

## CTS CONVENTION REPORT

### Report of the Seventieth Annual Convention of the College Theology Society May 30–June 2, 2024

**T**HE College Theology Society (CTS) gathered at Regis University this year to discuss “Vulnerability and Flourishing” at the Seventieth Annual CTS Convention held from Thursday, May 30, to Sunday, June 2, 2024. One hundred fifty-four people registered for the convention, which was held in conjunction with the meeting of the National Association of Baptist Professors of Religion (NABPR). Convention cochairs John N. Sheveland (Gonzaga University) and Cristina Lledo Gomez (BBI—The Australian Institute of Theological Education) invited society members to “develop theological and multidisciplinary resources for responding to vulnerability to violence and abuse” while at the same time promoting recovery, healing, and—ultimately—“the flourishing of all of God’s creation.” The call for papers acknowledged the church’s own patterns of exploitation, abuse, and cover-up and introduced a conference theme aimed to aid both church and society become better attuned to the various and evolving ways vulnerability is experienced.

Collectively, members of the CTS and NAPBR participated in forty-two sectional meetings, in which eighty-five papers and two responses were presented, and ten participants joined in three different panel discussions. The convention also included three plenary addresses, and the NABPR Region-at-Large presidential address. Alfred Kah Meng Peng (Singapore) offered the opening plenary “Vulnerable Harmony and the Pastoral Accompaniment of LGBTQ Christians: A Singaporean Gay Catholic’s Perspective” on Thursday evening. C. Vanessa White, OFS (Catholic Theological Union) presented “There is a Balm . . . Vulnerability, Challenge, and Hope” on Friday afternoon, and Richard Lennan (Boston College School of Theology and Ministry) gave the final plenary “Paradoxical Flourishing: Theology as Embraced Vulnerability” over the lunch hour on Saturday.

In addition, Kathryn House (Meadville Lombard Theological School), president of the NABPR Region-at-Large, offered the presidential address,

“Baptism as Solidarity in the Afterlife of White Evangelical Purity Culture,” on Saturday afternoon. CTS President Johann Vento (Georgian Court University) convened the society’s annual business meeting Saturday afternoon. President Vento updated the membership on a number of important dialogues in which the society is currently involved and thanked those involved. First, the CTS’s own visioning process is now fully underway. President Vento thanked the working group leading this process, including Kathy Lilla Cox (University of San Diego), MT Davila (Merrimack College), Brian Flanagan (New Ways Ministry), Craig Ford (St. Norbert College), Flora X. Tang (University of Notre Dame), and Sandra Yocum (University of Dayton), as well as Mary-Paula Cancienne, RSM (Georgian Court University) who is serving as consultant. Next, President Vento thanked past president Brian Flanagan for continuing the dialogues the CTS is involved in with other societies in the theological guild, including Academy of Catholic Hispanic Theologians of the United States (ACHTUS), Academy of Catholic Theology (ACT), Black Catholic Theological Symposium (BCTS), Canadian Theological Society (CTS-CAN), Catholic Theological Society of America (CTSA), and Fellowship of Catholic Scholars (FCS).

President Vento noted that CTS members were also involved in the spring synodal sessions hosted by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). Finally, President Vento reported that CTS representatives will join the December 2024 General Assembly of the International Network of Societies for Catholic Theology (INSeCT). Those gathered in Rome for INSeCT’s general assembly will participate in the Dicastery for Culture and Education’s conference entitled, “The Future of Theology in the University Setting and Its Necessary Conversions.” President Vento celebrated the many dialogues the society is involved in, both for being consistent with the church’s current synodal moment and for the value these dialogues offer the society as it engages in its own process of visioning and self-reflection.

Board Director Kathy Lilla Cox stood in for Vice President Mara Brecht (Loyola University Chicago) to announce election results and committee membership. In the spring election, Jason King (St. Mary’s University, Texas) was elected president-elect. Xavier Montecel (St. Mary’s University, Texas) was elected Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion officer-elect. Jessica Coblenz (St. Mary’s University, Indiana) and Susan Bigelow Reynolds (Emory University) were elected board members at large. At the spring board meeting, the board reappointed Tracy Sayuki Tiemeier (Loyola Marymount University) to the position of senior DEI officer and Dan Rober (Sacred Heart University) as executive director of national conventions.

The 2024–2025 awards committee members were announced to include Ramon Luzarraga (St. Martin’s University), who will serve as chair, along

with committee members Laura Taylor (College of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University), Linda Harrington (Independent Scholar), Callie Tabor (Sacred Heart University), Mary Kate Birge (Mount St. Mary's University), and A. J. Hoy (The College of Wooster). A motion passed to approve the new committee. On behalf of the board, Cox thanked past awards committee chair Mary Doyle Roche (College of the Holy Cross) and members Christopher Bellitto (Kean University) and Kelly Johnson (University of Dayton) for their three years of service. A slate of appointees for the 2024–2025 nominations committee was then introduced to include Mary Kate Holman (Fairfield University) and Anita Houck (Saint Mary's College, Indiana) with Tracy Sayuki Tiemeier, serving on the committee as senior DEI officer. Cox thanked Christina Astorga (University of Portland) for serving on the 2023–2024 Nominations Committee. The society passed a motion to approve the new committee.

