

AAR Annual Business Meeting Denver, CO/November 18, 2018

Call to Order

A quorum of 25 having been established, outgoing President David Gushee opened the meeting at 7:38 a.m. 40 members attended, including all Board members who were able to attend the conference.

Memorial List

President Gushee read the Memorial List to recognize members who died in 2018: Alan B. Anderson, Katie G. Cannon, James H. Cone, J. Harold Ellens, Elinor W. Gadon, Luis Oscar Gomez, Luis Leon, Saba Mahmood, Gail O'Day, Aaron Panken, Jonathan Z. Smith.

President's Report

President Gushee identified the search for new Executive Director as the most important work of the organization during his presidency. He welcomed Alice Hunt and thanked recent past Executive Director, Jack Fitzmier, for his service.

President Gushee also observed that the long-range plan that the board has worked on for several years has moved from concept to action under Alice Hunts's leadership. Among the most important outcomes are: the re-statement of values, the elevation of the public understanding of religion as part of AAR's core mission; and an overall emphasis on being a year-round organization that provides services to members, particularly in providing opportunities for professional flourishing. The AAR will promote the importance of sustained membership, too. He also recognized the work of the Publishing Task Force, especially citing the preparation of the **Guidelines for Evaluating Digital Scholarship** that have been approved

and will be distributed to members. Further articulation of professional policies and procedures will be refined under the leadership of Laurie Patton and Alice Hunt.

Executive Director's Report

Alice Hunt thanked all for giving her the opportunity for serving as Executive Director. She thanked Robert Puckett and all staff for their skill and dedication in preparing for and running of the annual meeting. Alice noted the departure of not just former Executive Director Jack Fitzmier but also Steve Herrick and Soraya Shahrak; Debra Minor will retire in the spring but will overlap to onboard a new Director for Finance and Administration. New hires among AAR staff include Marion Pierre as Program Specialist and Marchell Jackson as Events Manager. She thanked the board for their wisdom and engagement and recognized, in particular, the departing board members. She singled out for recognition those who served on the Publishing Task Force (chair Ted Vial, Tim Beal, Daniel Boscaljon, Christopher Cantwell, Anthony Cerulli, Kimberly Rae Connor, Lynn Clark, Cynthia Eller, Willie Jennings, Kathryn Lofton, John Nemec, Laurie Patton, Kristian Peterson, Jeri Wieringa, Diane Winston, Sarah Levine, and Jack Fitzmier) as well as the Professional Conduct Task Force—(chair Su Yon Pak, Kecia Ali, Megan Goodwin, Bobbi Patterson, David Sanchez, Randall Styers, Emilie Townes, Melissa Wilcox, and Jack Fitzmier). She noted the statement begins with values and sets high expectations for member conduct. She also recognized the many ways in which staff has supported her priorities, including addressing staff culture, developing a mission-aligned organizational chart, completing a budget sweep, clarifying the MOU with Emory, and completing the branding work. She concluded by affirming that our membership is our best asset—a treasure trove of content—and because of this excellence in the academic study of religion the AAR has an obligation to promote the public understanding of religions. She noted that she is currently working with staff and board members to prioritize the initial actions that the AAR can

take to support this new and important mission and also underscore the idea of the AAR as a 365-24-7 organization.

Treasurer's Report

Jonathan Sarna described the current state of the budget and noted growth in the investment resources. Although a slight deficit appears for the current year, it is offset by investment gains; also, the deficit is the result of one-time expenses. Jonathan expressed his concern about the declining membership numbers and urged us to develop ways to slow and reverse this process to sustain resources. He thanked Deborah Minor for her work and pointed out that AAR's financial position, in relationship to other learned societies, is very strong.

2018 Election Results

President Gushee honored departing Board members Jonathan Sarna, Treasurer, Kecia Ali, Status Committee Director, and Grace Ji-Sun Kim, At-Large Director and welcomed new members: Amir Hussain, At-Large Director, Zayn Kassam, Status Committee Director, Marla Frederick, Vice President and Randall Styers, Treasurer. President Gushee described the nominations process and efforts to make it more transparent and inclusive in giving members opportunities to serve. He also reminded us that nominations for Board positions will remain open until December 5.

New Business

President David Gushee described the changes to AAR By-Laws and noted that the Board had approved them at the September 2018 meeting. He noted the changes signal a change in ethos, not just nomenclature. When he called for comments, one member noted the difficulties of negotiating the current political climate with respect to religious scholarship and expressed the hope that the AAR continue its commitment to protecting the political convictions of the membership.

Motion 1—Changes to the Bylaws as amended. Passed with a 2/3 quorum of votes.

President Gushee concluded the meeting by inviting Laurie Patton, the incoming President, to the podium to gavel the meeting to a close, which she did after giving thanks for his leadership and service to the AAR.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kimberly Rae Connor
Secretary