



OTSA Annual Meeting, Jan. 13 – 15, 2022
All times in **EST** (Eastern Standard Time)

Theme: Orthodoxy in a Pluralistic World
Program with Abstracts
(updated 12/22/2021)

Thursday (1/13/22) Morning

- 9:00 – 9:30 am: Opening Prayer Service

Welcome and Opening remarks: Teva Regule, PhD, OTSA President

- 9:30 – 11:00 am

- 9:30 – 10:30 am: **Panel: A Discussion on: “For the Life of the World: Toward an Orthodox Christian Social Ethos”**

Moderator: Teva Regule

Panelists:

- Chris Durante, PhD (Saint Peter’s University)
- Nikolaos Asproulis, PhD (Deputy Director, Volos Academy for Theological Studies)
- Fr. Nicholas Kazarian, PhD (Director, Inter-Orthodox, Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations at the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America)

This panel will provide commentaries on “For the Life of the World: Toward an Orthodox Christian Social Ethos” by two Orthodox Christian scholars as well as a discussion with one of its authors. The panel will consist of a talk by Nikolaos Asproulis entitled: “Doing Orthodox Political Theology Today: Insights from the Document ‘For the Life of the World: Towards a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church’;” a talk by Chris Durante entitled: “An Ecological Perspective on ‘For the Life of the World’” as well as a response from one of the document’s authors: Fr. Nicolas Kazarian of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

- 10:30 – 11:00 am: **Paper: “One Baptism for the Remission of Sins”**
Jeffrey Lamp, PhD (Oral Roberts University)

The paper will examine the contribution that the sacrament of baptism might play in an Eastern Orthodox eco-theology. The “one baptism for the remission of sins,” as the creed puts it, contributes to an eco-theology in ways that go beyond the remission of sins. An ecological reading emphasizes the cosmic dimensions implicit within baptism, especially when baptism is read in concert with creation narratives and in connection with the role of the Spirit. The focal image here is that of water. Water is an important consideration in the creation of the cosmos in that water is both the instrumentality and locus of the Spirit’s activity in the world and water is the image of the dawning of new creation. In this paper, we will examine the connections between water, creation, the Spirit, and new creation, drawing upon key biblical texts from both testaments for these connections as well as from services of the Eastern Orthodox Church in the celebration of Theophany, particularly the Great Blessing of the Waters and the Outdoor Blessing of the Waters services.

- 11:00 – 11:15: *Break*

- 11:15 am – 12:45 pm
 - 11: 15 am – 12:15 pm: **Panel: “Diaconal Post-COVID Rescue Response”**
Moderator: Teva Regule
Panelists:
 - Dcn. Salvatore Fazio (Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology)
 - Demetra Velisarios Jaquet, DMin (CPE Training Supervisor, Spiritual Director, Pastoral Counselor)
 - Helen Creticos Theodoropoulos, PhD (Saint Sava Serbian Orthodox School of Theology)

A study and reflection on the ministry of the diaconate, male and female, reenergized and focused on addressing pastoral needs today.

The COVID-19 pandemic that began in 2020 and still permeates the world has revealed gaps in the ministry of our Church to those who are stressed, frightened, sick, grieving, and suffering. Throughout the crisis, both mental and spiritual health suffered and continue to be at risk. These pastoral needs are not new, but the pandemic enabled us to see more clearly what these unmet needs are, and gives us the opportunity to reflect on the ways we can seek out and serve those in need. There are many lost sheep who cannot find their way back to the Church. We know that we are not the ones who save the lost; only Christ is Savior. However, we also know that He works through us, His Body, the community of the faithful, His Holy Church, as we are empowered and guided by the grace of His Holy Spirit. This is the pastoral ministry of Christ reaching through His people to the whole world, and can be likened to the search and rescue teams that go out in dangerous and desperate conditions to rescue the lost, injured and needy. Within that model of the search and rescue team, the ordained diaconate—male and female—has a clear and crucial ministry. This panel will examine the current needs and the way in which the ministry of the diaconate can have a critical role in the work of Christ, as it has since the first seven deacons were ordained. The panel will reflect on the history, and current roles and responsibilities of the diaconate today. We invite all participants to share with us a vision of what the full ministry of the diaconate can be.

