

Creating a new Atlantic School of Theology alumni/ae association

March, 2009

HISTORY:

The first graduates of AST in the early 70's formed the Atlantic School of Theology Association. It should be noted that this Association also welcomed all the alumni/ae of its antecedent schools: Pine Hill Divinity Hall, Holy Heart Seminary and University of King's College Divinity School, but there has been no significant engagement with the alumni from the antecedent schools throughout the life of the AST alumni association.

The constitution and bylaws were amended in 2001 and 2005. The name was changed to the Atlantic School of Theology Alumni (ASTA). In the spring of 2008, the Atlantic School of Theology Alumni association configuration was retired. The current officers continued on in a caretaker capacity. In the fall of 2008 there was a meeting of the caretaker officers and AST alumni/ae representatives from the three founding partners of the school; at this meeting the caretaker officers retired to make way for the creation of a new alumni/ae association. The association officers and volunteers over the past 37 years were recognized and deeply appreciated for all the work and effort that was put into the creation and work of the alumni association. (See the fall, 2008, issue of AST magazine, page 20, for an article by retiring President, Randy Townsend describing the process.)

While graduates of Holy Heart Seminary stayed in touch with each other, there is no evidence that a formal alumni association was created or that they became actively involved with the AST alumni association.

Graduates from King's College Divinity School automatically became members of the King's College alumni association, but for the most part did not take part in the AST alumni association.

The Pine Hill Divinity Hall has long had a vigorous alumni/ae association and continues to this day. Contact, however, with the Pine Hill alumni/ae association and the AST alumni association has been limited.

CREATING A NEW AST ALUMNI/AE ASSOCIATION

To resolve the challenges that were encountered with ASTA, the creation of a new AST alumni/ae association will be based on three basic principles that will guide its construction:

1. While ASTA had been open to all AST graduates and its antecedent schools, the fact is that graduates of the founding partners did not get involved in any significant way with ASTA. The new configuration will make conscious and deliberate efforts to welcome and work with not only those that graduated from AST but also the graduates of the antecedent schools.
2. It is recognized that the new alumni/ae association would be relatively small with limited financial and time resources to plan and carry out activities on behalf of its members. The new configuration will look to an alumni/ae executive made up of members from AST and its antecedent schools to help plan and authorize activities for its members, but the school will provide the funds and personnel to execute events and activities on behalf of the new alumni/ae association.
3. One criticism of previous ASTA events was that they largely took place in Halifax with nothing happening elsewhere in Atlantic Canada. The new association will plan for and execute alumni/ae activities periodically throughout the four Atlantic Canada provinces.

MISSION OF A NEW ALUMNI/AE ASSOCIATION

1. To provide fellowship, communication and continuing education opportunities for and amongst all its members from AST and its antecedent schools throughout Atlantic Canada.
2. To appropriately support, to the extent of available resources, the mission of the Atlantic School of Theology as defined and approved by its Board of Governors.
3. To foster and honour the relationship between the association's members and the Atlantic School of Theology.

NEXT STEPS

1. In order to move the agenda forward for the creation of a new association, a transitional executive committee has been formed. This committee will help plan and set the stage for the new association. The members of the transitional executive are as follows:

Fr. Louis Caissie representing Holy Heart alumni/ae
Archbishop Arthur Peters representing King's College alumni/ae
The Rev. Bob Mills representing Pine Hill alumni association
The Rev. Jane Clattenburg representing the Board of Governors
The Rev. Jane Reid representing the Anglican alumni/ae
The Rev. Linda Yates representing the United alumni/ae
Buffy Harper representing the Catholic alumni/ae
Mauritz Erhard & Dawn Robertson representing the Advancement
Department

At the first scheduled home-coming, which will be at convocation time 2010, an alumni/ae meeting will be called to formally elect officers and to approve a revised alumni/ae association constitution and bylaws that would reflect the newly configured association.

2. Possible activities of the new alumni/ae association are as follows:
 - A. Sanction a new interactive alumni/ae web site and establish an alumni/ae FaceBook account. Advancement has a small line item in its budget for alumni/ae work which could be used to hire a savvy AST student, to set up and maintain.
 - B. Sanction homecoming and regional events. In a broad brush way, regional events could look something like this: On a Friday afternoon gather for a social time and in the evening there will be a greeting from the current AST president and a representative from one of the founding partners followed by a nice dinner; then a notable keynote address that both challenges and informs the listeners (a continuing education experience).

Biannual homecoming events would be similar and would be timed to coincide with convocation. On Friday afternoon, the day before convocation when rehearsals take place, alumni/ae would gather for their annual meeting, a presentation of awards for graduates followed by a reception. That evening there would be a dinner agenda similar to the one for the regional events. Of course, alumni/ae would be encouraged to stay over to Saturday and participate in the convocation.

C. A suggested schedule for regional events would be as follows:

- a. November, 2009 – Saint John N.B.
- b. April 30, 2010 – Homecoming/convocation
- c. October, 2010 – St. John's NFDL
- d. May, 2011 -- Antigonish, N.S.
- e. October, 2011 – Charlottetown, PEI
- f. May, 2012 – Homecoming/convocation
- g. October, 2012 – Yarmouth, N.S.
- h. May, 2013 – Moncton, N.B.
- i. October, 2013 – Corner Brook, NFDL