

THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO'S
Institute for Life Course and Aging is pleased to present

If the State Won't Care, Will the Church? Ambivalence in Religious Programming for Older Adults in Ghana

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**Thursday, February 17, 2022
12:00 pm – 1:00 pm**

[ZOOM LINK](#)

Although African countries are primarily youthful, they are undergoing demographic changes of aging, in which not only are individuals living longer but a greater proportion of the society is comprised of older adults. Because age is a major social category by which societies decide how to distribute power and resources, the growth in the older population can prompt other social reconfigurations, including in governance. However, the Government of Ghana has not responded to what many Ghanaians consider a “crisis of aging,” but rather has promoted a social norm of families providing care. This refusal has occurred despite major expansions in social protection in other areas, such as national health insurance and free secondary education. Religious institutions, on the other hand, have stepped forward in providing programming aimed at older adults, albeit ambivalently and hesitantly. Religious innovations in the care of older adults are significant because they may provide the model for future state policy, and their programs may mount pressure on the state to expand social protection to older adults, as has happened in social protection expansions in other countries. This paper examines why religious institutions in Ghana have become involved in elder care, why that care has taken the form of certain activities, and how those ideas and practices have become known within Ghana as potential solutions to the problems older adults face. It concludes with thoughts about the contradictions and unevenness of (neo)liberal governance in Ghana, in relying on the churches and family in some ways, but expanding social protection significantly in others.

*Dr. Cati Coe is Professor of Anthropology at Rutgers University, and a visiting scholar at the Institute on Globalization and the Human condition at McMaster University during winter 2022. She is the author of the recent published **Changes in Care: Aging, Migration, and Social Class in West Africa** (Rutgers University Press, 2021). She has researched and written widely on West Africa, including on intergenerational relations in Ghanaian transnational families and on African elder care workers in the United States.*

This seminar will be recorded and can be accessed within a week
on our [YouTube Channel](#) under [Seminars Playlist](#).

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