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New Series 13.1



Theta Alpha Kappa

The National Honor Society for Religious Studies and Theology

PRESIDENT'S NEWSLETTER

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Four Students Win 2021 Albert Clark Awards—2022 Competition Now Open



We are delighted to announce the winners of the 2021 Albert Clark Awards. The papers submitted by these students will be published in upcoming issues of *Journal of Theta Alpha Kappa*, along with other exceptional articles that were submitted for the competition.

Both winners in the undergraduate competition are students at George Washington University. **Stephanie Gemmell** finished first for "Willing Deeply and Inwardly: Neurotheology and Free Will in Kierkegaardian Existentialism." The runner-up was **Rebecca Leppert**, with a paper titled "A Disabling Medieval Religious Discourse: The Paradox of the Suffering Christ."

In the graduate student competition, the winner was **Ryan Duerr** of the University of Dayton for "The Dialogical Imagination: Tracy's Analogical Method and Luther's Hidden God in Socratic Conversation." The runner-up, yet another George Washington University student, was **Melanie Mohsen** for a paper titled "Reinterpreting the Prophet's Death (632): The Limit of Sociopolitical Functions on Theological Contemplations."

The application period for the 2022 Albert Clark Awards program is now open, and materials are due by January 21, 2022. For complete application information, see the announcement on the TAK website at <https://thetaphakappa.org/clark-awards/>.

Input Needed by July 1 for 2021 Business Meeting Plans

At present the TAK board is deliberating whether to host the society's 2021 business meeting in person at the AAR/SBL Annual Meeting this November in San Antonio, Texas, or else conduct the meeting online as we did in 2020. The issue of the traditional reception (with food and drink) is also especially challenging this year. While many people are eager to travel and meet in person again after staying home due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we also know that many others do not yet feel comfortable traveling or gathering in large groups.

In light of this, the board is considering multiple options: a "normal" in-person combined business meeting and reception in San Antonio, an online business meeting, and/or a stand-alone reception in San Antonio unconnected to the (online) business meeting. (We do not think it is feasible to offer a hybrid business meeting, incorporating both in-person and online participants during the AAR/SBL meeting weekend, in part due to the rental cost and complications of the technology that would be needed in a hotel setting.)

Could you let us know what you prefer so that we can plan appropriately? By July 1, please complete the *very brief* survey at <http://www.tinyurl.com/2021TAK>.



TAK Welcomes Two New Chapters

Theta Alpha Kappa extends a hearty welcome to two new chapters, at Mount St. Joseph University and Our Lady of the Elms College.

Mount St. Joseph University is located in Cincinnati, Ohio, and its chapter representative is **Kyle A. Schenkewitz**.

Our Lady of the Elms College (or **Elms College**), is located in Chicopee, Massachusetts. Its chapter representative is **Michael J. McGravey**.

Three TAK National Board Changes Effective July 1

After a year with multiple TAK national board transitions in 2020–2021, we are delighted that the board will remain intact for 2021–2022 as we undertake several significant projects on behalf of the society. That said, we do have three changes that will take effect on July 1, 2021.

Michael Berger (Emory University), who has served as an at-large board member since 2016, was elected at the November 2020 business meeting as our new treasurer. He and our current treasurer **Christopher McMahon** (Saint Vincent College) have been working together closely to foster a smooth transition in this very important office. Christopher will complete his second three-year term as treasurer this month, and he will remain on the board in 2021–2022 (appointed by the board to fill the last year of Michael's vacated at-large slot) to provide multiple valuable insights from his several years of board service.

Julye Bidmead (Chapman University) joined the board last summer to fill the final year of a vacant at-large position. She was subsequently elected at the 2020 business meeting to a full three-year at-large board term.

Graduate Fellowship Awards Update

Thanks to everyone who applied for the 2021 Graduate Student Fellowship Awards. Applications are presently being evaluated, and we will announce the names of the winners later this summer.

TAK Website Revisions Underway

Work is underway on several important revisions of materials at the TAK website (ThetaAlphaKappa.org), and these projects are major summer priorities for the national board and other TAK members who have agreed to assist. These are lengthy processes that concern materials including the chapter handbook, policies and procedures manual of the national board, and the contents and layout of numerous pages on the website. Thanks for your patience as we seek to improve our communications with you in this important venue.

When you consult the TAK website, please be sure to use the [ThetaAlphaKappa.org](https://thetaalphakappa.org) address. Unfortunately Google (and similar) searches sometimes link to “legacy” versions of the website hosted at two universities that have obsolete information.

Thanks to 2021 Clark Awards Judges

The success of every aspect of the work of Theta Alpha Kappa hinges on the work of volunteers who are dedicated to student success in the study of religious studies and theology. This is especially the case for the Albert Clark Awards program, for which the contributions of volunteer judges are vital. Thanks so much to the following chapter representatives who served in this important role for the 2021 competition:

William Ashcraft (Truman State University), **James Bowley** (Millsaps College), **Seth Schermerhorn** (Hamilton College), **Robert Seesengood** (Albright College), **Ken Stenstrup** (St. Mary's University of Minnesota), and **Liz Wilson** (Miami University, Ohio).

If you would like to serve as a judge in the future, please contact JTAK editor Bernadette McNary-Zak at McNary_Zak@rhodes.edu.

Last Call for 2020–2021 Inductions and Undergraduate Achievement Awards

There is still time to induct eligible students into Theta Alpha Kappa this year, using either our standard induction process (see <https://thetaalphakappa.org/new-member-induction-form/>) or the alternate system through which preauthorized students place their own induction orders (see <https://tinyurl.com/TAK2020special-induction>).

All orders must be placed with our vendor, Kenneth E. Jernigan and Associates, and payment must be received before orders will be shipped. Payment can be made online by credit card at the time of the order or else by a subsequent check. Note that the individual induction fee—which includes the formal induction certificate—is \$30. A shipping and handling charge is added to each order, so it is more efficient to place one large chapter-wide order rather than multiple small ones.

If your chapter number ends with 5–9 and you have not yet ordered your institution's Undergraduate Achievement Award, please be sure to do so by June 15 by emailing our current treasurer Christopher McMahon at Christopher.McMahon@stvincent.edu. Please do not request award checks after that date as our treasurer transition (discussed elsewhere in this newsletter) will soon occur.