

## 2021 FIRST ASR COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

12:00 noon – 2:00 PM ET, Friday, August 6, 2021  
Via Zoom

### Jim Cavendish presiding

Present: James (Jim) Cavendish – President, Rachel Kraus – Executive Officer, James (Jim) Spickard – President-Elect, Paula Nesbitt – Immediate Past President, Joseph Baker – Editor SofR, Gerardo Marti – Consultant SoR and Incoming President-Elect, Brian Starks, Program Chair, Council Members: Amy Adamczyk, Grace Yukich, Tricia Bruce, Damon Mayrl, Rachel Rinaldo, Kraig Beyerlein, Committee Members: Kevin Christiano – Lifetime Achievement Award, Warren Goldstein, Finance/Development.

1. Jim Cavendish called the meeting to order at 12:04 pm ET.
2. Council reviewed the Council and Business meeting minutes from ASR's Virtual 2020 Council and Business Meetings. Two changes to the minutes were requested:
  - a. Add the discussion and vote via email on the 501c3 entity. Council voted to move forward on this issue, and a 501c3 entity was created. The ASR maintains its 501c6 status, while the 501c3 entity is an addition. Our primary goal for creating a 501c3 entity is to allow contributions made to the ASR to be tax deductible.
  - b. Add the email conversation about an international liaison to the International liaison/Gallagher committee.
  - c. Amy A. moved to approve minutes with the changes.
  - d. Council unanimously approved the minutes with the changes noted above.
3. Update on the composition of standing committees and new appointees
  - a. We've had full committees except for one.
  - b. Jim S. mentions the rotation of committee members including the new Chairs of the committees and those members who are cycling off.
  - c. Development/Finance Committee: Warren Goldstein served as the Chair this past year. The two other members were unable to complete their terms. Laurel K. filled the one year position, and David G. will serve for three years. This coming year, Warren G. will be in the third year of his term. David G. will serve as the Chair, and the incoming President-Elect Gerardo Marti will appoint one new member to the committee.
  - d. An announcement was made that we have handbooks for each of the committees except one. The handbooks were distributed several months ago, and each committee has its own folder in the ASR google drive.

- e. Incoming President-Elect Gerardo Marti will appoint one person to each of the standing committees.
- f. Past President Paula Nesbitt thanked Jim S. for his thoroughness and organizing committee members who will be able to pass on institutional memory.

#### 4. Review of Standing Committees reports

- a. Jim C. asks for comments about the reports. Kevin C. is present, and Jim asked him to talk about the Lifetime Achievement Award.
- b. Kevin C. offered his thanks to Jim Cavendish and Jim Spickard. Kevin tells council that the award began in 2017. He mentioned that Peter Beyer has completed his term, and Inger F. will serve as Chair of the committee. He tells council that the committee received no new nominations. However, the committee keeps nominees for five years. This year, the committee had a pool of ten nominees for the award. The award was given to Nancy Nason-Clark. Her nomination came from Marion Goldman. Nancy was editor of *Sociology of Religion* from 2000 – 2006. Her work has focused on the connections between religion and domestic violence. Jim C. thanked Kevin for his and his committee's good work. Kevin will introduce the recipient at the awards ceremony. With Peter completing his term, Kevin thanked Peter for his work on the committee.
- c. Jim Cavendish comments that a few reports did not have much detail partly because the committees did not have much work to do over the past year. One example is the international/Gallagher committee. The membership committee's report was also short. Jim suggested the membership committee review trends for membership over the past years. In the past, the membership committee has requested this information from the Executive Officer. Membership in the ASR is now fluid (memberships began when people renew or join rather than everyone's membership having the same expiration date of December 31).
- d. Grace Yukich said we should expect to see a significant drop over the next year or two with the changes in funding and people not receiving financial assistance for conferences from their institutions. Council discussed that the authors of *Religion and Social Order* are members of the association. If the ASR wants to attract more diversity in membership and authors, reaching out to students is one strategy.
- e. Jim Spickard commented that we are moving into a different academic climate and we don't yet know what that will look like. He suggests we need to get ahead

of the changes that are coming. He says the structure of scholarly life will be different. He mentioned putting this issue on the second council meeting agenda.

