

## Homecoming 2025

**DISTINGUISHED  
ALUMNI AWARD**



**ALUMNI HONORED  
OAK AND ESSAMUAH**



**FAITHFUL  
FOOTPRINTS**



**RECENT  
PUBLICATIONS**

# CGCM NEWS

## The Center for Global Christianity and Mission



Oak and Essamuah walking to Award Ceremony, Dave Green Photography

## Sung-Deuk Oak Honored at STH

The Boston University School of Theology recently welcomed back four of its accomplished graduates to celebrate their contributions to church and society through the annual Distinguished Alumni Awards. Among this year's honorees were CGCM alumni Rev. Dr. Casely Essamuah (featured in issue 27), and Rev. Dr. Sung-Deuk Oak (ThD '02), the Dongsoon Im and Mija Im Endowed Chair of Korean Christianity at UCLA's Department of Asian Languages and Cultures. Oak's words at the ceremony contained both historical lessons and urgent encouragement for today's students and scholars.

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## A Return to BU

In his remarks, Dr. Oak reflected on the deep personal significance of receiving the award from his alma mater, recalling his own days at Boston University three decades ago. “It’s a great honor to be here with you,” he began. “BU is a special place. As someone who studied here 31 years ago with three children, graduating in 2002, I have seen the world change dramatically throughout my lifetime.”

He described his journey from growing up in a village without electricity in the 1970s, to writing his Master of Divinity thesis on a desktop computer in the 1990s, to now navigating the rise of artificial intelligence in the 21st century. “It took only 20 years for my premodern world to transition into a postmodern one,” he remarked. “Since then, we have seen the rise of smartphones and now, A.I. It’s been a rapid three-decade shift from the age of the internet to the age of A.I.”

## Lessons from History

As a historian, Dr. Oak noted that, while historians do not predict the future, he believes the next generation will face even greater changes than his own. But, he reminded the audience, “what is inside you is far more important than any external change. Your sense of calling and self-assurance is what truly matters.”

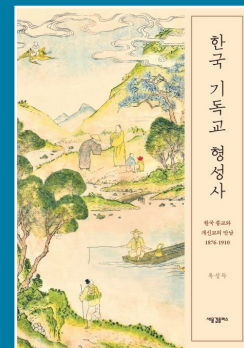
Rather than dwell on global crises—from climate change to pandemics to social discrimination—he urged students and young alumni to focus on their own calling and vision: “No matter what challenges arise in the next decade, you must pursue your unique aspirations and fulfill your calling.” “Your life will ultimately be judged by what you will accomplish in the final decade of work, not by the first decade of your theological studies.”

For those in their thirties, he stressed, there is still abundant time to explore, learn, and even fail. “You have the freedom to try anything in your 30s and 40s,” he said, encouraging students not to fear mistakes but to grow through them.

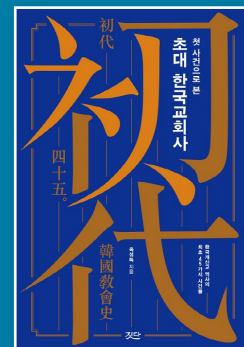
## Selected Books by Sung Deuk-Oak



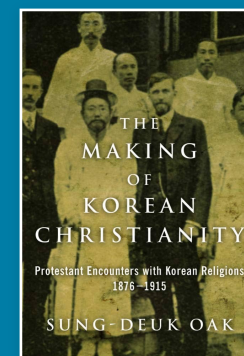
A Great Revival in the Peninsula



The History of the Formation of Christianity in Korea



Early Korean Church History as Seen from the First Incidents





Collected Writings of Samuel Moffett,  
Vols. 1-4



Rewriting Early Korean Church History



*The Declining Korean Church and a  
Diary of a Historian*

Turning his reflection toward his field of expertise, Dr. Oak acknowledged the crisis facing Korean Protestantism. Once admired for its rapid growth, Korean churches are now grappling with accusations of pride and materialism; they are embroiled in cultural conflicts. “They were tempted by material wealth and worldly dominion.” Yet he offered hope: “As long as they have the Word of God—the divine message not the word of A.I.—there is hope.”

### Temptations in Ministry

Drawing on the biblical story of Jesus’ temptations in the wilderness, Dr. Oak outlined three dangers that future ministers and scholars must navigate:

- 1) Material comfort and financial stability — represented by the temptation to turn stones into bread. To resist, he explained, leaders must learn through sacrifice and suffering to rely on the authentic Word of God.
- 2) Worldly influence without substance — the temptation to leap from the temple and impress the masses. In today’s digital culture, he warned, “without genuine spiritual substance, your online ministry will become nothing more than a clanging symbol.”
- 3) Worldly power and control — the temptation to worship dominion rather than service. “When your ministry becomes successful, you might be tempted by the power of control,” he cautioned. “But remember that your job is not to control but to serve.”

### Looking Forward

Dr. Oak concluded his remarks with a charge to the students and community of Boston University: “Go forward with confidence in the coming decade. No challenge has stopped you, and will not stop you now. Your calling, vision, and efforts will challenge the world in 10 years. Thank you, and may God bless your studies.”

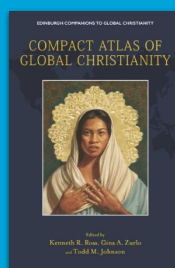
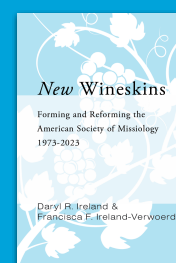
His words stood as a testimony: in the midst of change, the calling to serve with integrity, humility, and vision endures.

# Faithful Footprints

One of the purposes of the CGCM is to connect students at the School of Theology to the richness and reality of the global church. To that end, Faithful Footprints is a new initiative that is led by and for students. Using material published by the Center's Dictionary of African Christian Biography ([dacb.org](http://dacb.org)), students gather for a meal each month to hear and reflect on the stories of two pre-selected African leaders, one woman and one man. These dinners become an opportunity for students to share their own stories. Using material from the lives of their African forebears in the faith, they can name parallels in their own lives. What are the challenges and heartaches that they face in life and ministry? Where have they seen signs of God's grace, justice, and joy? How have they experienced God's deliverance, healing, or call? Through these conversations, the often-overlooked lives of African Christians come to light and are given due attention; they also inspire, offer guidance, and build a new community at the School of Theology.

## Recent Publications

Daryl Ireland and Francisca Ireland-Verwoerd, *New Wineskins: Forming and Reforming the American Society of Missiology, 1973-2023* (Eugene, OR: Wipe & Stock, 2025).



*The Compact Atlas of Global Christianity*. Edinburgh *Companions to Global Christianity*, vol 10, ed. Kenneth R. Ross, Gina A. Zurlo and Todd M. Johnson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2025) includes an Introduction by Gina Zurlo ('17), and essays on Africa and North America by Jean-Luc Enyegue ('18) and Alex Mayfield ('21), respectively.

Eugenio Menegon, "Carletti and Religion: Christianity and Asian Traditions in the *Ragionamenti*," in Brian Brege, Paula Findlen and Giorgio Riello eds., *Trading at the Edges of Empire: Francesco Carletti's World, ca. 1600* (Florence & Cambridge, MA: Villa I Tatti - Officina Libraria - Harvard University Press, 2025), pp. 117-13.

