

American Academy of Religion  
Annual Business Meeting  
Marriott Marquis  
Sunday, Nov. 22 2015  
7:30-8:30

**1. Call to Order: President Tweed (7:35)**

**2. Approval of 2014 Minutes**

**Motion: to approve the Minutes, as corrected, of the 2014 Business Meeting**

Passed Unanimously

**3. Memorial List**

A moment of silence was held in the memory of the following members who passed away in 2015:

Edward Ian Bailey  
Marcus J. Borg  
Irvin J. Borowsky  
Karen McCarthy Brown  
William Cassidy  
Austin B. Creel  
William E. Farley  
James W. Fowler  
Rita M. Gross  
Martin Riesebrodt  
Robert V. Smith  
Owen C. Thomas  
Michelle Tooley  
Anthony C. Yu

**4. President's Report**

President Tweed reported on the year's accomplishments, and commended the work of the AAR Board, Committees, and the AAR staff in Atlanta. While recognizing the AAR faces challenges in terms of sea changes in higher education and impacts on membership revenue, he expressed gratitude for AAR's overall financial health, citing creative cost-savings like moving one of the board meetings from a face to face format to a day-long conference call, and new revenue sources, like the Luce Foundation's grant to support faculty fellows at the U.S. Department of State.

Tweed reported on the year's accomplishments in terms of three headings.

a) Policies and Public Statements

- A policy and procedures/flow chart for how and when the AAR issues public statements
- AAR Statement on Academic Freedom revised after extensive consultation with committees and membership
- Policy on Sexual Harassment revisited and in process of revision
- Statement drafted by our Contingent Faculty Task Force on Responsible Institutional

#### Practices involving Contingent Faculty

- Guidelines for Responsible Research Practices and Standards of Professional Conduct for AAR Members.
- Letters to a range university administrations about violation of academic freedom concerns or closure of religious studies departments.
- Letter of concern protesting a proposed Georgia law that threatened our commitment to treat all members, and all annual meeting attendees, fairly.
- Letter of concern about a Texas law allowing concealed weapons in classrooms, endangering students and constraining academic freedom.

#### b) Governance and Procedural Innovations:

- Began to post draft policy statements on website line and solicit on-line comments
- Presidential appointments were made with careful measures of consultation
  - Attended to all markers of diversity: institutional setting, career stage, race, sexuality, and gender and, of course, who is best for a given committee
  - 58% of appointments were women; 42% were non-white
- Appointed new editor for JAAR
- Conducted a comprehensive review and renewed contract of Exec. Director Jack Fitzmier
- Began a Long Term Plan, hired Theisen Consulting, and instilling a culture of planning

#### c) Membership Services

- Created member profiles to understand our membership better
- A Membership Task Force guided us to improving how we attract, serve, retain members.
- Rethinking *Religious Studies News* and launched a Publications Task Force
- No longer charge Graduate Students to use Employment Services
- New Travel grant program: 25 grants of \$500 underrepresented minorities, contingent faculty, and the like
- Applied Religious Studies Working Group to help connect graduate students with employment outside traditional academic jobs
- Created new Mentoring Program: 65 mentors and 65 mentees met at Annual Meeting

### 5. Executive Director's report

Jack Fitzmier affirmed that AAR has accomplished much in the past year, highlighting a number:

- “Institutional nimbleness” created by policy and procedural and technical innovations equipped AAR to respond issue in two days a statement concerning the rising Anti-Muslim rhetoric and to send email blast to attendees
- AAR staff is once again back to closer levels prior to the 2008 downturn.
- Luce-supported AAR program placing religious studies scholars as Fellows at the State Department to enhance the religious studies knowledge informing policy and international relations.
  - Two fellows per year for three years, with hope of renewal.
  - Thus far, program has received 47 applicants, of which AAR sent 9 to State
  - Subject to security clearance, there should be 4 Fellows in ensuing year.
  - Extended prison chaplains program to include military chaplains.