- 12:15 – 12:45 pm: **Paper: “Deaconesses in the Orthodox Church Today: Consecrated in Africa, Considered Elsewhere”**
Carrie Frederick Frost, PhD (Saint Sophia Ukrainian Orthodox Seminary)

The consecration of deaconesses in Democratic Republic of Congo by the Patriarch of Alexandria in 2017 caught the attention of those supportive of, and antagonistic to, the revival of deaconess in the Orthodox Church throughout the world. Prior to and since these consecrations other autocephalous Orthodox Churches have affirmed the need and prerogative to reinstitute the ordained order of deaconesses in the Orthodox Church, yet none has taken such a step. What meaning does the consecrations in Africa hold for other Orthodox churches, and how does the possibility of reinstituting this order interplay with the autonomy of the autocephalous churches in praxis today? What are the broad issues at play as the Orthodox churches consider reinstituting deaconesses? These questions—which are believed to be critical to the process of reinstituting the order of deaconesses—will be asked and explored in this paper.

- 12:45 – 1:45 pm: *Optional Lunch Conversations/Thematic Break-out groups (Zoom Rooms-TBD)*

Thursday Afternoon: *Science and the Church*

• 1:45 – 3:00 pm

• **Panel: “Covid and the Church”**

Moderator: Gayle Woloschak, PhD (Northwestern University)

Panelists:

- Hermina Nedelescu, PhD (The Scripps Research Institute)
- Cheryl Johnson, MD (Cape Coral Hospital, OCMC Board)
- Rico Monge, PhD (University of San Diego)
- Fr. Anthony Roeber, PhD (Saint Vladimir’s Orthodox Theological Seminary)

The goal of this panel is to provide information and discussion about how the Church handles and continues to handle the COVID pandemic, examining the issue from multiple different perspectives, including medical and theological. Speakers will discuss the biology of the virus and reflect on issues related to Church attendance; medical treatments, both appropriate and not will be explored; context of the pandemic for the Church population will be discussed; and ethical perspectives on approaches the Church has used will be examined.

• 3:00 – 3:15 pm: *Break*

• 3:15 – 4:30 pm

• **Panel: “What makes the Dialogue between Science and Religion Theologically Valuable?”**

Moderator: Helen Theodoropoulos

Panelists:

- Fr. Doru Costache, PhD (Sydney College of Divinity, Australia)
- Dcn. Alexei Nesteruk, PhD (University of Portsmouth, UK)
- Stoyan Tanev, PhD (Carleton University, Ottawa, ON, Canada)

The objective of this panel discussion is to engage the audience in a reflection on the theological dimensions of the so-called dialogue between science and religion. The question included in the title of the panel will be used only as a starting point for the panelists to express their personal views on the challenges of articulating a scientifically engaged theology by initiating a critical examination of existing dialogical paradigms and offering insights that could be relevant to Orthodox theology. Some of the additional questions that will be addressed by the panelists are as follows:

- Is the idea of scientifically engaged theology more suitable to the Orthodox ethos than the widespread notion of science and religion in dialogue?
- Were the early Christian and Byzantine theologians scientifically engaged?
- What is the main purpose of a scientifically engaged theology?
- Is there a best way to conceptualize the encounter between science and Christian faith?
- How to make the encounter between science and Christian faith theologically valuable?

• 4:30 pm: Evening prayer

(Dinner Break)

Thursday Evening: *Outreach and Dialogue*

• 7:00 – 9:00 pm

• 7:00 – 8:30 pm: **Panel: “Engaging the Other in Ecumenical and Interfaith Dialogue: What we have Learned”**

Moderator: Fr. Gabriel Rochelle

Panelists:

- Tony Kireopoulos, PhD (Associate General Secretary, National Council of Churches)
- Teva Regule, PhD (Former Invited Orthodox Consultant, World Council of Churches)
- Dcn. Nicholas Denysenko, PhD (Valparaiso University, Former Director of the Huffington Ecumenical Institute)
- Br. Christopher Savage (Prior, New Skete Monastery)

Ecumenical and Interfaith dialogue is often challenging. When it is dismissed by some in the Church as unnecessary, what may be lost in the discussion are the opportunities for witness, and even opportunities for learning from others. Historically, the Orthodox Church(es) have participated in official (and unofficial) dialogue; in fact, the Ecumenical Patriarchate was instrumental in starting and promoting the need for the World Council of Churches. This panel will explore the challenges and opportunities in the engagement with the religious “other” through platforms in which the Orthodox Church is involved. What have we learned from this experience? How can our participation help to engender peace and healing in our ever-increasing pluralistic world?

