

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF RELIGION SOUTHWEST REGION

REPORT TO AAR BOARD

Fiscal Year 2016 (July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016)

The Southwest Region held its annual meeting March 11-13, 2016 at the Marriott DFW in Irving, Texas in conjunction with the three other organizations (SBL-SW, ASSR, and ASOR) that jointly compose the Southwest Commission on Religious Studies (SWCRS). The program comprised 26 sessions, plus two special events for graduate students and another of presentations by SWCRS Junior Scholar Grant recipients, both AAR members. Another innovation was an exhibit of 3 paintings and a 15-piece graphic sequence, art created by AAR-SW Student Director BJ Parker. His works were displayed in the main hallway and registration areas, bringing some scholarly dialogue out of the session room and into the main concourse, as well as adding a visual component to the conference. The plenary speaker was AAR-SW President Joerg Rieger, who spoke about his research in Turkey in response to the overarching SWCRS theme “Engaging Diversity.” This was the first year SWCRS adopted such a theme for the conference as a whole, it was quite successful, and next year there will again be a theme for the conference. SWCRS piloted a meeting app that all agreed was a great innovation. This precipitated the subsequent decision to print very few meeting programs, to mail none, and to upload the program to aarweb.org, thereby reducing costs and precluding confusion from last-minute changes. The meeting this year continued the region’s strong support of graduate students:

- The region supported its Student Director’s travel expenses for the national and regional meetings at a cost of \$800.
- The document drafted last year by AAR-SW officers for SWCRS titled “Guidelines for Presenters & Presiders,” a document chiefly designed to inform new conference attendees, is now routinely in use and required reading for all conference presenters and presiders.
- Last year the SWCRS Directors agreed to invite the student director from each member society to observe the Directors Meeting, so AAR-SW Student Director BJ Parker attended.
- A graduate luncheon that was inaugurated last year with substantial AAR financial support was held for a second time this year on Saturday to provide students who registered early a much-discounted meal and brief remarks by the SWCRS Executive and a representative from each society on challenges today in the scholarly world. The program was planned by AAR-SW Student Director BJ Parker. SWCRS now provides most of the funding for this event with minimal contributions from each of the constituent societies.
- A new Graduate Student Paper Award was inaugurated. Papers were solicited in the SWCRS Call for Papers and submissions were reviewed by a committee chaired by the Student Director. The winner, Andrew Benko, “Can a leopard change its spots?” received a small financial award and recognition at the SWCRS Awards Reception.

With funding provided by an AAR Regional Development Grant, the Region conducted a pre-SWCRS workshop, “How Might the Region Become a Stronger and More Meaningful Presence in the Scholarly and Professional Lives of its Members? A Workshop to Re-Imagine Our Time Together During and Between Annual Meetings.” Twenty members of AAR-SW who responded to an invitation to participate and who together represent the diversity of our membership as much as possible, particularly with

respect to discipline, gender, race/ethnicity, and age, gathered at the conference hotel on Friday, March 11, 2016 for a full day of facilitated discussion, brainstorming, and planning. The workshop began with luncheon discussion of why we come to this meeting, what we value about it, and what we expect from it. There were three working groups, each addressing one major topic:

The AAR-SW Annual Meeting

Collaboration and Work between Annual Meetings

Diversifying Our Scholarly Community

Groups engaged in wishful thinking brainstorming, developed major themes and issues, and presented to the entire workshop their discussion and recommendations. This was enormously productive, resulting in a list of specific, substantive, and actionable ideas, as well as four task forces to realize them. The four task forces will focus this year on the Region's website/social media presence, membership, programs, and supplemental meetings. Everyone who attended left the workshop excited for the work ahead, appreciative of the time together, and hopeful the Region will conduct follow-on workshop in 2017. The Region's leadership team – the Regionally Elected Coordinator, the President, and the Student Director – will share the experience with the other nine regions by conducting a workshop at the AAR meeting in San Antonio in November 2016 for RECs and officers of other regions.