- f. Jim Cavendish said that costs of student memberships are lower than professional memberships.
  - g. Brian Starks said that he reached out to students and asked for assistance with technical support. No one responded to his request.
  - h. Jim Cavendish: discussed the need for more diverse authors who publish in *Sociology of Religion* and attend the conference. He discussed reaching out to minorities.
5. Executive Officer's Report
- a. Rachel Kraus discussed the finances of the association. She mentioned that starting in 2022, we will not have the same guaranteed minimum royalties from Oxford, the publisher of our journal. Rather than a guaranteed \$55,000, the association will receive 80% of royalties. An estimate of the difference between these two amounts is close to \$20,000 not in the association's favor. So, council needs to start thinking seriously about cutting costs and/or increasing revenue.
  - b. Council discussed food and beverage minimums that are around \$20,000 (not including taxes and fees).
  - c. Tricia Bruce suggested the council meetings (not the business meeting) be held online outside of the hotel.
  - d. Kevin C. mentioned that the American Sociological Association (ASA) has a set amount of money allotted for their reception. Rachel said that the money from the ASA doesn't pay for all of the additional reception attendees.
  - e. Jim S. suggested that the Finance Committee work on the expenses of the association and report back to council with some suggestions on how to decrease costs.
  - f. Jim S. moved to accept the budget for 2022. Council voted unanimously to approve the budget.
6. President's Report
- a. Jim Cavendish thanked the program and ad hoc committee members for all of their hard work putting together the conference. He commented that he is happy that we now have a 501c3 entity to which people can make tax deductible donations. He thanked Paula and the nominations committee for their work creating the slate of candidates for this year's election.
  - b. Paula Nesbitt said her report is self-evident. She commented that we have excellent members joining council. She mentioned that potential candidates were

asked to affirm their familiarity with the ASA Code of Ethics and five statements in order to be part of the slate of candidates. Paula suggested these five statements can be (should be?) institutionalized in our future nominations process. She reported that virtually no one raised a question about the five statements, and everyone agreed with the five statements. She thanked Jim C. for the opportunity to serve ASR over the past years. She commented that she is truly thrilled with the energy and vitality of the association's leadership. She wished everyone the very best moving forward.

- c. Jim C. asked that those five statements be listed in the documents we give to future nominations committees.
7. Council discussed the Fichter awards.
    - a. The Committee decided last year to move the timeline earlier for the Fichter award decisions. They want to make decisions between May 1 and June 1. The committee thought it would be helpful for people to know whether they are getting funding before the summer, which is a common time that those on the academic calendar travel for research. Council discussed having a February 1 deadline to receive submissions and announce decisions by April 1. Moving the dates earlier was approved in a business meeting. We need to implement this change.
  8. Council discussed work from the Finance/Development Committee
    - a. Warren Goldstein discussed the work of the Finance/Development Committee. He talked about environmentally sensitive investments. The committee met several times to discuss the possibility of the ASR investing in Environment, Sustainable, Government (ESG) funds. The committee is supportive of moving funds, but they aren't sure how to go about doing it.
    - b. Jim S. mentioned that two of our main funds invest in fossil fuels. He suggested that investing in ESG funds can sometimes have a bigger return than other types of funds.
    - c. Jim C. suggested that we need to look at service fees, which are currently very minimal. Other funds may have larger fees.
    - d. Warren suggested that when accounts are professionally managed, people who work with those funds watch the market. They are proactive.
    - e. Brian S. suggested that professionally managed accounts don't always get the best returns.
  9. Joseph Baker updated council on the journal.
    - a. Joseph thanked everyone on the editorial team. He commented that the Associate Editors have been great. They were instrumental in putting

together materials for the special issue on religion and Covid-19. He thanked Andrew Whitehead who focuses on social media for the journal. Andrew conducts podcasts and sends them to the publisher, Oxford.

