Pamela J. Walker is an historian, with a particular interest in gender and religion. She received her PhD in modern European and women’s history from Rutgers University in 1992. She joined the History Department at Carleton University in the fall of 1991. In 1993/1994 she was a Research Associate and Visiting Lecturer in the Women’s Studies in Religion Program at the Divinity School, Harvard University. She was the holder of the Joint Chair in Women’s Studies, for Carleton University and the University of Ottawa, in 2010-2011, and the Director of Carleton’s Centre for Initiatives in Education, from 2007 to 2012. Professor Walker co-edited, with Beverly Mayne Kienzle, Women Preachers and Prophets Through Two Millennia of Christianity, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998). She is the author of Pulling the Devil’s Kingdom Down: The Salvation Army in Victorian Britain (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 2001) as well as numerous articles on women and religion in modern Britain. In 2002, she was awarded a faculty Teaching Excellence Award. Her current project, funded by a SSHRC research grant, is titled “Missions to the Metropolis”. It examines how later nineteenth century missionary projects reshaped the gendered, racialized religious practice of British men and women.

Statement on Research Project: “Missions to the Metropolis”

This project will seek to understand how the imperial world of the later nineteenth century mattered to the religious beliefs and practices of British men and women. It examines three missionary organizations that each, in different ways, was created and sustained by cross-national influences and problems. The first, the mission to convert Britain’s new Jewish immigrants, was a major focus of missionary funds and effort. Largely unsuccessful, this campaign was energetically supported by British women who regarded the arrival of these immigrants as a unique opportunity to convert women they regarded as burdened by an oriental religion and who, they hoped, would help convert the empire. The second case study examines one English mission to South Africa that was shaped by the holiness movement, a strand of the missionary movement that set out with only a strong faith, economy of means and a trust in God. This mission’s rich records reveal how their theology and their beliefs about race and gender shaped the recruitment of missionaries in England and the work they expected to do in South Africa. The third case study examines the arrival of Christian Science in Britain. Christian Science was created by an American woman and the majority of its British adherents and leadership were women. Its theology of healing overturned conventional ideas about the body, race and gender. Examining how women’s words spread Christian Science and the particular ways their work was both accepted and vilified will allow a new perspective on religious embodiment and the interplay of domestic, transatlantic and imperial religious cultures.

Religion is a particularly rich starting point for considering cross-national influences and shared histories for by its very nature Protestantism moved across national boundaries. In its evangelical, missionary form, it required contact with others. In these three case studies, the interplay of evangelical and missionary activities with different origins and targets but all at work in Britain, will allow a reconsideration of how Protestantism, an anchor of national identity and a source of intense missionary activity in the empire, was remade between 1870 and 1914.