



10 March, 2022

Dear Fathers and Friends,

Greetings

1. **Summary of Annual Meeting:** The OTSA Annual Meeting of 2021-22 was extraordinary in several ways. The continuation of the COVID pandemic led us to shift our Annual Meeting from in-person to a virtual only format. In addition, our interest in promoting dialogue among Orthodox scholars led us to shift the dates of the meeting from our original time in November 2021, to a time enabling greater participation: January 13-15, 2022. Our theme this year was “Orthodoxy in a Pluralistic World.”

We examined the theme of Orthodoxy and Pluralism from several directions. Our first several sessions circled around the ways Orthodoxy can theologically, liturgically, and in its practical service address social issues, in particular concerns about the environment, and the mental, physical and spiritual health of people in need. We then explored the fascinating interplay between theology and science—both the challenges science brings to theology, as well as the insight theology offers to science. In our evening sessions, we shifted to the ways Orthodoxy engages the “other” in ecumenical and interfaith dialogue, both generally and in the specific method of forum ecumenism pursued in Canada. Our second day saw us continue on this path with reflection on the Church and the kingdom(s), and discussions about the dialogue between the Orthodox and the Evangelicals, and between Orthodox and Pentecostals. We segued into two panels examining issues of growing concern affecting every parish: mixed marriages, and the increasing departure from the Church of young adults—the “dones.”

Friday afternoon we held our Business Meeting (see below #2), and in the evening, the Florovsky Lecture (see below #3). Paper presentations on Saturday looked at the impact of symbolism and language use, and then moved to consideration of Russia’s influence in two very different times and ways: the leadership of Bishop (later Patriarch) Tikhon over the developing Orthodox Church in America, and the current influence of the Russian Orthodox Church in geopolitics. Over the course of the conference, we provided opportunities for members to network, learn about research work and projects, and explore how to publish academic work. Members and guests participated from all over the United States, Canada, and even from overseas. The summary of the conference, photos, and links to the agenda with abstracts are found at:
<https://www.otsamerica.net/2021-annual-meeting/>

2. **Business meeting highlights:** We reviewed the major initiatives undertaken in 2021, including our mixed marriages webinar, our Academy and the Church blog, our incorporation, and our receiving non-profit status. In addition:

a. **We welcomed these new members:**

- Chris Durante, PhD, is Associate Professor of Theology at St. Peter's University. His areas of specialization include global ethics; ecumenical and interfaith dialogue; medical ethics; and ecological theology and ethics. (Full Membership)
- Nina Glibetic, PhD, is Assistant Professor of Liturgical Studies in the Department of Theology at the University of Notre Dame. She has expertise in Eastern Christian, Byzantine, and Oriental Liturgies. (Full Membership)
- Demetra (Dee) Jaquet, DMin, is a counselor, educator, and director of spiritual formation and pastoral care, a co-founder of OCAMPR and several other Orthodox organizations. (Full Membership)
- Peter (Chungsoo) Lee is a PhD student at the Antiochian House of Studies. His academic studies and interests focus on philosophy, ethics, and patristic theology. (Associate Membership)
- Rev. Deacon Bartholomew Mercado is a PhD candidate at the Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome, and is an archivist at the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. He is a contributing member of the OTSA mixed marriages task force. (Full Membership)
- Bradley Nassif, PhD, is Professor of Biblical and Theological Studies, North Park University, with specializations ranging from the History of Christian Thought and the theology of the early Eastern and Byzantine Church, to Orthodox and Evangelical Protestant dialogue. (Full Membership)
- Hermina Nedelescu, PhD, is a neuroscientist at the Scripps Research Institute who utilizes viruses to study the neurobiological basis of abnormal behaviors relevant to human psychopathology with emphasis on neuro-circuit activity and control of motivation. Her interest in joining OTSA is to allay fears and promote understanding of science among our Orthodox faithful. (Associate Membership)
- Fr. Richard Rene is a priest in the OCA and an active prison chaplain and pastor. He is pursuing his PhD in Theology at the University of Toronto, and is a regular podcaster on Ancient Faith Radio. (Full Membership)
- Rev. Niveen Sarras, PhD, is a Lutheran pastor with extensive academic expertise in Old Testament studies. Her experience and interests also include dialogue between Orthodox and Lutheran theology, and Christianity in the Middle East. (Associate Membership)
- Laura Wilson is a PhD student in Orthodox Studies at the Antiochian House of Studies. Her research interests include gender and ontology, symbolism and theosis. (Associate Membership)

b. **Two new proposals were approved:**

- i. **Lifetime membership for members age 70 and above:** Members who are current in their dues and are age 70 or above can apply for lifetime membership for no fee. Members who are not current in their dues can become current by paying for the previous three years. New applicants for membership who are 70 or above need only pay a \$15.00 application fee and will receive lifetime membership. Current members who are age 70 and older may apply for lifetime membership simply by emailing our treasurer, Fr. Nicholas Ferencz (nicholas.ferencz@gmail.com)
- ii. **Annual Meeting 2023 in Volos, Greece:** We agreed to hold our next Annual Meeting in juxtaposition with the next IOTA Mega-conference in January 2023, in Volos, Greece. The dates of the IOTA conference are set for the 11th–14th, with sessions set aside for OTSA, and OTSA plans to designate a day for our own meeting on Jan. 10th. The proposed sessions are a panel/session on academic freedom and the Church; a session on Orthodox mission to and in North America; and a panel on how OTSA works and can be a model for similar societies in other nations. Mark your calendars!