- b. Joseph informed council that some people on the editorial board have finished their terms.
- c. Joseph highlighted the following statistics for council: 200 manuscripts were submitted, which is a 7% increase over last year. The acceptance rate (around 11%) is similar to what it was last year. The impact factor is 3.4, which is twice that of the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* (JSSR). *Sociology of Religion* (SoR) is now a top 25 sociology journal.
- d. Joseph will be stepping down as Editor-in-Chief for the journal and discussed the timeline for the transition. The Call for applications will be available in September/October. Applications will be due April 1. Ideally, there will be a new Editor in place by the summer. Any suggestions for the editorship should be sent to Chris Ellison.
- e. Joseph informed council that there has been a lot of transition at OUP.
- f. Joseph addressed an issue that was brought up at earlier council meetings regarding the diversity of authors and content in the journal. He told council that there was a decline of minority authorship in 2020. He said that women made up only around one-third of authors, which is down from the forties. He commented that women now make up around 45% of authors.
- g. Joseph discussed data transparency issues. He wants to begin a process to make data available to decrease the possibility of fraud.
- h. An announcement was made that Council renewed our contract with Oxford University Press.

10. Brian Starks discussed the Program Committee's work

- a. He reminded people to look for an email from ATIV. He commented that a lot of work has gone into putting together a virtual conference.

11. An announcement about ASR's Virtual Business Meeting was made.

12. The meeting adjourned at 2:15 pm ET.

Respectfully submitted,

Rachel Kraus (substituting for Tia Pratt)

**Association for the Sociology of Religion**  
**Business Meeting Minutes**  
**August 9, 2021, via Zoom**  
**James Cavendish, President, Presiding**

**Present:** Jim Spickard, President-Elect, Rachel Kraus, Executive Officer, Tia Noelle Pratt, Secretary, James Cavendish, President, Joseph Baker, Editor – *Sociology of Religion*, Tricia Bruce, Council Member, Richard Pitt, Council Member, Gerardo Marti, Brian Starks, 2021 Program Chair, Rebecca Catto, Kevin Christiano, Mark Chaves, Eileen Barker, Jamy Rentschler, Afe Adogame, Mark Chaves

Jim Cavendish, President, called the meeting to order at 12:48pm EDT.

Rachel Kraus, Executive Officer provides a report to the members:

- ASR has close to \$1million USD in assets. Most of that is in investments.
- ASR's contract with Oxford University Press, the publisher of *Sociology of Religion*, is changing. ASR's guaranteed income from the journal has offset the cost of the annual meeting. ASR's income from the journal will go down between \$10,000 and \$20,000 USD. Consequently, ASR is moving to a less secure financial position.
- Rachel asks for members' patience as issues around financial security are sorted out.

Jim Cavendish provides an update to members:

- The last two years have been trying. ASR needed to cancel 2 hotel contracts for the 2020 and 2021 annual meetings as well as transition to a virtual meeting for 2021.
- ASR has established a separate 501(C)3 to allow ASR to receive tax deductible donations and increase endowments; the association has over \$800,000 in endowments.
  - Investments can function in different ways once ASR has assets over the \$1million USD threshold. Meeting the \$1million USD threshold will allow ASR to increase spending for Fichter Grants, Travel Grants, etc.

Jim Cavendish acknowledges Jim Spickard, Tricia Bruce, and Brian Starks for their work in arranging the virtual meeting.

Jim Cavendish says he is happy with the direction of the association. He also expresses his excitement about the Association's use of technology and its possibilities for the future.

Jim Cavendish informs the association that Joseph Baker has communicated his decision to complete a two-year term as journal editor. The timeline for a transition to a new editor for *Sociology of Religion* is as follows:

- A call for applications will go out in September 2021 and remain open until April 2022.
- Summer 2022 – the new editor will put together an editorial team.
- Fall 2022 – the new editor will receive training.
- January 2023 – the new editor will take over.
- Joseph Baker will stay on as consulting editor through 2023 and is open to helping.

Jim Cavendish invites Brian Starks, 2021 program chair, for a report on the program.