As is the custom of the society, outgoing board directors Kathy Lilla Cox and Nancy Rourke (Canisius College) were approved by the society to serve on the Resolutions Committee, along with the vice president (*ex officio*) for the 2024–2025 year. Cox recognized the other board members who have completed their years of service. Brian Flanagan completed his service as past president. Christina Astorga concluded her role as senior DEI officer, and Milton Javier Bravo (Loyola University Maryland) finished his service as DEI officer. The full membership warmly thanked these members for their hard work. Cox reminded the CTS membership of the upcoming 2025 elections. She encouraged members to nominate themselves or colleagues for any of the following positions: vice president, DEI officer elect, treasurer, two at-large board members, and executive coordinator of digital media.

The executive director of National Conventions, Dan Rober, updated the membership regarding increasing costs of conventions due to factors such as inflation and vendor pricing. Rober announced the theme of the upcoming 2025 convention: "The Locus of the Theological Vocation." Nancy Rourke, Nathaniel Holmes (Florida Memorial University), and Ramon Luzarraga will serve as convention cochairs and volume editors. Rober asked that members encourage friends and colleagues to attend. The 2025 convention will be held at the University of Dayton, and Tim Gabrielli (University of Dayton) will be the local coordinator. The 2026 convention will be held online. The board's goal will be to plan an online convention that will maximize the format's potential for widely inclusive participation and creative engagement. Rober indicated that the society is seeking campuses and local coordinators for conventions in future years.

Director of Research and Publications Reid Locklin (University of Toronto) announced the successful publication of the 2023 annual volume titled *Theology and Media(tion)* and edited by Stephen Okey (Saint Leo University)

and Katherine Schmidt (Molloy University). The volume includes three plenary addresses along with fourteen peer-reviewed essays. Locklin celebrated the ongoing partnership between CTS and Orbis Books, noting the updated cover design and shift to the use of footnotes. Conference participants were encouraged to submit essays to the forthcoming 2024 Annual Volume, *Vulnerability and Flourishing*, which will be edited by John N. Sheveland and Cristina Lledo Gomez.

*Horizons* editor Elena Procaro-Foley (Iona University) reported on the fiftieth anniversary celebration of the journal. The two issues of volume 50 celebrating *Horizons's* Golden Anniversary have been published, totaling more than five hundred pages and including both new research and reprints of classic essays. Volume 51 will continue the anniversary. Procaro-Foley updated the CTS on *Horizons's* subscriptions (seventy-nine institutional subscriptions) and negotiated sales and donation agreements (more than eight thousand).

Treasurer Nicole Reibe (Loyola University Maryland) reported that the society is in a good financial position. At the time of the 2024 convention, the society's assets totaled approximately \$398,000, although this figure doesn't account for the cost of the convention itself. Reibe congratulated the society on meeting its fundraising goal of \$3,000 for the Fr. Sloyan Fund and explained how the funds had been distributed. More than a dozen conference participants—all of whom were first-time in-person conference participants—were given financial support to attend and participate in the 2024 convention. Reibe invited the CTS membership to consider the special role the Fr. Sloyan Fund can play in expanding the scope and reach of the society. Members can contribute to the Fr. Sloyan Fund through one-time or ongoing donations, or institutions can contribute financial support.

The secretary of the society, Paul Schutz (Santa Clara University), reported by prerecorded video that the society's membership numbers remain steady. Schutz also gave an update on the in-depth analysis of membership and convention participation he is spearheading. Schutz examined conference attendance between 2015 and 2023. The preliminary assessment reveals that there is a substantial difference between the number of people who attended one to three conventions and people who attended four to nine conventions during this period. Broadly, members seem to attend conventions when the location is more accessible. In addition, data analysis showed that 34 percent of those who attended a CTS convention only once were presenters in the years they attended. Schutz said that more careful analysis of the relationship between membership and conference registration is needed. Finally, Schutz reintroduced an ongoing conversation among the CTS membership, namely the matter of restructuring membership dues.

Before Saturday's business meeting, members gathered during a plenary session timeslot to continue the work of the society's visioning process. The cochairs of the visioning committee, Mary Paula Cancienne and Brian Flanagan, led a discussion exercise that invited CTS members to articulate and discuss our many hopes and ideas about the society's future. Saturday evening included a liturgy celebrated at the St. John Francis Regis Chapel, followed by the CTS Reception and Awards Banquet at the Mountain View Room in St. Peter Claver, SJ, Hall. CTS President Johann Vento presented the Presidential Award to M. Shawn Copeland (professor emerita, Boston College). President Vento remarked that Copeland has made "incalculable contributions to the field and to our society" and praised Copeland's vast body of work for offering "creative and prophetic witness to the most significant signs of our times."

Awards Committee member Chris Bellitto presented the society's writing awards. Stephen Okey was awarded best article for "Reconsidering David Tracy's Public Theology in a Digital Age," published in the *International Journal of Public Theology* 17, no. 3, pp. 321–45. Susan Bigelow Reynolds received the best book award for *People Get Ready: Ritual, Solidarity, and Lived Ecclesiology in Catholic Roxbury* (Fordham University Press, 2023). The Susan G. Perry Best Graduate Student Essay was given to Trevor B. Williams (Villanova University) for "St. Joseph, the Roman Canon, and the Redemptive Union of Liturgical Devotion." Kathy Lilla Cox, chair of the teaching award committee, awarded the 2023 Monika Hellwig Teaching Excellence Award to Timothy Gabrielli.

With the Rocky Mountains off in the distance, CTS members enjoyed the beautiful setting Regis University provided for an in-person gathering. All those whose efforts, intelligence, and careful planning contributed to a successful convention are deserving of thanks.

MARA BRECHT  
Loyola University Chicago, USA  
[mbrecht@luc.edu](mailto:mbrecht@luc.edu)