3. **The Florovsky Lecture** was given by The Very Rev. Dr. John Jillions, entitled “‘Preserving the Fullness of Thy Church’: Fighting Fundamentalism, Defending Dialogue and Reclaiming Catholicity.” We are pleased that close to 300 people registered to attend. You can access the video of the lecture at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a2SVk_Zhk2c. In addition, the text of the lecture is being published in the next issue of The Wheel.
4. **Call for IOTA papers:** The second mega-conference of the International Orthodox Theological Association will take place in Volos, Greece on January 11–14, 2023. IOTA’s twenty-seven groups invite paper proposals on the topics specified in the Call for Papers (CFP). All proposals must be submitted as pdfs and limited to 1,000 words. Proposals will be accepted within the following two-month window: February 5, 2022 — April 15, 2022. Decisions regarding the submitted proposals will be shared with applicants by June 15, 2022. For more information, see: <https://iota-web.org/call-for-papers2022/>
5. **Call for OTSA papers:** OTSA will be holding its annual meeting in Volos, Greece, on Jan. 10, 2023, and will host sessions within the IOTA meeting that follows on Jan 11–14. The theme for both meetings will be “The Mission of the Church.” We are now receiving proposals for papers or panels, and these fall into two categories because we will have OTSA sessions both within IOTA and, of course, on the day devoted exclusively to the OTSA meeting.
 - a. **Papers for the OTSA sessions within the IOTA meeting** should pertain to these topics: 1) Academic Freedom (i.e. the importance of academic freedom, navigating the church/academy dialectic, etc.) 2) Mission to N. America - (i.e. ecumenical outreach, youth, philanthropy, etc.) 3) Orthodoxy in N. America—Its Promise and Struggles/Tensions” (e.g., the inner dynamics of Orthodox life in N. America—i.e. ecclesial polity, social media, cradle vs. convert, immigrant vs. 2nd-3rd generation American experience, etc.) **The deadline for these proposals is April 30.**
 - b. **Papers exclusive to the OTSA meeting** can pertain to the theme of mission more broadly. **The deadline for these proposals is May 15.**

All proposals should include an abstract of less than 250 words and an abbreviated CV of the presenter(s), sent to the OTSA secretary, Helen Theodoropoulos, at secretary@otsamerica.org or helen60076@yahoo.com. Deadlines: submissions for OTSA sessions within IOTA are due by April 30; submissions for OTSA-only presentations are due by May 15. All submissions will be notified of their status by June 15.
6. **Call for papers:** Hellenic College Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology will hold an academic conference from October 6–8, 2022 in observance of the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. Paper proposals on the topic of the history of the Greek Orthodox Church in America are

welcome. For more information, see <https://www.hchc.edu/hchc-to-host-go-100th-anniversary-conference-call-for-papers/>

7. OTSA has offered to **assist the Assembly of Bishops** by recommending members to participate in its task force examining the reception of converts to the Orthodox Church. Those with expertise in (for instance) ecclesiology, liturgy, canon law, history and pastoral care are especially encouraged to consider this opportunity. If you would like to be considered, please send a statement of your interest and expertise (approx. 200 words) and your CV to Helen Theodoropoulos (helen60076@yahoo.com) by **March 25, 2022**.
8. **Church and Academy blog:** we encourage our members to participate in our ongoing blog. Please send submissions to Teva (teva@mit.edu) or Helen (helen60076@yahoo.com).
9. **OTSA dues:** Now is the time to become current in your 2022 dues! We can confirm that two Orthodox Journals offer discounts to OTSA members current in their 2022 dues. The Greek Orthodox Theological Review offers a reduced rate of \$20/year (discounted from the subscription rate of \$30 /year (USA) or \$35/year (outside USA). Please indicate that you are an OTSA member. Requests for subscriptions should be addressed to the Production Manager, GOTR, 50 Goddard Avenue, Brookline, Massachusetts 02445 or email: GOTR@hchc.edu. In addition, the Journal of Orthodox Christian Studies offers 30% off with a promo code. The code is: SFOTSA0911 and the Promo page URL is: <https://www.press.jhu.edu/journals/new-noteworthy/special-offers/otsa-offer>
The link for membership dues is: <https://www.otsamerica.net/pay-dues/> Members who reside outside of the United States and have trouble with PayPal can pay either via wire transfer, or with a check sent to our treasurer, Fr. Nicholas Ferencz (Nicholas.ferencz@gmail.com) at Fr. Nicholas Ferencz, St. Michael the Archangel Church 146 Third Ave., Rankin, PA 15104).
10. **Future Webinars:** OTSA is planning to offer two webinars this year focusing on the broad theme of ecclesiology—Understanding the Church in a post-Covid World and The Church and Ministering to the “Dones” in Our Parishes. More information to follow.
11. **In Memoriam:** We are saddened to report that our colleague and OTSA member Sister Nonna Verna Harrison reposed in the Lord on February 8, 2022, at the age of 68, after suffering a stroke on December 28. A distinguished patristics scholar and translator, Sr. Nonna was active in theological education at several schools, notably as Assistant Professor of Church History, Saint Paul School of Theology, and lecturer at the Pappas Patristics Institute, The Orthodox Christian Studies Institute in Cambridge, and at the Sheptytsky Institute of Eastern Christian Studies at the University of Toronto. She authored several books, and numerous articles and translations. She was buried at St Barbara Orthodox Monastery in Ojala, CA. May her memory be eternal.

Respectfully submitted,

Teva Regule, PhD, OTSA President

Helen Creticos Theodoropoulos, PhD, OTSA Secretary