At the conclusion of SWCRS, representatives of the constituent societies met briefly to plan the 2017 meeting. There it was agreed that piloting a conference theme was successful and everyone wanted to repeat the experience. The theme helps to unify the Commission, fostering inter-society dialogue and enhancing the overall program. The theme for 2017 will be "Religion Matters."

Meeting registration and attendance:

SWCRS Annual Meeting Summary 2016

March 11-13, 2016, Irving TX

Registrants and Participants

Total registrants	289
Preregistrants	266
On-site registrants	23
Program participants not registered	2
Total possible revenue lost	\$96
Registration sales	\$16,466.06
Registration donations	\$6

Registration net revenue

\$16,472.06

By Type and Organizational Affiliation

Exhibitors	9	AAR	76
Faculty	127	ASOR	27
Students	115	ASSR	26
Retired Members	9	SBL	135
Partners/Spouses	9		
Non-members	20		
Total	289		

Hotel Sleeping Rooms

Contracted commitment: 178

Total rooms bought 185

Exhibitors

Total tables sold 25

Total exhibitors 14

Abilene Christian University Press, Augsburg Fortress, Baker, Baylor University Press, Eisenbrauns, Hendrickson, IVP, Liturgical Press, Oxford University Press, The Jerusalem Center for Biblical Studies, SBL, Westminster John Knox, Wm. Eerdmans, Zondervan

Onsite representatives 9

Total exhibitor fees paid \$3,601.12

Vouchers paid \$300

Total exhibitor revenue \$3,301.12

Business meeting:

The 2016 AAR-SW Business Meeting was held at the Marriott DFW at 7:30a on Sunday, March 13, a return to the traditional meeting time.

- **Treasurer's Report:** The Region now has an annual budget that includes support of Regionally Elected and Student Directors' expenses, the SWCRS graduate student luncheon, and the regional travel grant. The Region's savings are managed carefully to facilitate special projects to benefit the Region.
- **Policies & Procedures:** The Regionally Elected Coordinator presented a draft of the Region's Policies & Procedures documentation, comprising the Operating Agreement, Policy File, Regions Handbook, and Appendices of guidelines, reports, and forms. The draft was approved as composed with the additional note that because it is a "living document" there will be revisions and modifications each year. Several were proposed at the meeting.
- **Regional Travel Grant:** The Region made the first AAR Regional Travel Grant to Marc DiPaolo, and subsequently developed a protocol for taking applications and distributing the Grant in the future that will be incorporated into the Policies & Procedures.
- **New Business:** The Region discussed initiatives coming out of the pre-SWCRS workshop, chiefly building a regional website and social media presence, creating a new office for the direction of that, and establishing new programs.

AAR-SW Officers:

Regional Coordinator: Katherine Downey

Past President: Jens Kreinath, Wichita State University

President: Marc DiPaolo, Oklahoma City University

President-Elect: Paul Martens, Baylor University

Vice President: Rebecca Huskey, Oklahoma University

Student Director: Rachel Toombs, Baylor University

Multimedia Coordinator: Nick Werse, Baylor University

Highlights:

The duties of each of the four offices on the presidential line were expanded, differentiated, and defined in the Policies & Procedures so that each has meaning and heft. This will also have the effect of spreading the work of the region across more people and lighten the burden on the Regionally Elected Coordinator. The current and past Student Directors are revising some procedures as well, for instance nominating the successor at the beginning of Year 2 of the Director's term of service in order to allow the successor a year to shadow the current Director. A new leadership role was created as a result of the pre-SWCRS workshop, Multimedia Coordinator. This will be a multiple-year appointment, the details still being defined. The Multimedia Coordinator's first initiative was to create a regional website, which is aar-sw.org, and a Facebook page for members. The Southwest's leadership team is active, enthusiastic,

and innovative. With new programming is coming new program leadership, hence new ideas and excitement for the work and promise of the Region.

Serving in the role of Regional Coordinator was a profound pleasure for me again this year. I thoroughly enjoyed the Regions Committee meeting in Atlanta. My enthusiasm is always refreshed when I am in the company of the other Coordinators and our new Director, Ardyth Bass, who participated in our pre-SWCRS workshop and attended our regional meeting.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Katherine Downey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Katherine Downey, Southwest Regionally Elected Coordinator