- Seeking support to bring more chaplains to AAR for this.
- Total Attendance at AAR/SBL Annual Meeting: 9923

## 6. Treasurers Report

Jack Fitzmier presented the Treasurer's report for Linda Moody, who could not attend.

- a) Highlights from Statement of Revenue and Expense (copies circulated)
  - Two main sources of revenue: membership and annual meeting
    - some decline in membership, particularly student members;
    - strong annual meeting attendance
    - Luce Grant
  - Changed credit card processes and saved \$40,000
  - All books have been audited, and we have a strong financial position
- b) Highlights from Balance Sheet (copies circulated)
  - total assets exceeding \$11m
  - Major asset is AAR portion of the Luce Center, the offices on Emory's campus.
  - Most AAR securities are negative screened for socially responsible investment
- c) Bulk of Investments are unrestricted, so resources are available to seed new programs and initiatives that arise out of the Long Term Plan process.
- d) IRS Form 990 has been filed
  - Non-Profit best practices is when 75% of resources go to programming
  - AAR reports 91% of resources to go programming

## 7. Vote on Proposed Changes to Bylaws

Jack Fitzmier introduced a four page memo with Proposed Changes to By Laws that used strikethroughs for changed language and that had been posted on website thirty days in advance of the meeting in accordance with the by laws. Copies were circulated at the Annual Business Meeting. The proposed changes were recommended by the Board after a process of reflection on four years of experience under the current by law changes, which involved some considerable changes to the Board structure. In general, AAR governance has become, under those changes, more nimble, more accountable, and more democratic, but there were a number of kinks, and the proposed changes, address those.

The voting on the provisions of the four page memo were made *ad seriatum*, as follows:

### **Motion 2: to amend the by-laws as follows: Composition and Staffing of the Program Committee**

Article VII. Committees of the Board and Working Groups

Part I. Committees of the Board

Section 5. Program Committee.

**Section 5. The Program Committee.** The Program Unit Director chairs the Program Committee. Membership includes the Vice President (~~ex officio~~), one At-Large Director, and ~~six~~ **ten** other AAR non-director Members, ~~at least four of whom~~ **all** of whom must have had significant program Unit experience. The committee shall meet ~~in the fall~~ after the Annual Meeting, and once at another point during the year. ~~The Executive Director shall staff this committee.~~ **The Director of Meetings, the Executive Director, and other members of the AAR executive staff, as necessary, shall staff this committee.**

Passed unanimously

**Motion 3: to amend the by-laws as follows: Restructuring of the Board's Planning Functions**

Article VII. Committees of the Board and Working Groups

Part I. Committees of the Board

Section 6. Planning Committee.

~~**Section 6. Planning Committee.** The Planning Committee identifies strategic goals and objectives, develops time lines and action plans, and measures progress of plans. This committee is chaired by the Executive Director. Membership includes the Regions Director, Student Director, one At-Large Director, and two AAR non-director Members.~~

**Section 7. 6. Appointment.** Each fall the Executive Committee will prepare a slate of candidates to fill open positions (for the following year) on Committees of the Board. This slate will be brought to the entire Board for its consideration. After discussion, when the final slate has been formulated, the Board will vote to appoint the slate of candidates to Committees of the Board.

Passed Unanimously

**Motion 4: to amend the by-laws as follows: Changes to the Governance of the Regions**

Article VIII. Regional Groups

Section 2. Governance.

**Section 2. Governance.** Each Board-established regional group is subject to the authority of the Board of Directors. Each regional group shall maintain a record of its activities, and the ~~Regional Coordinator~~ **Regionally Elected Coordinator** shall submit an Annual Report with financial statements to the Executive Director. ~~Only current Members who reside within the geographical area of the regional group may hold office or vote in regional elections.~~ Regional directors and officers must be AAR members. ~~and must be members of that region.~~ **Any member of a region may hold office or vote in that region's elections.** The regional student director must be a student in good standing at a school located within that region **at the time of election.** ~~Only members of a region may vote in that region's elections.~~

## Passed Unanimously

### **Motion 5: to amend the by-laws as follows: The Role, Title and Selection of the Member Advocate Director**

Article V. Board of Directors

Section 6. Member Advocate Director.