- Brian express thanks to those who helped put the meeting together – Jim Spickard, Jim Cavendish, and Tricia Bruce.
- Event Pilot will keep the ASR virtual meeting template for the future; this will greatly reduce the advance work should ASR use a virtual meeting in the future.
  - Gerado Marti asks if ASR were to hold a symposium at another point of the year, could this platform be used.
    - Jim Spickard says the \$13,000 USD in start-up costs for the platform makes a smaller symposium event cost prohibitive; but it is possible.
- Afe Adogame suggests not putting graduate student panels alongside sessions that are likely to get large attendance.
- Mark Chaves asks for registration numbers which leads to a discussion about membership and the overall health of the association.
  - Brian Starks reports 180 attendees which is half of the usual in person numbers; most of them are speakers.
  - Rachel Kraus reports that the Association made about \$6,000 USD in registration fees; usually the Association brings in approximately \$20,000 in registration fees. The registration fee was much lower for the virtual conference.
  - Rachel Kraus also reports that membership in ASR is down significantly from last year; ASR currently has 360 active members down from a typical number of 600; Attendance at the annual drives membership since membership is required for participation in the annual meeting. With attendance at the annual meeting down, it stands to reason that the membership numbers are also down.
  - Tricia Bruce says that membership numbers and participation are concerning for the health of the association and asks about outreach
    - Brian Starks says there wasn't as much bandwidth to recruit for 2021; membership committee will be involved in recruitment moving forward.
  - Afe Adogame asks for an increase in the Travel Grants amounts for 2022 for two reasons:
    - Los Angeles is far from everywhere and California is very expensive.
    - Brian Starks says there is decreased membership and participation from both international and U.S.-based scholars. He goes on to talk about synergies with other associations such as ISSR and SSSR. There is a committee authorized to work on such collaborations.
  - Richard Pitt asks where the money comes from for membership and conference fees because as university-based funds decreased dramatically in 2021.
    - It is not possible to assess this without asking the membership directly.
    - Brian Starks suggests a survey of the membership since the last one was in 2014

Jim Cavendish invites Kevin Christiano, chair of the Lifetime Achievement Award Committee to announce Nancy Naison-Clark as the recipient of the 2021 Lifetime Achievement Award.

Afe Adogame asks for an update of the website because the website reflects 2020 instead of the 2021 annual meeting and the upcoming 2022 annual meetings.

Jim Cavendish announces the article award winner, the McNamar Award winner, and Fichter Grant.

Jim Spickard reports that Council updated all of the committee descriptions and created a handbook for each committee.

Jim Cavendish invites Joseph Baker to report on the journal.

- *Sociology of Religion* received 200 submissions last year and had an 11% acceptance rate.
- A special issue is forthcoming. It is expected to be the last issue of the year and will be on religion and the pandemic
- There has been a lot of turnover at Oxford
- Joseph thanks the associate editors for their work.
- Average decision time is 27 days; desk rejects are returned two weeks; major revisions is 45 days; longest was over 100 days; wait time is no more in 3 months; There has been difficulty in securing reviewers.
- Impact factor 3.4.
- As a result of concerns raised in 2020, Joseph looked into demographics of journal authors
  - Authorship was coded for 5 years
  - 20% journal authors are minority scholars; there was an uptick in 2019 because of special issue on multiracial congregations
  - 25% of authors in 2021 are minorities for 2021; the association has reported 25% minority membership for 2021
  - Demographic identifiers on the Oxford profile will make tracking easier moving forward; it is important to continuing tracking going forward; women authors down significantly for 2020-21 which reflects what is happening across academia

Jim Cavendish asks Jim Spickard to speak on the program for 2022.

- Jim Spickard points out that Council has been addressing all of the issues raised in the business meeting; ASR needs to talk about visioning because the nature of scholarship is changing; best thing ASR can do for itself is have a good conference in 2022; we may need to figure out how to make it more accessible
- Theme for 2022: “Religion, Repression, and the Search for Justice”
- Jim Spickard says he is looking forward to the conference and thanks the membership for its support.