• 8:30 – 9:00 pm: **Paper: “The Influence of Forum Ecumenism in Canada”**

Richard Schneider, PhD (Trinity College, University of Toronto)

Participation in ecumenical organizations and actions has always been a cleft stick for Orthodox Christians. On the one hand, at least since the start of the 20th century in the famous 1920 Encyclical of the Ecumenical Patriarchate “To the Churches of Christ Everywhere,” visionary Orthodox leaders have taken a leading role in fostering and developing ecumenical relationships, despite difficulties for cooperation which emerged in the course of developing methodologies for working together. On the other hand, especially but not exclusively on the part of traditionalist Orthodox, there has been a high suspicion of any tendency to regard other Christian bodies as equal partners, a view bolstered by an ecclesiology which identifies the Orthodox church as the one, and uniquely singular, true church called into being by Christ, with all others being relegated to inferior status as “heterodox,” making ecumenical activity a fall from Orthodox grace. Very often, Orthodox delegates to ecumenical bodies have used an evangelical apologetic: the Orthodox churches participate in ecumenism as witnesses to the one truth so that “others” may see, hear, and learn – an approach grounded in dialectic rather than dialogue.

Is this conflict of values an irretrievable dilemma, one of those irreconcilable paradoxes of which Orthodox liturgy and theology is so fond? In approaching the challenge of ecumenism the Orthodox leadership of 1920 recognized the cleft stick in its ecumenical call when it acknowledged “differences of doctrine” yet claiming these were not “barriers” to “contact” or even to “rapprochement” (Προσέγγις). Thus, the committee of bishops and metropolitans which prepared the Encyclical clearly believed that, while preserving adherence to Orthodox doctrine, a methodology for diverse churches which permitted working together was possible to find.

The Orthodox members of the World Council of Churches never succeeded in resolving this dilemma, despite the best effort of great pioneers such as Geoges Florovsky; the spirit of conflict and confrontation has remained and often erupted to the surface. But 30 years of experience in the Canadian Council of Churches [CCC] has effected a “Copernican revolution” in ecumenical work through which a methodology of mutual respect, living well and creatively with “others,” has been found, and works – indeed, works well. This new methodology for seeking ecumenical decision-making and insight – known as “forum” in CCC – depends on consensus-seeking rather than voting, respect among churches of the capacity of each to seek truth, equality of churches when they voice their truths in a dialogue of teaching and also listening to “others,” and appropriate humility in

accepting that others may have some important insights that our church needs to learn. The result for Orthodox Church members of CCC has been a dramatic shift from a minority group of naysayers to a position of leadership and imparters of sought-after wisdom. But by far more exciting has been the recognition through practice that “forum” is actually a theology, revealing important updatings of anthropology and ecclesiology which lead ultimately to a general model of being Orthodox in a pluralistic society. From the forum experience we realize a new – and better – understanding of the Great Mandate: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

Friday (1/14/22) Morning: *Outreach and Dialogue*

- 9:00 – 9:30 am: Morning Prayer
- 9:30 – 11:30 am
 - 9:30 – 10:00 am: **Paper: “What on Earth does the Kingdom of Heaven Have to do with the Church?”**
Fr. Radu Bordeanu, PhD (Duquesne University)

The term “church” appears only three times in the gospels, and only in Matthew, while “the Kingdom of God” (and its variations) appears 99 times. Clearly, the central message of Jesus’ preaching was not the Church, but the Kingdom. That does not mean that Christ’s proclamation of the Kingdom was later distorted to result in the Church. Rather, the Church represents the natural consequence of Christ’s proclamation of the Kingdom. The Kingdom of God, fully manifested in the person of Jesus, expanded to include the community of disciples and then all the nations. Jesus’ followers referred to their community as “the Body of Christ,” and so the Church is the extended Jesus, or the extension of the Incarnation, having the same mission as the Messiah, namely to proclaim the good news and to heal the world of sin, suffering, and death. Consequently, the Church remains “the Israel of God” (Gal. 6:16) in the context of the Messiah’s death, resurrection, and outpouring of the Spirit.

