

Elaine Heath Named Dean of Duke Divinity School

Heath is a theologian, preacher, teacher and writer

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Editor's Note: A photo of Elaine Heath is available at http://today.duke.edu/showcase/mmedia/hires/Heath_Elaine_2.jpeg.



Elaine A. Heath, dean of Duke Divinity School

Elaine A. Heath, a theologian, preacher, teacher and writer, will be the next dean of the Duke Divinity School, President Richard H. Brodhead and Provost Sally Kornbluth announced Tuesday.

Heath is currently the McCreless Professor of Evangelism at Southern Methodist University's Perkins School of Theology in Dallas. She succeeds Ellen Davis, who has served as interim dean since the retirement of Richard

Hays in August 2015.

"Elaine Heath is a leading scholar of emergence, the process by which religious faith finds new life outside familiar institutional forms," Brodhead said. "She is also a noted practitioner of emergence and has reached out to establish new communities with people marginalized in many ways.

"At a time when the religious life of mainstream Protestantism is undergoing profound change, she will be a perfect leader for helping the Duke Divinity School retain traditional strengths while creatively responding to new challenges. A person of powerful authenticity and a good listener, she will strengthen the community within the Duke Divinity School and help the school maintain its important leadership role."

Kornbluth added, "The Divinity School has a special role of scholarship, teaching and service at Duke, and Elaine Heath will be an exemplary leader in all those areas. She has demonstrated an ability to lead, manage and inspire that will continue to move the school forward.

"I am especially grateful to Ellen Davis for serving as interim dean during the period of transition, and to the search committee for its thorough and thoughtful deliberations throughout this process," Kornbluth said.

Heath said she looks forward to joining the Duke community.

"The world is rapidly changing, and the church needs leaders who can guide congregations and other organizations through culture shifts toward a vibrant future," Heath said. "As part of one of the top research universities in the world, and because of its robust, historic grounding in the church, Duke Divinity School is well positioned to develop rigorous new forms of contextualized theological education while continuing its renowned intellectual tradition.

"I am deeply honored to have been invited to serve as the next dean of Duke Divinity School."

Heath's appointment comes after a national search chaired by Randy Maddox, the William Kellon

Quick Professor of Wesleyan and Methodist Studies at the Divinity School.

"We are excited to welcome Elaine Heath to the Duke Divinity School," Maddox said. "Her scholarship, which focuses on historic examples of Christians engaging creatively with the social and spiritual challenges of their time, engages effectively with the challenges of today. Leaders across the Christian spectrum have turned to her for guidance in reshaping the mission and ministry of churches in their local settings. And as an ordained United Methodist elder, she is deeply committed to nurturing the Divinity School's historic Methodist connections, while equally passionate about the value of diversity and the importance of modeling an inclusive community."

Heath's scholarly work integrates systematic, pastoral and spiritual theology in ways that bridge the gap between academy, church and world. She has been on the SMU faculty since 2005.

Heath is the author of numerous books and monographs, the most recent of which is "Missional.Monastic.Mainline.: A Guide to Starting Missional Micro-Communities in Historically Mainline Traditions" (Cascade, 2014). She is also the co-founder and leader of the [Missional Wisdom Foundation](#), which provides opportunities for clergy and laity to learn how to live in intentional communities and how to develop missional communities in diverse social contexts.

"My colleagues and I are deeply grateful for the appointment of Elaine Heath as dean of Duke Divinity School," added Hope Morgan Ward, bishop of the North Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church and a member of the university's Board of Trustees. "She brings to this position deep and rich wisdom, scholarship and experience. She also lives and works wonderfully in the convergent spaces of mind and spirit, of spirituality and community, of the academy and the practice of ministry. We welcome her with excitement and great anticipation."

Before joining SMU, Heath was an assistant professor and director of the doctor of ministry program at Ashland Theological Seminary. An ordained minister, she earlier served as a pastor in the East Ohio Conference of the United Methodist Church. Heath is a graduate of Oakland University, received an M.Div. from Ashland, and earned her Ph.D. in systematic theology from Duquesne University in 2002.

The Duke Divinity School is one of the university's founding schools, with faculty conducting teaching and research in all disciplines of academic theology and a long tradition of intellectual leadership in the church. The Divinity School enrolls students in five master's-level degrees, both professional and academic, and two doctoral programs (Th.D. and D.Min.), as well as a Ph.D. in biblical, historical and theological fields that is jointly administered with the Department of Religious Studies. It also maintains a worldwide network of outreach and service programs.

MORE INFORMATION

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