

## CTS CONVENTION REPORT

### Report of the Sixty-Eighth Annual Convention of the College Theology Society June 2–4, 2022

**M**EMBERS of the College Theology Society (CTS) grappled with the theme “Why We Can’t Wait: Racism in the Church” at the Sixty-Eighth Annual CTS Convention held virtually from Thursday, June 2, to Saturday, June 4, 2022. Two-hundred forty-four people registered for and participated in the convention, which was held in conjunction with the meeting of the National Association of Baptist Professors of Religion (NABPR). The call for papers for the conference, organized by cochairs Catherine Punsalan Manlimos (Seattle University), Tracy Sayuki Tiemeier (Loyola Marymont University), and Elisabeth T. Vasko (Duquesne University) issued this challenge: “Theologians and scholars of religion must take on the difficult process of self-examination and articulation of complicity in the sin of racism, as well as work in all areas of thought and practice in order to develop a faith defined by racial justice. We cannot wait.”

Members of the CTS and NABPR presented ninety papers with eleven paper responses, and six participants in two panel discussions across forty-five sectional meetings. In addition, the convention included three plenary presentations and the NABPR presidential address. The opening plenary panel, presented Thursday evening, considered “Whiteness, White Privilege, and the Academy” and featured contributions from SimonMary Asease Ahiokhai (University of Portland), Karen B. Enriquez (Loyola Marymount University), and Karen Teel (University of San Diego). On Friday morning, emilie m townes of Vanderbilt University spoke on “Recentering the Theological Canon: The Future of Theological Education.” Steve Harmon, Gardner-Webb University School of Divinity (North Carolina), gave the NABPR presidential address “Interdependency without Imperialism: Neville Callam’s Ecumenical Contributions” on Saturday morning. On Saturday afternoon, the theme “From ‘I Can’t Breathe’ to the

Breath of Life: Racism and the Church, Past and Present” was considered in a plenary session with panel contributions from Shawnee M. Daniels-Sykes (Mount Mary University, Wisconsin), Cecilia A. Moore (University of Dayton), and Melissa Pagán (Mount St. Mary’s University, California).

President Brian Flanagan convened the society’s annual business meeting Saturday morning. After welcoming the assembled members of the society, he shared a recent initiative for the society to support the development of caucuses made up of society members interested in particular issues. The current caucus groups are: LGBTQ+ Scholars, BIPOC Scholars, Religious Studies Scholars, Disabled and Neurodiverse Scholars, and Contingent Faculty. Then Flanagan presented a proposed amendment to the CTS Constitution from the Committee on De-Centering Whiteness and the Board of Directors for discussion. The substance of the amendment aims at structuring the society’s antiracism efforts and making its own governance structures more intentionally equitable. The proposal was discussed, voted on, and approved and is reproduced here in full:

**Proposal:** As proposed by the Ad Hoc Committee and by the Board of Directors, we propose the following amendments to our CTS Constitution:

1. The inclusion of the following statement on diversity in Article II, which defines the purposes of the Society in Article II, Purposes, of the CTS Constitution:
  - o “From a deep sense of its catholicity, which sees diversity as fundamental to unity, the College Theology Society values differences of religion, race, age, ability, culture, gender, sexuality, and national origin. Members of the Society commit ourselves to nonviolent communication, diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice within our interactions, policies, and structures.”
2. The creation of Officers for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion with constitutive roles in the governance of the Society
  - o The proposal would establish **three** new positions: a DEI Officer-Elect, a DEI Officer, and a DEI Senior Officer;
  - o Individuals would be elected by the membership and would serve for 3 years, rotating successively in each of the three roles;
  - o The DEI Officer-Elect would serve as a non-voting member of the Board of Directors; the DEI Officer and DEI Senior Officer would serve as voting members of the Board;
  - o These Officers would also aid governance in other areas of the Society: The DEI Officer on a newly established Standing Committee on DEI (see

below); and the DEI Senior Officer on the nominations and executive committees.

3. The creation of a Standing Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion to promote mentoring, recruiting, and programming initiatives within the Society
  - o As distinct from the above Officers' focus on contributing to CTS governance, this committee would focus on supporting and recruiting members from historically marginalized or minoritized groups;
  - o The Chair of this committee, elected by its members, would also serve as a non-voting member of the Board.

Vice President Julia Brumbaugh (Regis University, Colorado) announced the election results and new appointees to committees. Joann Vento (Georgian University) was elected president-elect, Nicole Reibe (Loyola University Maryland) was elected treasurer, and Craig Ford (St. Norbert's College) and Cristina Lledo Gomez (BBI-The Australian Institute of Theological Education) were elected as new members of the board of directors. Katherine Schmidt (Molloy University) was appointed by the board to serve as the new executive coordinator of digital media. Brumbaugh thanked other CTS members for their willingness to run for office, and she thanked outgoing board members for their generous service. These are: Mary Doak (University of San Diego), past president; Stephen Okey (St. Leo University), who served as treasurer; Dana Dillon (Providence College), who served as the inaugural executive coordinator of digital media; and John Sheveland (Gonzaga University) and Laura Taylor (College of St. Benedict/St. John's University), who served as board members.