The Church exists as a partial manifestation of the Kingdom between the two full manifestations of the Kingdom, first in the person of Jesus and, at the end of time, in the eschatological Kingdom. In the meantime, the Church is an icon of the Kingdom, functioning as a foretaste of the reality that is to come, while simultaneously bringing the eschatological Kingdom closer and closer. The eschaton thus becomes prescriptive of how the Church fulfills its mission here and now. In this sense, the Church already is what it will be.

- 10:00 – 11:30 am: **Panel: “Orthodoxy and Protestant Evangelicalism: Status of an Emerging Global Dialogue”**

Moderator: Fr. Gabriel Rochelle

Panelists:

- Bradley Nassif, PhD (North Park University)
- Archbishop Angaelos of London (Coptic Orthodox Church, Co-Founder of the Lausanne-Orthodox Initiative)
- Edith Humphrey, PhD (Emerita, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary)
- Tim Grass, PhD (Facilitator, Lausanne-Orthodox Initiative)
- James Stamoolis, PhD (Wheaton College; Trinity International University)

Since the 1990s, the Orthodox and Protestant Evangelical communities have had more direct contacts with each other than at any other time. This panel brings together theologians from both traditions to (a) discuss current issues and developments in Orthodox-Evangelical relations, and (b) to suggest constructive ways our two very different communities can relate to each other on both the parish and academic levels. The late Fr John Meyendorff wrote: “...If mutual ignorance and suspicion still persists, it is due to a continuous lack of dialogue” (Letter to *Evangelical Scholarship Initiative*, University of Notre Dame).

- 11:30 – 11:45 am: *Break*
- 11:45 – 12:45 pm:
 - **Panel: “Mixed Marriages: Understanding Inter-Christian and Inter-ethnic Couples’ Challenges.”**
 - Moderator: Fr. Gabriel Rochelle
 - Panelists:
 - Fr. Charles Ioanides, PhD (Greek Orthodox Archdiocese)
 - Bishop Daniel of Santa Rosa, JCL (Orthodox Church in America)
 - Fr Anthony Roeber, PhD (Saint Vladimir’s Orthodox Theological Seminary)

For this panel, Fr. Charles Ioanides will present a summary of his research findings and ministry to thousands of intermarried couples and families as part of an outreach ministry to these people during his years as a priest of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese. A response to his presentation will be offered by His Grace, Bishop Daniel of the OCA, and Fr. Anthony Roeber, the coordinator of OTSA’s working group on mixed marriages

- 12:45 – 1:45 pm: *Optional Lunch Conversations/Networking Break-out groups (Zoom Rooms-TBD)*

Friday Afternoon

- 1:45 – 3:15 pm
 - **Panel: “The Nones and Dones: Their Motivations and Aspirations, the Challenges and Opportunities”**
 - Moderator: Fr. John Jillions, PhD (Saint Vladimir’s Orthodox Theological Seminary)
 - Panelists:
 - Nathan Jacobs, PhD (Vanderbilt University Divinity School)
 - Fr. Michael Plekon, PhD (Emeritus, Baruch College, City University of New York)
 - Fr. Gabriel Rochelle, PhD (Saint Sophia Ukrainian Orthodox Theological Seminary)
 - Fr. Geoffrey Ready, PhD (Trinity College, University of Toronto)

Nathan Jacobs' film, "Becoming Truly Human" (2017) highlights the questions posed to religious faith by the growing number of "nones and dones"—many from our own families and churches—who are turning away from faith. Dr Jacobs and the panelists will consider the motivations, aspirations, challenges and opportunities this group presents to Orthodox churches today.

- 3:15 – 3:30 pm: *Break*
 - 3:30 – 5:00 pm: **OTSA Business Meeting**
(Open to members in good standing. Provisional members may attend but not vote.)
 - 5:00 – 5:30 pm: *(Virtual) Vespers*
- (Dinner Break)*

Friday Evening

• 7:30 pm – 9:00 pm: **Florovsky Lecture:**

**“ ‘Preserving the Fullness of Thy Church’: Fighting Fundamentalism,
Defending Dialogue and Reclaiming Catholicity”**

Presented by Very Rev. Dr. John A Jillions.