**Section 6. ~~Member Advocate~~ Status Committee Director.** The Member Advocate Director shall lead the Board's efforts to communicate effectively with the membership AAR's "Status" Committees, and shall help to administer accountability and accessibility policies that may be adopted by the Board. ~~The Member Advocate Director shall annually review the Board's efforts to be responsive to groups that seek to influence and contest its policies, and make recommendations, when necessary, concerning how the AAR can best reach out to its members.~~ The Member Advocate Status Committee Director shall be appointed by the Executive Committee for ~~serve~~ a term of three years and may not serve an additional consecutive term.

2. Regarding the title of this position, these additional bylaws will need to reflect the new title:

Article V. Board of Directors

Section 2. Composition.

**Section 2. Composition.** The Board of Directors consists of the President, President-Elect, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Student Director, Program Unit Director, Regions Director, ~~Member Advocate~~ Status Committee Director, and three at-large Directors. In addition, the Executive Director serves as a nonvoting member of the Board. The Board may excuse the Executive Director from being present in a meeting when it discusses matters relating to performance and employment of the Executive Director.

Article VII. Committees of the Board and Working Groups

Part I. Committees of the Board

Section 4. Nominations Committee.

**Section 4. Nominations Committee.** The Nominations Committee shall present to the Board at least two candidates to run for each AAR Director position elected by vote of the membership. The criteria for nomination include distinction in scholarship, teaching, and service to the Academy. The Committee selects candidates so as to bring the rich diversity of the AAR membership to the Board of Directors. The Committee shall be composed of five members: three Members who are not on the Board of Directors, the immediate past president of the Academy, and the ~~Member Advocate~~ Status Committee Director. The three non-director Members shall serve a term of three years and may not serve additional consecutive terms. The Nominations Committee may also recommend to the Board policies and procedures concerning elections to leadership positions. The Executive

Director shall staff this committee.

3. Regarding the selection of this Director, the following bylaw will need to be changed:

Article V. Board of Directors

Section 8. Election

**Section 8. Election.** Except for the President, President-Elect, and Executive Director, ~~and Member Advocate~~, Directors are elected by majority vote of the Members eligible to vote, and they serve until their successors take office. Their terms of office begin at the close of the meeting at which their election is reported. Election shall be by written or electronic ballot, distributed to all Members eligible to vote at the address on file at the AAR executive office. The Executive Director shall manage the election and report the results to the membership. The President and President-Elect succeed to office as provided in these bylaws.

### **Passed Unanimously**

With respect to the Member Advocate/Status Election in the near term, since the current Member Advocate has completed her term, the new election process could not have been in place prior to the amendment of the by-laws. In the transition, a hybrid process will ensue. The Nominating Committee will put together a slate from those recommended by the Chairs of the Status of Committees and present the slate to the Board from which the Board shall make the appointment. It was also noted that the AAR clarify in its materials that all AAR leaders serve as ombudspersons, and to clarify a more horizontal and accessible way to receive complaints.

### **8. 2015 Election Result**

David Gushee, Vice President

Jonathan Sarna, Treasurer

Grace Ji-Sun Kim, At Large Director

Ardy Bass, Regions Director\*

Bhakti Mamtora, Student Director

*\* Correction [June 9, 2016]: The AAR executive office mistakenly listed Ardy Bass' new position as At Large Director. Our sincere apologies to Dr. Bass for our error.*

### **9. New Business**

There was no New Business

### **10. Adjournment (8:30a.m)**

As he was widely recognized for his service, President Tweed adjourned the meeting and passed the gavel to President Serene Jones.