Brumbaugh asked for the society to ratify by vote the members of the Nominations and Awards Committees for the upcoming year and thanked members who have concluded their service. Christopher Hadley, SJ (Jesuit School of Theology, Santa Clara) and Anita Houck (St. Mary's College, Indiana) were both confirmed as the members of the Committee on Nominations, and thanks was expressed to Janice Thompson (Kings College) for her completed service. The Awards Committee membership was also ratified, confirming James Bretzke, SJ (John Carroll University), who will serve as chair, together with Christopher Bellitto (Kean University, NJ), Kelly Johnson (University of Dayton), and Mary Roche (Holy Cross College, Massachusetts). Benjamin Peters (University of St. Joseph), the outgoing chair of the Awards Committee, was also thanked. John Sheveland and Laura Taylor, the two outgoing board members, were confirmed as the Resolutions Committee for the upcoming year. There were no resolutions proposed during the last year.

The secretary of the society, George Faithful (Dominican University, California) reported that membership numbers rose significantly (+6.8 percent from a year ago, +23.9 percent from two years ago) with 502 active members. These numbers represent a return to pre-pandemic membership levels (504 in 2019). Faithful also announced that the upcoming year would be his final year of service as secretary and invited members to consider nominations for the position of secretary. Director of Research and Publications Reid Locklin (University of Toronto) shared that the 2022 annual volume, *The Human in a Dehumanizing World: Reexamining Theological Anthropology and Its Implications*, edited by Jessica Coblentz and Daniel P. Horan, OFM, was mailed on or about April 20, 2022.

Treasurer Stephen Okey reported that the society's operating budget was looking good overall, due in part to several years of virtual operations for the CTS. The society currently has a budget surplus of about \$8,800. The 2021 dues increased \$2,475 (9.3 percent) from 2020 and are at this point only down 13 percent from our all-time high of \$33,725 (2018). Costs remain low due to the lack of reimbursements for travel to board meetings and not holding a reception at the American Academy of Religion in 2021. At the time of the convention, dues for 2022 were only \$800 short of 2021. The 2021 convention, the second one held entirely virtually, ran a surplus of nearly \$3,400. By comparison the 2022 convention ran a surplus of \$1,290 due to higher honoraria for plenary speakers and the liturgy. Donations to the Fr. Gerard S. Sloyan Annual Fund for 2022 were \$310 at the time of Okey's report.

*Horizons* editor Elena Procario-Foley, Iona College, reported that during the period June 2021 to May 2022, one volume of *Horizons* (Volume 48, no. 1. and Volume 48, no. 2) was published, with a total of 561 pages, including eleven refereed manuscripts. As of May 4, 2022, there were 107 institutional subscriptions and 7,404 negotiated sales and donation agreements. Additionally, Procario-Foley drew members' attention to the June 2022 editorial essay "Is a Cushite Made in the Image of God?: Christian Visions of Race in Late Antiquity" by Vince Bantu, and she reminded members to use the resources provided by the *Horizons* Cambridge Core website.

Director of Conventions Dan Rober announced that next year's meeting will be at Sacred Heart College (Connecticut) and will consider "Theology and Media(tion): Rendering the Absent Present" in a program coordinated by Stephen Okey (Saint Leo University) and Katherine Schmidt (Molloy University).

Saturday evening included a liturgy that celebrated the Vigil of Pentecost and the CTS Awards Celebration. After the liturgy, CTS president Brian Flanagan presented the society's Presidential Award to NETWORK, the

Washington, DC-based lobby group. Deputy Executive Director and Chief Equity Officer Joan Neal accepted the award on behalf of the fifty-year-old organization. Executive Director Mary Novak and Chief of Staff Sr. Erin Zubal were also present for the award presentation. In his remarks, Flanagan expressed his admiration for NETWORK's work, honoring their "fifty years advocating Catholic social justice through political ministry." Benjamin Peters presented the society's writing awards. Katharine E. Harmon (Marian University) was awarded Best Article for "'Guitar-totin' Nuns and Hand-clappin' Love Songs': How the Implementation of the Vernacular Transformed American Catholic Church Music" in *The Catholic Historian*, vol. 39, no. 3, Summer 2021, pages 79-103. The Best Book Award was given to Sarah Shortall (University of Notre Dame) for *Soldiers of God in a Secular World: Catholic Theology and Twentieth-Century French Politics* (Harvard University Press, 2021). The Susan G. Perry Best Graduate Student Essay was awarded to Jordan Mason from St. Louis University, for "Bodies and Belief: Hildegard of Bingen's Body-Soul Participation in Part One of *Liber Divinorum Operum*." John Sheveland, chair of the teaching committee, awarded the 2022 Monika Helwig Teaching Excellence Award to Gerald Beyer (Villanova University).

Across the convention, members met in person in small local groups, people ran the annual 5k race, and everyone relied on the excellent technical coordination of Dan Rober, Dana Dillon, and Katherine Schmidt. Many thanks to all those whose labor, intelligence, and care contributed to the success of this year's meeting.

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