



November 21, 2025  
Board of Directors  
Hynes Convention Center, Boston

Meeting called to order at 4 p.m. (President Leela Prasad)

Present: Keri Day (At-large Director); Ann Gleig (Program Committee Director); Ristina Gooden (Student Director); Leela Prasad (President); Patrick Reyes (Contingent Faculty Director) ; Nikia Robert (Treasurer); Kathleen Sands (Secretary); Laurel Schneider (Pres. Elect); Darla Schumm (At-Large Director); Angela Sims (Vice-President); Matthew Vaughan (Regions Director); Heather White (Status Committees Director).

Ex Officio - Claudia Schippert; Nichol  Franklin; Elizabeth Hardcastle.

**I. Motion 1: to approve agenda**

Approved by acclamation.

**II. Motion 2: to accept minutes of June 2025 meeting**

Approved by acclamation.

**III. Re: alleged ICE plans to raid houses of worship in the Boston area** (Claudia Schippert)

We have created an open forum on this issue, for tomorrow at 4 pm. Hynes Convention Center 208.

**Motion 3: to accept draft statement objecting to raids on houses of worship and affirming constitutional freedoms for immediate posting on the AAR website.**

Seconded and approved unanimously.

**IV. President's Report** - Prasad (see full report in basecamp)

President Prasad expresses deep appreciation for the AAR board and staff with whom she has worked this year.

Experiences and insights from this presidential year:

- Conversations with AAR leaders in connection with our fundraising campaign. The campaign was moderately successful and also yielded important comments and suggestions.
- Presidential appointees - 43 of these were made, with attention to diversity across several registers.

- Religious Studies in public - this year we have made important progress in becoming a trusted public source on religion and religious studies, through our webinars and public statements.
- Department closures. We are being proactive and strategic about this, not only writing letters on behalf of EC but also opening broad discussion among members through webinars. This work will be continued through a presidential plenary at this meeting.
- Standing by our core values - the central and enduring lesson of this year.

**V. ED report** on period from June meeting to present (Claudia Schippert).

- June meetings. June 2025 meeting had 333 registrants, lower than hoped. However, it was very international and diverse, and the post-meeting survey showed high level of satisfaction. We'll hold another in June 2026, reducing registration fee only \$25 for students, \$50 for members, \$60 for non-members. We are hoping that this will increase the registration numbers.
- This meeting: 7,500 AAR and SBL registrants altogether (the AAR's portion is a little larger).
- AAR membership: At present, 6,125. Thanks to our staff, the data has been cleaned and communication with members greatly improved. It continues to be the case that about a third of our members are students, and another third are tenured or tenure track. We now have 12 institutional members.
- Job Board. We are replacing our job board and hope to have a new system in place in early 2026. We are doing this in conjunction with the SBL because many jobs cross over.
- Year-round programming. This is going strong, with fall Fridays and many webinars. Applied religious studies mentoring has increased in this period.
- Communications. We are emailing four newsletters each month; also use social media.
- Publications. JAAR is finally completely up to date, due partly to a new publication company. *Reading Religion* has greatly increased its readership, partly due to offering film reviews and essays on books. (see reports of JAAR and Reading Religion in Basecamp).
- Grant-funded projects. American Buddhism project got \$25 K from Luce. AAR is also involved in a project called Mapping Publicly Engaged Religion, funded by Luce and housed at ACLS. We'll hear more about this at the National Humanities reception. Claudia wrote two grant proposals that did not get approved (but were labor-intensive); now writing a grant application to Lilly and also seeking an ACLS grant that would enable us to learn more about the needs and precarities of our members.
- America 250. We also working with the National Museum of America on this. We will host four webinars this spring, one each month from February through May.
- Relations with other scholarly societies and initiatives. a) IAHR - Claudia went to their conference in Poland. b) ACLS - continues to be an important resource for us. c) ATLA (organization of religion and theology librarians). This organization buys books and therefore might effect an increase in the number of exhibitors at the AM. We and the SBL now have a MOU with them (see basecamp). d) Honors Society TAK: our data-sharing collaboration with them begins in the spring. We are still finalizing terms.
  - e) Templeton grant to Barbara McGraw will bring prison religious professionals to the AAR and pair with with scholars to learn more about religions, especially NRMs.
- Awards and Grants have re-started following the pause (See basecamp for report).

**Motion 4:** from the Executive Committee, to appoint AAR member and former president Mayra Rivera to the Government and Leadership Development Committee and to appoint AAR member Donovan Schaefer as Facilitator for the AAR's Professional Conduct Procedures.  
Seconded and approved unanimously.

**Motion 5:** to accept proposed revisions to the AAR book awards program, to include changes to the relevant juries' names and charges to reflect the revisions. (See basecamp)  
Seconded and approved unanimously.

#### **VI. Academic Labor and Contingent Faculty** (Patrick Reyes, chair).

The committee is reframing its recommendations in terms of new questions, such as: what does full employment look like for members of the AAR? what does flourishing look like? how do contingent faculty contribute to student learning? Between now and March, they will create a first draft, discuss with SBL academic committee and work toward final draft for the BoD meeting in June.

#### **VII. Program Committee report** - Ann Gleig, chair.

Proliferation problem. The Program Committee members needed more info on why this is a problem (see letter to program committee in basecamp). Actions taken so far: Tier 4 and 5 units have lost one session; seminars get only one session; units are asked to follow the rules and not to use special sessions just to get an extra session, and to consider merging (no takers yet on the last).

In January 2026, the Program Committee will pause its usual evaluation of 5-year unit reviews and consideration of new program proposals. Instead, the committee will use its meeting to streamline its measurements for program review, removing unnecessary metrics, and making standards clearer and more objective.

#### **VIII. Treasurer 's Report** - Nikia Robert.

The Finance committee has identified its three goals as transparency, planning (of expenses) and revenue generation. The Committee also suggests a treasurer's corner in our newsletter.

Claudia notes that our fundraising goal is \$70K and we now have \$41K. The campaign has been extended to December.

#### **IX. Awards revisions** (Claudia Schippert)

**Motion 6:** to change the name of the Students Awards Jury to the Dissertation Grants Jury.  
Seconded and approved unanimously.

#### **X. Bylaws changes** (Claudia Schippert)

**Motion 7:** to present the following proposed changes to the members for a vote at the June Business Meeting. Note that these additions do not change but only codify our practice.

a) Addition to Article VII, Part I, section 3, regarding the charge of the Governance and Leadership Development Committee. "The Committee may also develop and present to the Board procedures, as

relevant, to identify, recruit, and train potential leaders at all levels of the Academy. The Committee shall be actively involved in programming aimed at developing leadership skills for a wide variety of AAR members."

b) Addition to Article VII, Part I, Section 5. "For the Program Committee, the Executive Committee will prepare a slate of candidates to be elected to fill open non-Board of Directors Member positions (for the following year). The Program Unit Chairs, Program Committee, and Board of Directors may nominate Members who serve or have served on AAR Program Units. The Executive Committee will determine the slate with at least two candidates for each open AAR non-Board of Director Member position. Election shall be by electronic ballot, distributed to Members serving as current Program Unit Chairs at the email address on file at the AAR Office. The Executive Director shall manage the election and report the results."

Seconded and approved unanimously.

XI. **New Presidential Theme** (Laurel Schneider). The presidential theme for 2026 is imagining futures in a period that is not "business as usual."

#### **Other business**

BoD attendance at events during this annual meeting (see list of events in Basecamp)

Meeting adjourned at 6 p.m.

Respectfully submitted

Kathleen Sands

Secretary to the Board