Jim Cavendish says that he is confident in Jim Spickard’s leadership

Jim Spickard announces Rebecca Catto is the program chair for 2022.

The meeting concludes at 1:45pm EDT.

Respectfully submitted,



Tia Noelle Pratt, ASR Secretary



**Association for the Sociology of Religion**  
**Second Council Meeting**  
**August 11, 2021**  
**Via Zoom**  
**James Spickard – President, Presiding**

Present: James (Jim) Spickard – President, Tia Noelle Pratt – Secretary, Rachel Kraus – Executive Officer, Rebecca Catto – 2022 Program Chair; James (Jim) Cavendish – Immediate Past President, Gerardo Marti – President-Elect; Brian Starks – 2021 Program Chair; Council Members: Tricia Bruce, Samuel Perry, Rachel Rinaldo, Damon Mayrl, Geneviève Zubrzycki, Katie Corcoran, Grace Yukich

Jim Spickard calls the meeting to order at 11:34am EDT.

Jim Spickard introduces new council members.

Jim Spickard affirms the expertise of council members and his team approach to leadership.

Jim Spickard invites Jim Cavendish, immediate past president, to go over highlights from the first council meeting.

- Jim Cavendish reports that the first council meeting included:
  - Reports from standing committees
  - Announcement of awardees
  - Reports from publications committee, the editor of *Sociology of Religion*, and a summary of publisher's report
  - Discussion of Annual meeting format
  - Discussion of financial situation

Jim Spickard elaborates on:

- Balancing the association's budget
  - The association's revenue will decrease significantly due to the new contract with Oxford University Press; the new contract reflects broader trends in publishing
    - This issue also impacts the annual meeting as the revenue from Oxford subsidizes the annual meeting
- Drop in membership
  - The drop in membership reflects broader trends in academic guilds
  - International attendance at the annual meeting did not drop this year; held steady for virtual meeting even though some events were at non-standard hours for international members
- Planning for a new era
  - There are concerns that pre-Covid standards of annual meeting structure and attendance will not return
    - ASR will need to pivot and plan accordingly

Jim Spickard asks for feedback on the virtual annual meeting

- Rachel Kraus was pleasantly surprised about how well the technology worked

- Damon Mayrl says the structure of the program was clear
- Sam Perry affirms Damon's comments says the tech worked well
- Tia Pratt says the amount of information sent in advance was overwhelming and confusing adding that it made the process seem more difficult than it turned out to be.
  - Jim Spickard appreciates the comment and says that they were "building the plane while flying it" and now there is a blueprint for the future. That blueprint will ensure that information is sent in timely but not overwhelming manner.
- Tricia Bruce says some of the more informal interaction that is often most useful didn't happen and some of the Café spaces were underutilized.
  - Brian Starks provides more information about the use of spaces for informal interaction.
- Jim Cavendish liked both platforms and says in the future only Event Pilot is needed and not Lunch Pool although Lunch Pool has its uses. He adds that Lunch Pool will work better with more participants and suggests a Zoom room.
  - Jim Spickard appreciates the feedback and says the virtual meeting template will be available moving forward

Jim Spickard informs council that the Furfey Lecture is currently available online and the Presidential address will be available soon. Individual sessions will be available online for a week.

Jim Spickard reports that ASA no longer does joint sessions but didn't inform other organizations of this policy change. Despite this policy change, Damon Mayrl has arranged for a joint session for 2022.

Jim Spickard thanks Jim Cavendish for his leadership and Brian Starks for his work as program chair.

Jim Spickard calls on Rachel Kraus, Executive Officer for reports on 2022, 2023, and 2024 meetings

- Rachel Kraus reports that hotels are booked for 2022 and 2023 meetings
  - The Los Angeles hotel (2022) is close to the ASA hotel. The 2022 opening reception is on the same day of the ASA Religion Section and hopes for a joint reception with ASA-Religion.
  - The Philadelphia hotel (2023) is not close to the ASA Hotel. The hotel ASR used at the most recent Philadelphia meeting was not available.
  - Food and Beverage minimum for both the 2022 and 2023 hotels is \$20,000
    - The Association needs to be mindful of costs and stay as close as possible to \$20,000
    - A Food & Beverage minimum of \$20,000 is easy to meet. A decision needs to be made about having all 3 receptions (opening, Furfey, Presidential) or having 2 but making them "better" (more food/higher quality food).
    - Geneviève Zubrzycki points out that COVID will still be a concern in 2022 and the association needs options in case food and/or being in close proximity is not an option.

