

MINUTES

5.15 pm, Friday 6 September 2019
Liverpool Hope University

Present: Prof Francis Watson (President); Prof Steve Walton (Secretary); Dr John Lyons (Treasurer), 53 other members of the Society, and 4 guests.

1. Prof Francis Watson, as President, welcomed members and guests to the meeting.
2. **The minutes of the 2018 meeting** we approved as an accurate record.
3. There were no **matters arising from the 2018 minutes** not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

4. **President's report**

Prof Watson presented his reflections after a year in post, and in the light of the committee's meeting earlier in the day.

In the light of the growing emphasis on the work of the Society as a professional association (rather than a body which only ran a conference), he proposed to phase out use of 'The British New Testament Conference' in favour of 'The British New Testament Society'. This was welcomed by members.

He noted the significant financial reserves held by the Society, and introduced the idea of members bidding to carry out projects which would further the Society's mission and aims, such as: oral history of the Society; inviting speakers from abroad to seminars; helping independent scholars to gain access to resources. An email from the President, Secretary and Treasurer will follow explaining more about this idea, including the bidding process.

5. The meeting received and approved the **accounts and report on finances 2018-19**, presented by Dr John Lyons (Treasurer) after independent examination by Neil Kingston FCA of Burton Sweet. The finance report had been circulated in advance to members by email, and was also presented on screen.

Dr Lyons noted the advice from the independent examiner that the Society's present notional reserve of £8000 (nominally, five years' costs) needs to change, especially since annual costs have changed thorough appointing more officers who receive an honorarium. The independent examiner recommended that the Society identify a 'range' for reserves to stay within, so that the Society is not holding excessive amounts of money. The independent examiners had encouraged the Society to use some of the reserves in tune with our charitable purpose of 'the advancement of education through study of and research into the New Testament and related writings'. The committee will agree an appropriate range in the light of the surplus from this year's conference.

Prof Watson expressed the Society's thanks to Dr Lyons for his service as Treasurer over some years, and members joined in acclaiming Dr Lyons.

6. **Election of committee members for 2019-22**

Prof Watson thanked Dr Sean Adams for his service on the committee over the previous three years. The following nominations had been received for the vacant posts:

- Dr Tom de Bruin was nominated as Treasurer by Dr Michelle Fletcher. He was the sole candidate, and his appointment was approved by acclamation.
- Dr Jamie Davies (nominated by Dr Matthew Novenson) and Dr Ian Paul (nominated by Prof Paul Foster) stood for the committee place vacated by Dr Sean Adams. Drs John Lyons and Tom de Bruin acted as tellers for this election by secret ballot, which had the outcome that Dr Davies was elected to serve on the committee.

- Dr Michelle Fletcher had been nominated by Profs Eddie Adams and James Crossley to serve on the committee, and the committee proposed to the meeting that she be appointed as Secretary designate (following previous precedent for appointment of a new Secretary). She would work alongside Prof Walton during 2019–20, with a view to being formally elected as Secretary at the 2020 General meeting to serve in that role for 2020-23. The meeting approved this appointment by acclamation.

7. **Seminars**

The meeting received a list of current seminars and their chairs. Prof Watson reported on developments following a profitable meeting of seminar chairs earlier in the day, and the committee's reflections on that meeting.

- In future years, delegates will know which papers have been accepted for each seminar by the time they register to attend the conference, to give the fullest information on which to choose seminars. The schedule for the call for papers, etc. will be amended to facilitate this.
- Seminar chairs may, if they have insufficient suitable offers of papers, hold only two sessions. They are also encouraged to be creative with sessions, such as reading a classic article or chapter, or studying a primary source together.
- Seminar chairs will continue to have a normal five-year term of office, which the Secretary will monitor. If there is good reason for a seminar chair to continue beyond five years (such as the lack of a suitable successor), they may apply to the committee to serve for a second five-year term.

8. **Promoting and informing about the Society**

The Society's Information Officer, Prof Paul Middleton spoke to introduce possible ways to make the work of the Society and its members known through social media and the Society's website. He invited members to notify him of publications, lectures given, etc., so that he can tweet about them, and (if more substantial) to share information on the website.

9. **TRS-UK**

Prof John Barclay, President of TRS-UK, spoke about TRS-UK's work in linking together university departments where Theology and Religious Studies is taught. BNTS is a member of TRS-UK, represented by Prof Susan Docherty. He summarised the purposes of TRS-UK, outlined three strategic aims for 2018–23 and five current workstreams, and identified other work being done by TRS-UK to promote and enhance the discipline. [His slides are attached as an appendix.]

10. **Future meetings**

Prof Watson and Kelsie Rodenbiker invited the Society to hold the 2020 conference, which will mark the Society's fortieth anniversary, at **Durham University, 3–5 September 2020**.

Prof Walton requested members to consider hosting the conference at their institution in the years **from 2021 onwards**, particularly if it had not taken place at their institution in recent years.

11. **Members who have passed away**

The meeting stood in silence to remember Dr Meg (Margaret) Davies, Dr Owen E. Evans and Prof Paul Ellingworth.

12. **Any other business**

Prof Walton invited the help of members in gathering material for the Society's archives, so that the history of the Society could be made as complete as possible. He thanked those who had already contributed, and invited members with material from past conferences, including programmes, seminar information, accounts, lists of delegates, etc. to contact him by email at: secretary@bnts.org.uk.

▶ TRS-UK

- ▶ Represents all the 38 UK University Departments/units in Theology and Religion/Religious Studies
- ▶ Represents all the 12 professional subject associations (including BASR)
- ▶ Committee includes: John Barclay (Durham); Marion Bowman (OU); Stephen Pattison (Birmingham); Jeremy Kidwell (Birmingham); Wendy Dossett (Chester); Susannah Cornwall (Exeter)
- ▶ BNTS representative: Susan Docherty

▶ Three Priority Strategic Aims (2018-23)

1. To Increase the Pool of Undergraduate Applicants
2. To Develop Deeper Collaboration with RE School Teachers
3. To Enhance the Public Understanding of Religion

▶ Five Current Workstreams

1. **Graduate Videos:** to demonstrate the variety of employment prospects for TRS graduates
2. **Collaboration with RE Teachers:** questionnaire to learn the most useful forms. Liaison with NATRE and others
3. **Social Media:** new Twitter account (@UK_TRS) with dedicated team. To develop new website
4. **Market Research:** why do school leavers choose to do, or not do, TRS at University level?
5. **Media Advice:** Advice group and consultations to establish best strategies for public communication of our subject.

▶ Other work

- ▶ **Represent TRS** to the BA, the AHA, the REF authorities, and others
- ▶ **Disseminate good practice** around Departments and Associations
- ▶ **Data Collection** (e.g. student statistics)
- ▶ **Discussion forum** for common issues, e.g. at AGM
- ▶ **Fundraising** for strategic projects