

The 2015 JRCLS Annual Conference Report

The 2015 JRCLS Annual Conference was held at Arizona State University on February 12-14 and was a huge success with over 550 attendees. This article will touch on some highlights of the Conference. The Conference began with presentations from the Service Committee (Jim Moss) and the Religious Freedom Section (Jeff Shields). Lew Cramer and Ilene Crane gave a presentation to students on networking skills.

Jeremiah Morgan, the International Chair of the Law Society, encouraged everyone to participate in the "Build and Extend" Membership Drive. He is urging chapters and individuals to expand the reach and the momentum of the Law Society. We now have about 12,000 members. That number could grow to 24,000 members or more if we work to bring others into this great society. He compared the society right now to a small river that could grow into a much bigger river. Elder Packer said we are "needed as defenders of the faith." The Membership Drive seeks 10% growth in a 10-week effort. The Drive started January 23 and will end April 3. Every committee, every chapter, and every member can make a difference to bring people into this society.

The first night of the Conference, Thursday night, the main speaker was Judge David Campbell (AZ District Court Judge). He spoke on a Judge's view of Justice, Mercy & the Atonement. We are working to get a copy of his talk for distribution.

Friday morning included a plenary session featuring Elder Lance Wickman, General Counsel for the LDS Church, and Bill Atkin, associate General Counsel. They spoke on the need for us (The J. Reuben Clark Law Society) to set up and defend religious liberty. We are needed to speak up and defend our views. Bill Atkin quoted the prophets and encouraged us to do this now. We need to defend and appeal for religious freedom upon which the United States was founded. We are under covenant to establish Zion and build up the Kingdom of God. Elder Holland said "we cannot flee any longer..." Elder Cook challenges us to join with people of all faiths to be a beacon of morality. We should be an active participant, not a silent observer.

Bill Atkin also announced a new initiative and a way forward for the Law Society to get engaged in religious freedom activities. He bore his testimony that we were driven to law school to use our profession, and our skills, to assist in this latter-day battle, so that our children can have the same blessings that we have had.

Here is the new initiative: The Church through Kirton & McConkie has established a religious liberty phone number and email address. This data is "attorney-based" in that the Church prefers referrals of information to come from attorney and particularly members of the J. Reuben Clark Law Society. More information about this initiative will be provided later.

The Friday meetings featured a Dean's panel and a church history talk at lunch by the assistant Church Historian. Friday night featured a few components. One was Senator Jeff Flake who received the Rex Lee Service Award from the Arizona Chapter of the Law Society. He spoke eloquently about freedom of religion and some of his experiences

with Cuba. Sheri Dew, President and CEO of Deseret Book, gave the keynote address and inspired everyone on how to properly process questions that we may have about the gospel. She shared some personal experiences and how she grew and deepened her testimony from her own frustrations.

Saturday featured Section meetings and other plenary sessions including the concluding session with the Area Legal Counsel from around the world. These concluding talks are always inspiring and show how the Lord supports their work in helping the church to expand and grow.

The 2016 Annual Conference was announced to be in San Diego and we look forward to seeing everyone there next year.

- Newsletter