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Message from the President

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Iohannes omnibus sodalibus salutem.

That greeting is of course more apt in a literal sense now than it has been—hopes for your health, in these times of unexpected and devastating disease. Of course, the COVID-19 disaster is bigger than our small classical society, but we are caught up in it. We are also reacting as a community in various ways. We are working with other classical organizations to provide assistance to our colleagues who are in need at the moment. Most notably as we all know, the pandemic caused us to cancel the Annual Meeting in March. And, I suggest, we have a unique perspective on the situation that is of value to our wider communities as well.

I. Support for classicists affected by COVID-19

First, we are supporting a very important project: the **SCS-WCC COVID-19 Relief Fund**, set up by the Society for Classical Studies and the Women’s Classical Caucus, and now co-sponsored by CANE, CAAS, CAMWS, and other classical organizations throughout the country. The fund is meant to support classicists, including graduate students and faculty, who have immediate and pressing needs for small amounts of financial assistance. The need is real—the initial amount of \$15,000, distributed in amounts of \$500 or less, was gone in eight hours. CANE has made an initial contribution and plans to increase the amount as the need continues. I urge individual members to make contributions to this fund for our fellow-classicists if they are able to do so. See <https://classicalstudies.org/scs-news/scs-wcc-covid-19-relief-fund> for more information and to contribute.

Second, CANE has itself set up an additional program of support for teachers in our area who are experiencing like need. In recognition of the extremities of our times, the Educational Grants Committee is temporarily expanding its charge. In addition to the committee’s ongoing support for teachers’ purchases of classroom resources, including access to online materials or service to assist with distance learning, the committee is also now offering micro-grants to Classics teachers for personal needs. CANE members (regardless of location) and anyone who teaches Classics-related curriculum in New England are eligible. Please contact Lindsay Sears at eduprograms@caneweb.org to apply for any of the grants offered by the committee.

II. Moving the Annual Meeting to a virtual format.

Before talking about the response to our having to cancel the meeting scheduled for Trinity College, I would like to take a short bit of space to thank Trinity for agreeing to host us. The arrangements were all made, and I can say that they went very smoothly. In particular, I would single out for our thanks the Local Arrangements Coordinator, Meredith Safran, whose efforts on behalf of CANE are enormously valuable. Thank Meredith when you get to see her!

Many scholarly and pedagogical organizations have moved their meetings to a virtual format. CANE was among the first organizations to have to cancel, and we have taken a while to decide what to do and how to do it. I felt that we needed a venue for sharing our scholarly and pedagogical work, and to come together as a community. Here is the plan.

In July, there will be a virtual CANE Annual Meeting, via our new Zoom account. The meeting will consist of several paper sessions and workshops during the week of July 13th-17th (not coincidentally, the same week of the cancelled CANE Summer Institute for this year). There will be no split sessions, so everyone can go to everything if they choose. Unfortunately, we will not be able to have the traditional CANE events like the Banquet or the awarding of the Barlow-Beach award, but they will come next year when we meet at UMass Amherst under the leadership of our new President, Teresa Ramsby. All of the sessions will be recorded and available for anyone who can't make a particular panel. And for this special meeting of our community, CANE will not charge any registration fees. Watch caneweb.org for further updates as we organize the logistics nearer to time.

As a final note on the past year, allow me to recognize the wonderful work that the outgoing Immediate Past President, Sue Curry, has done over the last three years. Of course, she presided over a most successful and stimulating Annual Meeting last year at Holy Cross, but I would like to say also that her dedication to CANE and to the world of classics in a broader sense, is truly inspiring. Thank you, Sue, for everything, and be sure to stay involved!

III. Reacting as classicists

As I have been thinking about the pandemic as a classicist over the last several weeks, it has struck me how much we already know about it from our special point of view. Liz Baer's recent op-ed in the *Berkshire Eagle*, available at <https://caneweb.org/new/?p=4389> and on CANE's Twitter feed, makes the point that Aeneas's speech to his men can help us to interpret our difficulties in retrospect. Vergil is not the only author to be helpful. After all, classical literature as we understand it starts with an epidemic in the *Iliad*. Oedipus's tragedy starts with his reaction to a plague, and the

Plague of Athens in Thucydides has been cited by many commentators already as a model for our understanding of what we are going through in real time. Not only that; those of us who are Roman imperial historians or early medievalists know about the plagues under Marcus Aurelius and Justinian at the cusp of the ancient and medieval worlds. Plague is a constant thread throughout the area of our study, in literature and history, and so I think we as scholars of antiquity have in a real sense already seen this kind of event and we know how it turns out. Not usually that well—to take one example, if we recall Agamemnon’s reaction to the plague in Homer we can see that his selfish reaction to having to make sacrifices for the common good did not solve the problem. The community, and in particular for us, CANE as a professional and intellectual home, is what gets us through these hard times. That’s the message I want to leave with this Classics community, that we are meant to support one another; and that we can say that with some assurance to our wider circle.

Durate et vosmet servate secundis,

John Higgins
CANE President