



July 13, 2020

Dear Friends and Fathers,

Greetings from the OTSA Executive committee. We hope you are well and keeping safe.

Although your executive committee has been rather silent these first few months of this very extraordinary year, we have been busy behind the scenes considering various ways in which OTSA can move forward and act. Included in this letter are a recap of the 2019 Business meeting, and details for the 2020 Fall meeting. The circumstances of the times in which we live have altered how we do things, but not what we do, and why. Looking to construct a fall OTSA meeting that fosters the exchange of ideas, fellowship, and greater connections across the Orthodox academic community, in a way that is safe and accessible for all members, we have decided on conducting the fall meeting virtually, using the ZOOM platform. In addition, we are proposing a Blog Project on the topic of the Church and the Academy, and an in-person Spring 2021 meeting specifically addressing the Social Ethos Document.

1. Recap of 2019 Annual Meeting.

- a. The theme of our 2019 meeting was “Unity in the Church.” A description of the theme, a link to the full program and abstracts of the meeting, along with the link to the Florovsky Lecture by Dr. Paul Gavrilyuk is on the OTSA website here:
<http://www.otsamerica.org/2019-annual-meeting/>
- b. The 2019 Business meeting accomplished the following:
 - i. Approval of the by-laws, in preparation for the incorporation of OTSA in the State of Massachusetts.
 - ii. Reception of the new liaison to the Assembly of Bishops, Bishop Irinej (Dobrijevic´), Serbian Orthodox Church- Eastern America Diocese (bishop@easterndiocese.org). Bishop Irinej attended part of the meeting and raised the possibility of OTSA working more closely with the Assembly of Bishops. He suggested having OTSA work with the Assembly on specific areas of concern, and perhaps holding an annual OTSA meeting at the same time and location as the meeting of the Assembly of Bishops in order to foster greater connections and support between the Church and the academy.
 - iii. We discussed creating topic/interest oriented subgroups that align with the IOTA subgroups. This would foster the discussion on the “local” level of conversations and ideas that can then continue on the international level when IOTA meets. It would link the two in substantive ways. (For more information, see plans for our Fall 2020 meeting, #2 below.)
 - iv. A reminder for dues to be paid. We have been operating at a deficit, and dues are critical (and reasonable). (See #6 below.)

- v. We received the following new members:
 - a. Nathaniel Wood (Associate Member). PhD, Fordham Univ. He is currently Associate Director for the Orthodox Christian Studies Center at Fordham and webmaster for OTSA.
 - b. Emil Salim (Associate Member). PhD in philosophy, Univ. of Arizona. He is currently interested in Orthodox theology and spirituality.
 - c. Nicholas Kamas (Full Member). PhD, Notre Dame Medieval Institute. His work focuses on the conflict between Eastern and Western Christianity.
 - d. Geoffrey Ready (Full Member). DMin, Trinity College, Univ. of Toronto. He is co-director of the Orthodox School of Theology at Trinity College. His area of expertise is in Orthodox theology, focusing on liturgical and sacramental theology.
 - vi. New officers: Teva Regule, President; Fr. John Jillions, Vice President; Helen Creticos Theodoropoulos, Secretary; Fr. Gabriel Rochelle, Treasurer.
2. **Plan for Annual Fall Meeting 2020:** Date: Nov. 12- 14, 2020, Thursday afternoon through Saturday afternoon. Location: Virtual, via ZOOM. We are looking for ways to innovatively use the Zoom platform to not only offer large group lectures, presentations and discussion but also to facilitate small group conversations, dialogue around shared interests, and social as well as professional interconnections. This year's theme is Theological Anthropology. We ask for papers and panel presentations that explore this theme, including, but not limited to, discussion of the following ways people identify who is human and who is "other": race, ethnicity, gender, social and/or economic status, and ideology.
- Requirements for the proposals for the papers and panels include an abstract of less than 250 words and an abbreviated CV of the presenter(s). The papers are allocated a 20-minute time slot, with 10 minutes for Q&A. The **deadline for the proposals is Sept. 15, 2020**. Please send the proposals to the OTSA secretary, Helen Theodoropoulos, at secretary@otsamerica.org or helen60076@yahoo.com.
3. **The Church and the Academy blog project- supporting academic freedom:** Emerging from discussion of the problems of academic freedom around the Orthodox world at our last meeting, and also from ongoing events, we invite members to submit short essays on the topic. These will be posted on the OTSA web site. While the authors of these blog posts would be known to the editor, his/her identity could be confidential if requested in order to enable honest expression. Members should submit short essays (<1000 words) on this theme **by Sept. 1, 2020** to secretary@otsamerica.org. We are looking to collaborate with Public Orthodoxy on this, with them also posting these guest blogs (subject to their vetting process).
4. **Tentative Spring 2021 meeting on Social Ethos Document:** Recognizing the need for substantive examination and discussion of the document "For the Life of the World. Towards a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church," we are planning an in-person meeting for Spring 2021, possibly in connection with Fordham Univ., to address this document. More details to follow.

5. **We would like to recognize and highlight new publications by our members.** Please send to the secretary information about recently published volumes. We note the following:
- *Divine Guidance: Lessons for Today From the World of Early Christianity*, by the Rev. John Jillions Oxford University Press: 2020. For an interview, see <http://easternchristianbooks.blogspot.com/2020/03/john-jillions-on-gods-guidance-in-world.html>.
 - *Maternal Body: A Theology of Incarnation from the Christian East*, by Carrie Frederick Frost. Paulist Press: 2019. For a review of this work, see <https://iota-web.org/2020/06/29/carrie-frederick-frost-maternal-body-reviewed-by-helen-creticos-theodoropoulos/>
 - *On Christian Leadership: The Letters of Alexander Schmemmann and Georges Florovsky (1947-1955)* by Paul Gavrilyuk. SVS Press: 2020.
6. **Please attend to submitting your dues.** We are operating at a deficit and the need is great. You can pay online at <https://www.otsamerica.org/pay-dues/>. If you prefer, you can pay by check; please contact our Treasurer, Fr. Gabriel Rochelle, for further information: gabrielcroch@aol.com. Please note that any member who has not paid their dues for three (3) consecutive years is considered inactive and can be removed from membership. However, we would much rather keep you involved in the society! So, please pay your dues! Please also consider contributing to the Florovsky Fund.
- Thank you for your consideration and contribution.**

Respectfully submitted,

Teva Regule, President

Helen Creticos Theodoropoulos, Secretary.