• Plenary Discussion/Q+A

(Public Lecture – Separate registration required)

Fr. Jillions is a Research Fellow and the founding Principal of the Institute for Orthodox Christian Studies (Cambridge, UK), former Chancellor of the Orthodox Church in America, and the author of *Divine Guidance: Lessons for Today from the World of Early Christianity* (Oxford University Press, 2020). He has also served as Associate Professor of Theology at Saint Paul University in Ottawa (with the Sheptytsky Institute), Associate Professor of Religion and Culture at St Vladimir’s Orthodox Theological Seminary, and as adjunct instructor at Fordham University.

Saturday (1/15/22) Morning

- 9:00 – 9:15 am: Morning Prayer
- 9:15 – 10:00 am: **Plenary: Networking with New Members**
- 10:00 – 11:00 am: **Papers: Reading Ancient Texts with New Eyes**
Moderator for Morning Sessions: Fr. John Jillions

“Symbol and Image: A Comparison and Contrast between Plato and Dionysius”

Chungsoo (Peter) Lee, PhD Student (Antiochian House of Studies)

In Plato’s analogy of the cave, image is thrice removed from the reality, i.e., the painter imitates the bed made by a carpenter who in turn imitates the nature (*Republic*, 597b-d). The lower one descends in the divined lines, the lesser degree of clarity and reality is obtained. In contrast, in Dionysius the Areopagite the hierarchy of beings is established as God’s loving gesture towards the lower beings such that the descent of the higher in the hierarchy is the upliftment of the lower. The interaction between the higher and the lower occurs through contemplation (*theōria*), fellowship (*koinōnia*), and resemblance (*homoiōsis*) (*On Divine Names*, 1.2). In fact, the hierarchy itself is the gradation of participation and illumination between the higher and the lower by way of imitation (*The Celestial Hierarchy*, Ch. 3, p. 12). Symbol then does not deceive or distort, as in Plato, but uplifts the lower to the higher in union. This fundamental difference in the understanding of symbol or image that exists between Platonism and the Neo-Platonism must be understood as the significant background that shaped the Greek Fathers’ understanding of the sacraments such as the Eucharist. As the Syriac word, *raza* (‘secrete,’ ‘mystery,’ and ‘symbol’; its plural form, *raze*, means the Mysteries or the Eucharist) indicates, symbol contains the reality appropriately veiled, befitting the beholder for his or her upliftment. Semblance or symbol, then, is something positive rather than something deficient or lesser of reality and truth. It contributes toward the union rather than keeping the distance between the two disparate realities.

“Color Symbolism in Early Christian Egyptian Texts: Linguistic Associations as a Window into Cultural Perceptions of the Relationships between Color and Socio-Spiritual Status”

Claire Koen, PhD Candidate (Fordham University)

In this paper I will consider the use of color symbolism in influential early Egyptian Christian texts such as Epistle of Barnabas, Life of Antony, and the *Apophthegmata Patrum*. More specifically, I will consider the ways in which the use of the terms “darkness,” “dark,” “black,” and “blackness,” are used to signal evil, danger, or sin, on the one hand, while terms such as “light,” “white,” “whiteness,” and “radiant” are used to describe holiness, safety, virtue, and the angelic. I will then consider what these associations might be able to tell us about the authors and their intellectual circles. After this analysis I will turn to similar semantic patterns in the Divine Liturgy and consider how these patterns might serve to shore up the implicit cultural biases of Orthodox Christians.

- 11:00 – 11:15 am: *Break*

- 11:15 –12:15 pm: *Papers: Russian Influence in Foreign Lands*

“St. Tikhon and Conciliar Church Administration in North America, 1898-1907”

Scott Kenworthy, PhD (Miami University)

