



# The Association of Theological Schools The Commission on Accrediting

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*Frank M. Yamada • Executive Director*

March 26, 2020

Dear member colleagues of The Association of Theological Schools,

This email serves as a notice to the members of The Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada, as well as to members of the ATS Commission on Accrediting, about the ATS/COA 2020 Biennial Meeting. I am also writing to provide you with an update on plans that are shifting on a weekly, if not daily, basis regarding the planning of the meeting and the work of the Association and the Commission.

Per the Association's bylaws, "(w)ritten notice of the day, hour, and geographic location (if any) of each Biennial Meeting... shall be given to all Members of record entitled to vote at the meeting at least ninety (90) days prior to the date of the meeting..." (section 2.6). Identical language is also found in the Commission's bylaws (section 2.6).

As of this writing, the world is facing a pandemic. The outbreak of COVID-19, which is caused by the novel Coronavirus, has required each of our schools to respond in order to ensure the health and well-being of its faculty, staff, and students. ATS has created a [resource page](#) with updated information and actions from the Board of Commissioners to allow for educational flexibility during this time of disruption from the Coronavirus. At this critical time for Canada and the United States, indeed for all countries of the globe, ATS remains committed "to promote the improvement and enhancement of theological schools to the benefit of communities of faith and the broader public." To stay true to that mission in the middle of this situation, ATS staff have continued to support and resource the schools. The health and well-being of all of those within the ATS community has been the priority of the Association's and Commission's leadership.

In that spirit, here is the notification about the ATS/COA 2020 Biennial Meeting. We would ask you to hold the dates of June 24–25, 2020, in your calendars. Because of the daily shifts resulting from the Coronavirus situation, the staff and boards of the Association and the Commission have already established contingency plans for all of its meetings, including the Biennial Meeting. This past week, both boards voted to authorize a biennial meeting that would allow for an electronic option to participate in the meeting and vote remotely. As of this date, March 26, 2020, the venue in Vancouver, British Columbia, has not been canceled, though we have been in contact with the hotel and local officials given the current pandemic and the safety and health concerns that have emerged in the past few months. We expect to be able to provide more information in the coming days and weeks. Out of concern for the health and safety of the membership, and given the current restrictions on travel in both the United States and Canada, the specific time on June 24 and/or June 25, will be announced within 45

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days prior to the meeting with the publishing of the agenda (as per the bylaws), and the format of the meeting could change to a completely online, digital meeting should the circumstances dictate.

In summary:

- The ATS/COA 2020 Biennial Meeting is scheduled for June 24–25, 2020. Hold these dates.
- The format will allow for an electronic option to participate and vote in the meeting remotely, regardless of whether or not there is also an in-person component to the meeting.
- We continue to communicate with the hotel and local officials about the viability and safety of the meeting venue in Vancouver given the Coronavirus situation. We will communicate more details in the coming days and weeks.
- The specific times of the meeting on June 24 and/or June 25, will be announced with the agenda (45 days prior to the meeting), and the format of the meeting could change to completely online given the current Coronavirus/COVID-19 situation.
- All decisions about the meeting will be made with the safety and health of the membership as a priority.

What does this mean for those who plan to participate in the meeting?

- If you have already purchased your travel...Continue to follow the protocols of your federal or local governments and/or your own institution's policy as you make your decisions to cancel or postpone travel.
- Should you cancel, or if you have already canceled your travel plans...You will have the option to participate in the meeting electronically.
- If you have not yet purchased your travel...Like many decisions in these days of social distancing, wait and see. More information is coming. Should you decide not to travel or if officials have prohibited persons from traveling, you will be able to participate in the meeting electronically.
- In the upcoming days and weeks, look for further communications and updates about the meeting and how business will be conducted with the electronic format.

If you have questions about the ATS/COA 2020 Biennial Meeting and the format proposed, reach out to the office of the executive director by email (Marissa Dechant, [dechant@ats.edu](mailto:dechant@ats.edu)).

In these uncertain times, stay healthy and safe friends.

Peace and grace,  
Frank Yamada  
Executive Director  
The Association of Theological Schools