



20 December 2020

Dear Fathers and Friends

Greetings from the OTSA Executive Committee. We are thankful and pleased to share with you that those who were able to attend our Annual Meeting this year expressed thanks “for designing and implementing such a wonderful conference”... “such a rich and engaging meeting”... and “the OTSA conference was fantastic; you all really pulled off something wonderful in spite/because of the technology!”

Annual Meeting: On November 12-14, 2020, OTSA members gathered for our first *virtual* Annual Meeting, and the first Florovsky lecture in webinar format. The extraordinary circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated creative thinking in running a meeting that kept members safe but still enabled us to engage in meaningful discussion and social connection.

The theme of the meeting was *Theological Anthropology*, with challenging and thoughtful papers that clustered around the areas of spiritual life, theosis, moral action, gender and human rights, racism, disability, and embodied identity. Several of the papers will be posted shortly to the OTSA website. For a more detailed summary of the meeting, a list of the papers presented along with abstracts, and a few screenshots, please click here: <https://www.otsamerica.net/2020-annual-meeting/>



Florovsky Lecture: This year, the Very Rev. Fr. Michael Plekon, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus, Sociology, Religion and Culture, The City University of New York-Baruch College offered the Florovsky Lecture via webinar format. He spoke on “Community as Church, Church as Community: Death and Resurrection in the Parish Today.” An extended and lively question and answer session followed his remarks. Attendance was significantly higher than usual, and, per our mission, included many members of the public. You can view the lecture on the OTSA Annual Meeting web page or directly here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UwsJWjPV7GU&feature=youtu.be>

Business Meeting: At our Annual Business Meeting, we reviewed the many initiatives undertaken by OTSA in 2020, discussed the Assembly of Bishop’s new proposed structure for its relationship with Orthodox associations including OTSA, and were very pleased to welcome nine new members. Let us briefly introduce these new members to you:

1. Philip Dorroll received his PhD in Religion from Emory University. He is Associate Professor of Religion at Wofford College in Spartanburg, SC, with a focus in Islamic theology, Orthodox Theology, and Orthodox Christian-Muslim relations.
2. Bohdan Hladio is an Orthodox Priest active in the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Canada, serving in many capacities, offering a popular column, and active in inter-Orthodox and ecumenical projects.
3. Sarah Riccardi-Swartz recently completed her PhD in Anthropology from New York University, and her work sits at the intersection of sociocultural anthropology and Orthodox Theology. Her multiple articles reflect interests and expertise that range from fields as diverse (but interrelated) as digital studies, globalization, poverty, disability, and gender and sexuality.
4. Jeffrey S. Lamp received his PhD in New Testament Studies from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, and an M.S. in Environmental Science from Oklahoma State University. Both fields are represented in his work at Oral Roberts University, Tulsa OK, where he is Professor of New Testament and Instructor of Environmental Science.
5. Elias (Elliott) Dorham is currently a DMin candidate at St. Vladimir’s Theological Seminary and is a Deacon in the Greek Melkite Catholic Church. He seeks to engage the broader Orthodox academic arena with the voice of pastoral experience. (Associate Member)
6. Claire Koen is pursuing her PhD in Judaism and Christianity in Antiquity from Fordham University. She is hoping to expand her participation in Orthodox academic and community life. (Associate Member: pre-ABD)
7. Philip Seeton is Instructor in Theology at Newman University, Wichita, KS and a Roman Catholic priest who serves an Eastern Catholic parish. His classes include Eastern Christian history and spirituality, and he hopes to expand his understanding and connection with the Orthodox community and faith. (Associate Member)
8. David Smith received his PhD in New Testament studies from Duke Divinity School, and is currently visiting Assistant Professor of New Testament at Duke. An Anglican, David hopes to foster relations among Orthodox, Catholics, Anglicans, and the wider Christian world. (Associate Member)
9. Gabrielle Thomas received her PhD in Historical Theology from Nottingham University. Recently relocated to the US from the UK, Rev. Gabrielle, is lecturer in Early Christianity and Anglican Studies at Yale Divinity School. An Anglican, she is actively

engaged in interrelations between the Anglican and Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches. (Associate Member)

At our business meeting, we also reelected the slate of officers who served for 2020, to continue through 2021:

Teva Regule, President
Fr. John Jillions, Vice President
Fr. Gabriel Rochelle, Treasurer
Fr. Tony Vrame, Associate Treasurer
Helen Theodoropoulos, Secretary

Church and the Academy Blog: We have a new excellent blog post for our “Church and the Academy” blog, “Academic Freedom”, written by Fr. John Jillions: <https://www.otsamerica.net/2020/12/13/academic-freedom/>. This is a continuing blog, and we encourage members to offer their thoughts on this subject.

Dues Reminder: At the end of the year, it is common to wrap up loose ends—one of which is often the paying of dues that have slipped past our attention over the year. This would be a great time to cross that task off your list and pay the dues for 2020 and would greatly assist OTSA in its continued work. We thank those of you who are current in your dues, and offer thanks in advance for those of you completing that task now. You can pay online here: <https://www.otsamerica.net/pay-dues/>

Best wishes to all for a beautiful and blessed celebration of the Nativity of Our Lord. May 2021 be healthy and happy, and a time of reconnection and renewal.

Respectfully submitted,

Teva Regule, PhD, OTSA President
Helen Creticos Theodoropoulos, PhD, OTSA Secretary