

Secretary

Serves a three-year term. The Secretary is responsible for recording and verifying the official records of the Board of Directors, the Executive Committee, and the Annual Business Meeting. The Secretary serves on the Executive Committee.

Kimberly Rae Connor

Kimberly Rae Connor received a BA in English from Gettysburg College, an MA in literature and theology from the University of Bristol, England, and a PhD in religion and literature from the University of Virginia. She is a professor in the School of Management at the University of San Francisco where she developed and leads a program for MBA students based on the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius and where she has received awards for teaching and mission advocacy.

Connor's books include: *Conversions and Visions in the Writings of African American Women* (University of Tennessee Press, 1993) and *Imagining Grace: Liberating Theologies in the Slave Narrative Tradition* (University of Illinois Press, 2000), which was selected by *Choice* as an outstanding academic title in the humanities for 2000. Connor received grants for her work from the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Jesuit Foundation, and the Lilly and Luce Foundations. In addition to her books, she published many articles, reviews, and reference volume entries on topics related to African American and American religion and literature, and multicultural and Ignatian pedagogy. Connor blogs for *The Huffington Post* on how the humanities benefit management education and leads weekly story-telling field trips at 826 Valenica, a local nonprofit.

Statement

I am seeking the opportunity to serve as Secretary for the AAR Board of Directors because I was asked to accept the nomination by an organization to which I owe my career. After earning a PhD in 1991 and steadily publishing in my field, I was for a long time among the un-employed, the alt-ac, and the under-employed in academia. I taught various courses in religious studies in a variety of settings, including an independent high school, a community college, a state university, and several liberal arts universities. Currently, however, I am one of the lucky ones who enjoy stable employment in a setting where, although not a traditional religious studies department, nonetheless I feel valued, fairly compensated, and encouraged to use what I learned in my graduate studies in the humanities to improve management education. What sustained me during those long years of uncertainty about my professional development were the creative and leadership opportunities provided to me through service to the AAR.

An invitation to participate in the 2000 AAR/Lily Luce workshop "Teaching in the Global Village" when I was only a high school teacher encouraged me to continue my research as an unaffiliated scholar. The relationships I made with colleagues in the workshop led to collaborations, publications, and my appointment (2002–2012), as a member of the AAR Publications Committee where I served as editor of the Academy Series. During my tenure, we developed new, rigorous standards for the Series and I successfully edited 25 first-time authors who were writing in a wide array of disciplines previously underrepresented by AAR books. While serving as editor I was asked to serve as interim Chair and later was appointed Chair of the AAR Publications Committee, a role I held from 2011–2014. In this role, I was introduced to an even wider array of colleagues as our committee reached out with panels to support new developments in the field and to provide guidance for members in the rapidly changing climate of academic publishing. In 2013, I was invited to participate in the AAR/Luce sponsored workshop "Theology of Religious Pluralism and Comparative Theology," which led to deeper collaborations and the publication of an AAR series volume promoted by my work on the Publications Committee. I also served on the JAAR Editor Search Committee as a member in 2009, and in 2014 I chaired the JAAR Editor Search Committee. The searches resulted in the appointment of the first international and the first female editors. I also served as Associate Editor and on the Editorial Board for JAAR from 2010–2016. Currently I serve as chair of a sub-committee for the Publications Task Force of the AAR.

The AAR has sustained and nourished me professionally for almost two decades. My idiosyncratic background in interdisciplinary research and teaching, along with my current role in a school of management, have provided me ways to understand and appreciate the varied experiences of AAR members seeking relevance in their work, a perspective I hope to bring to the work of the Board. I am privileged at this point in my career to be able to prioritize service over other professional obligations and I appreciate the opportunity to do so once again for the AAR.

David Harrington Watt

David Harrington Watt earned an AB from the University of California at Berkeley and a PhD from Harvard University. He taught at Temple University for over thirty years. At Temple, Watt took a special interest in the university's general education courses and doctoral programs. He now teaches at Haverford College where he is the Douglas and Dorothy Steere Professor of Quaker Studies and an affiliate professor in the Department of Religion.

The books and articles Watt has written include: *A Transforming Faith* (Rutgers University Press, 1991), *Bible-Carrying Christians* (Oxford University Press, 2002), *Antifundamentalism in Modern America* (Cornell University Press, 2017), and "Philadelphia, Rufus Jones, and the Reinvention of Quakerism." Together with Simon A. Wood, Watt edited a volume, *Fundamentalism: Perspectives on a Contested History* (University of South Carolina Press, 2014), that explored what is lost and what is gained when Jews and Muslims are labeled "fundamentalists."

In collaboration with Laura Levitt and Tracy Fessenden, Watt edits a series, *North American Religions*, for NYU Press. Books in the series explore topics such as lived religion, popular religious movements, religion and social power, religion and cultural reproduction, and the relationship between secular and religious practices.

Statement

Over the years, I've come to have a deep interest in, and great affection for, the American Academy of Religion. It would be an honor to be allowed to serve as its secretary. If I were elected, I would carry out my duties conscientiously and enthusiastically.

As a few of you may know, I've been involved in the work of the AAR for a number of years. I have, for example, co-chaired the steering committee of the AAR's North American Religions Section, chaired the AAR's Academic Relations Committee, and served as the AAR's delegate to the American Council of Learned Societies.

A good deal of the work that I've performed for the AAR has been connected to issues that arise from schools' heavy reliance on non-tenured instructors. I've participated in numerous panels that focused on academic labor justice and served on the AAR's Contingent Faculty Task Force. I was one of the people who helped draft the AAR's "Statement on Standards Pertaining to Contingent Faculty in the Study of Religion" and I am currently a member of the AAR's Academic Labor and Contingent Faculty Working Group.

Like you, I want the AAR to be an organization that makes a self-conscious effort to serve the needs of all of its members—including contingent faculty, graduate students, tenure-line faculty, and people who make their living outside of academia. Like you, I want to see the AAR continue to work to eliminate unnecessary barriers—financial and otherwise—to members' full participation in the life of the organization. (That might involve, for example, restructuring the AAR's dues structure and looking for ways to defray the costs that graduate students and non-tenured faculty incur when they attend the annual meeting). As it pays attention to those issues, the AAR should also do all that it can to work toward an academy in which the labor of everyone who teaches religion is properly compensated and in which a large proportion of the people who teach religion are afforded the protections that tenure offers.

At present, the forces of anti-intellectualism, homophobia, misogyny, racism, religious bigotry, and xenophobia pose tangible threats to the members of the AAR. Obviously, there is only so much that the AAR can do, by itself, to respond to those threats. (After all, the AAR's resources, compared to those of many other organizations, are quite limited.) But the AAR can and should redouble its efforts to find allies with whom it can work to advocate for the rights of its members. And it can and should redouble its efforts to make certain that it conducts its own affairs in ways that counteract the threats its members face.

The staff of the AAR, a group of hardworking, highly-intelligent women and men who are a delight to work with, are eager to do that. So are the members of the AAR.

Those members have demonstrated an impressive willingness to contribute their money, time, and creative energy to support the work of the AAR. For that reason, and for many other reasons as well, the AAR is in much better shape than most other learned societies. There is good reason to suppose that the future of our organization is a bright one.