Bishop Tikhon (Bellavin), the future Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church, set a new tone of leadership from his very first sermon delivered in his new see in San Francisco in December 1898. In that sermon, he called his flock—clergy and laity—to be his “co-workers.” He invited his clergy to advise him as they were more familiar with the needs of the mission than he, and he called on the flock to work together with him in building up the Church in America citing Paul’s letter to the Corinthians that the Church is a body and that all members have their role to play. Tikhon’s last act before returning to Russia was to preside over the First All-American Council in 1907, where he sought to bring to fruition this cooperative—or conciliar—model of Church. These were not just words and ideas, but rather a model of leadership he enacted during the entirety of his time in North America—a model that was only beginning to be actively discussed in Russia after 1905 and would only come to fruition there in 1917, when it elected Tikhon to the patriarchate. This paper will examine St. Tikhon’s cooperative approach to Church leadership during the American years, based upon a wealth of primary source evidence from the *Russian Orthodox American Messenger*, St. Tikhon’s letters, and archival documents in repositories both in the United States and Russia. It will also argue that the new model of leadership he honed in North America would play a decisive role in the Church’s survival in the midst of the Bolshevik Revolution.

“Russia’s Religious Geopolitics: Targeting Greece for Influence-Building for Orthodox Competition and Transatlantic Disruption”

Elizabeth Prodromou, PhD (Tufts University)

Russia’s Church-state decision makers understand Orthodox Christianity as a channel for interest-values disruptions in the Transatlantic Alliance space and for ideational-institutional changes in the global, transnational Orthodox community. Both the Kremlin and the Moscow Patriarchate conceive of religious influence-building in Greece as an equity for power projection in Eurasia and beyond.

This paper explores Russia’s use of strategic conservatism as a mechanism for influence-building in the Church of Greece and Mt. Athos. Russian Church-state actors’ focus on those two loci in Greece’s diverse Orthodox Ecosystem has two goals: to displace the primacy of the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople as the leader of global Orthodox Christianity; and, to disrupt Greece’s ideological and strategic value for the Transatlantic Alliance. The paper interrogates two key events as emblematic of the overall post-Cold War historical trajectory of Russia’s influence-building: the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church, held on Crete in June 2016; and, the Ecumenical Patriarchate’s granting of the Tomos of Autocephaly in January 2019 to the Orthodox Church of Ukraine. Specific tools of intersectional influence-building are considered, including theological norms protagonism, social and traditional media platforms, malign cyber activities, economic and financial penetration by Orthodox oligarchs, and personal targeting and coercion of religious leaders. The paper concludes that, although the efficacy of Russian influence-building has been limited in the short-term, the medium- and long-term effects will generate negative consequences for Orthodox unity and for Churches’ legitimacy and capacity, which may be consequential for Greece’s unique positioning in Transatlantic priorities.

- 12:15 – 12:30 pm: *Break*

- 12:30 – 1:00 pm: **Paper: *Orthodox in the Media***

“Pastors, Preachers, and Propagandists: The Rise of Orthodox E-Celebrities”

Sarah Riccardi-Swartz, PhD (Arizona State University)

Eastern Orthodox Christianity possesses a hierarchical theological and social structure, one that emphasizes obedience to doctrinal teachings and the guidance of clergy and monastic elders. As a religious organization, the faith perpetually returns to the writings and teachings of the Church Fathers, Ecumenical Councils, and well-established theologians to make sense of contemporary social moral issues. While each Orthodox jurisdiction possesses the same revealed theology, they also have their own *theologoumenon* (theological assertions) that do not claim doctrinal authority but have, in many cases, become emphasized within ideological strands of Orthodox thought. Despite this flexibility, there has been a consistent understanding among canonically affiliated Orthodox communities of where religious authority comes from, mainly through revealed theology preserved via Church Tradition, and how it should be considered, disseminated, received, and practiced. Since the advent of digital technology, however, both the locus of religious authority and the validity of theological assertions have shifted because of the democratization of religious information via the Internet, crowd-sourced content, and the rise of Orthodox public actors on social media. Through a form of Orthodox “cultural activism,” pastors, preachers, and propogandists produce socially mediated discourses, enabling the cult of Internet celebrity and crowd-sourced theology to become co-shares in the transformation of Orthodox belief and practice (Ginsburg 1996). Working with digital ethnography, media studies, and communications theories, this article highlights key actors in the shifting theological authority and social milieu of Orthodox Christianity in the United States, questioning what the rise of these micro e-celebrities might mean in terms of theological innovation and the political posture of the Church in this postmodern moment (Alperstein 2019).

- 1:00 pm: **Concluding Plenary and Closing Prayer Service**