

ATS members gather to celebrate at the Centennial Biennial Meeting

By ELIZA SMITH BROWN

A crowd of more than 400 gathered in Denver June 20 and 21 to celebrate the ATS Centennial, to share wisdom and best practices, to network, and to conduct the biennial business of The Association of Theological Schools and the Commission on Accrediting. Amidst historical displays and an Innovation Expo, veteran theological educators and recent graduates, the meeting embraced the dual theme of Legacy and Innovation.

Frank Yamada offers a new vision for the Association's second century

In his opening address, Executive Director Frank Yamada presented the *Legacy and Innovation* theme in somewhat theological terms and characterized the present as a



“both/and moment” in theological education. “God is doing a new thing among us even as schools seek to ground those new things in legacies that stretch back for centuries,” he said. “Uncertain times are

nothing new for the people of God and for those of us who have committed ourselves to the vocation of theological education. Legacy and innovation is what we do.”



Ten schools are approved for Associate membership

One of the first orders of business was to consider ten institutions for Associate membership, all of which were approved:

1. Academy for Jewish Religion (Yonkers, NY)
2. Antiochian House of Studies (La Verne, California)
3. Catholic Distance University Graduate School of Theology (Charles Town, WV)
4. The Robert E. Webber Institute for Worship Studies (Jacksonville, FL)
5. The King's Seminary (Southlake, TX)
6. Liberty University Rawlings School of Divinity (Lynchburg, VA)



7. Methodist Theological Seminary in America (Fullerton, CA)
8. NAIITS: An Indigenous Learning Community (formerly North American Institute for Indigenous Theological Studies) (Montague, PEI)
9. Oakwood University School of Religion (Huntsville, AL)
10. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (Mequon, WI)

Four organizations are granted Affiliate status

In addition, four organizations with a substantial interest in theological education, but not involved in educational programs leading to a degree, were welcomed as Affiliates, a status that does not lead to accreditation:

1. ISAAC: Innovative Space for Asian American Christianity (Los Angeles, CA)
2. Betty Ann Greenbaum Miller Center for Interreligious Learning & Leadership at Hebrew College (Newton Centre, MA)
3. The COMISS Network (Keller, TX)
4. Episcopal Divinity School at Union Theological Seminary (New York, NY)

Membership approves redevelopment of the accrediting standards and procedures

For the third time in 80 years, the membership approved a full redevelopment of the standards and procedures.



The process will be led by a task force of 19 seasoned theological educators, who are expected to bring a new

set of standards to the 2020 Biennial Meeting in Vancouver for membership approval.

They began what will be a year of listening to the membership by leading participants in a working forum to gather hopes and concerns about the redevelopment. [Read more](#) about the forthcoming process.

Centennial Display captures the essence of a century

A colorful exhibit presented highlights of the first 100 years of ATS, celebrating the founding and growth of



the Association's diverse membership and range of programs. Then and now photographs in the display and accompanying video offered a reminder of

how much has changed over the past century, even as the Association's core values and commitments have remained steady.

Innovation Expo showcases forward-thinking programs at more than 50 member schools

The Innovation Expo featured 44 tables at which school representatives shared the work they had done as part of the Educational

Models and Practices in Theological Education project and the Economic Challenges Facing Future Ministers project. Registrants appreciated the opportunity to simultaneously learn and network with peers. [Read more](#) about the exhibits that were on display.



Educational Models and Practices in Theological Education project informs the standards redevelopment

In a plenary session, Stephen Graham shared the latest findings from the project that promises to inform the redevelopment of the standards and procedures. Watch for more details in coming issues of *Colloquy Online*.

Students and recent graduates share how new educational models are supporting their ministries

In an inspiring plenary titled, “Why we do what we do,” seven current students and recent graduates shared



their stories. They spoke about the particular models and programs that have made their respective ministries possible. The speakers included a graduate of a historically black theological school (Hood Theological Seminary), a hospital chaplain who entered Taylor College

and Seminary before completing her bachelor's degree, a PhD student who has benefitted from a global partnership between his native India and Asbury Theological Seminary, a busy pastor who is studying online, a Cuban pastor who completed his studies in Spanish through B. H. Carroll Theological Institute, an MDiv graduate of Candler School of Theology who is specializing in multicultural ministry and restorative justice work



as a pastor, and a former inmate who completed a program sponsored by Duke University Divinity School while incarcerated and was inspired to become a chaplain at women's prisons. An



additional presenter joined the meeting by video—a life-sentenced prison inmate who is studying through New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and serving as an inmate minister. [Watch the full session.](#)

Three veteran theological educators receive the Distinguished Service Award

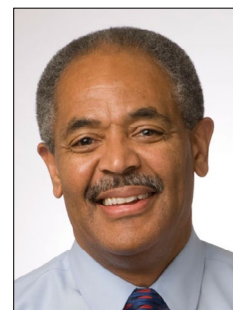
In recognition of the Centennial, the ATS Board of Directors this year voted to honor not one, but three “persons of exceptional vision, leadership, and influence who



advance the causes of our enterprise in very significant ways to the benefit of all.” At the Centennial

Banquet on the last night of the meeting, the awards were presented to Anne Anderson, John Kinney, and Richard Mouw. Also present for the festivities were six of the 15 past awardees: Barbara Brown Zikmund (2004), Diane Kennedy (2006), David L. Tiede (2010), Barbara Wheeler (2012), Justo González (2014), and Katarina Schuth (2016). [Read more](#) about this year's recipients.

The banquet—and the meeting—concluded as outgoing ATS president Janet Clark (Tyndale University College and Seminary) welcomed incoming president Brian Blount (Union Presbyterian Seminary) to offer the closing benediction. Having served as vice president for the past two years, Blount assumes his new role immediately. In that capacity, he will lead the ATS Board of Directors in charting strategic directions for the coming years.



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