

M I N U T E S
Annual Business Meeting
American Academy of Religion
San Antonio, TX
Nov. 20, 2016

1. Call to Order

President Serene Jones called the Annual Business Meeting to order at 7:44. A quorum of twenty five was reached by the time of the Memorial List.

2. Approval of the 2015 Minutes

Motion I. to approve the Minutes of the 2015 Annual Business Meeting

Unanimously Approved

3. Memorial List

A moment of silence was held in the memory of the following members who passed away in 2016.

Nikki Bado
Eugene B. Borowitz
Guy Hammond
Jacob Neusner
James Anthony Noel
Anne Patrick
Charles Ryerson

4. President's Report

President Jones cited a wonderful year for the Academy, with its centerpiece a strategic planning process led by the Board but broadly involving membership and leadership of the AAR that will this winter result in a finalized Strategic Plan. The AAR has retained the Theisen consulting firm to assist in a process that involved member surveys, stakeholder interviews, focus groups, studies of comparable ACLS organizations, external assessments of technology and communications, and a series of Board of Directors exercises to flesh out Mission, Values, Goals and Key Strategies. President Jones remarked on the considerable consensus there had been around the mission and values of the organization. Highlights of the plan involve engaging AAR members and the public beyond the Annual Meeting, to retool to better address the full range of AAR members, including especially contingent faculty, and to make the AAR more of a go-to place for the public understanding of religion. Also noted was the important affirmation of the AAR's concern to support and advocate for members made vulnerable in the current political situation after the 2016 presidential election, and the BoD's refining of its new process for receiving and vetting requests for public statements and actions. The AAR is moving forward with a sense of focus, commitment to diversity and inclusion and transparency.

President Jones concluded her remarks by warmly thanking Jack Fitzmier for his near decade of service as Executive Director.

5. Executive Director's Report

Jack Fitzmier gave a brief report about the wonderful shape of the AAR, financially, in terms of its programming and annual meeting, and in terms of its board and leadership. Consistent with other ACLS organizations, there has been an overall decline in membership, but the numbers have largely stabilized. The 2016 Annual Meeting will have had about 9400 in attendance, involving 1400 sessions. For these and other success, Fitzmier thanked the AAR staff, particularly Robert Puckett and CFO Deborah Minor.

6. Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Jonathan Sarna presented the Treasurer's Report. He affirmed the overall healthy financial position of the AAR calling attention to the positive number between net operating revenues and expenses. Compared with the previous year, the AAR is down in terms of revenue, largely because of grant income, but Sarna cited wise budgeting and spending in anticipation of same. In terms of the Balance Sheet, Sarna underscored that the Line of Credit had been fully paid and disappeared, and pointed to the very strong bottom line.

7. 2016 Election Results

Laurie Patton, Vice President
Kathryn McClymond, Program Director
Leela Prasad, At Large Director

8. New Business

There was no new business.

9. Adjournment

President Jones adjourned the meeting, and passed the gavel to the incoming AAR President, Eddie Glaude, Jr.