teach Church History and AP U.S. History to High School sophomores. The CGCM continues to invest in a new generation of mission researchers, who, in turn, equip the Church for mission.