- Rachel Kraus says the hotel will abide by current guidelines and if providing food isn't possible, ASR will not be held to the \$20,000 Food & Beverage minimum.
  - Geneviève Zubrzycki suggests 1 reception with better food to minimize risk.
  - Jim Spickard suggests having a reception at an outside space if possible.
  - Rachel Kraus will double check about outdoor availability
  - Jim Cavendish suggests double checking the contract and perhaps adding an addendum for food and beverage in case safety is a concern in 2022 and suggests doing this before the deadline for canceling the contract without penalty.
- For Montreal in 2024
  - Jim Spickard suggests moving forward with securing a Montreal hotel
    - Council agrees.
    - Geneviève Zubrzycki suggests making inquiries about crossing the Canadian border and options for conference modalities.
    - There is general agreement from council that the hotel used for the most recent meeting in Montreal was well liked and should be secured again if possible.

Jim Spickard initiates a conversation about international travel and points out:

- There was still international participation at the 2021 annual meeting despite the time differences.
- Faculty travel grants are no longer available or are significantly curtailed.
- ASR needs to create a support community that is also an intellectual and learning community.
- Jim Spickard calls for visioning for this – a cohort of council members to think critically about the future of the academy, how we connect people, where sociology of religion is going
  - Damon Mayrl suggests a permanent hybrid model to support the type of visioning
  - Gerardo affirms the importance of international community
  - Jim Spickard shares thoughts from international scholars
- Jim Spickard calls for volunteers to serve on visioning task force: Rachel Rinaldo, Gerardo Marti, Tia Pratt, and Grace Yukich volunteer
- Grace Yukich makes a motion to create an ad-hoc committee to assess the changes in academia and how ASR can best meet the challenges they present, support current members, and grow the membership – both domestically and internationally. Sam Perry seconds the motion. The motion passes unanimously.

Jim Cavendish asks if there are complications from posting videos on the ASR website for putting them in print, i.e., if the Furfey lecture is already online, is it considered “published” thus creating a problem for printing it in the journal.

- After some discussion the conclusion is that printing the lecture in the journal is not a problem.

Jim Spickard initiates a discussion about engaging membership throughout the year

- Jim Cavendish discusses the possibility of ASR doing co-sponsored events with universities virtually throughout the year.
- Geneviève Zubrzycki says a book club instead of Author Meets Critic would be useful – some sections of AAR are doing this. She also suggests a workshop for first-time book authors to support proposal development as a form of ongoing engagement with the membership.
- Jim Spickard asks for volunteers to nurture the idea. Geneviève Zubrzycki and Sam Perry volunteer.

Jim Spickard calls for Other Business. There is none.

Jim Spickard asks council's willingness to meet 2 times before next summer and council agrees.

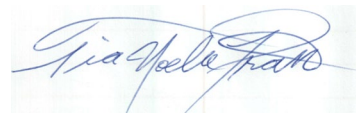
Jim Spickard introduces Rebecca Catto, 2022 program chair. The theme for 2022 is: "Religion, Repression, and the Search for Justice". The call for papers is on the website.

Jim Spickard thanks council for their service.

Meeting adjourns at 12:49pm EDT.

On September 2, 2021, Jim Spickard sent an email to Council regarding an item put forth by Kevin Christiano, chair of the Lifetime Achievement Award Committee, on behalf of the committee. The Lifetime Achievement Award Committee asks that the deadline for nominations be moved to May 1<sup>st</sup> of each year. Jim Spickard put forth a motion to move the deadline to May 1<sup>st</sup> and called for an email vote. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,



Tia Noelle Pratt  
ASR Secretary