

Annual Meeting registration opens
6-8 November 2015 in Atlanta
Resource highlights
and more inside



Photo taken at the Atlanta Botanical Garden, by Eric Sonstroem. This garden is a short drive/bus ride from our 2015 conference hotel.

#OccupyImagination

Clem understood that justice grows out of recognition of ourselves in each other. That my liberty depends on you being free, too. That history can't be a sword to justify injustice, or a shield against progress, but must be a manual for how to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past—how to break the cycle. A roadway toward a better world. He knew that the path of grace involves an open mind—but, more importantly, an open heart.

On Friday, June 26th, 2015, citizens of the United States heard the above words of “[public instruction](#)” from their President Barack Obama. Eulogizing the Reverend Clementa Pinckney, slain pastor of “Mother Emanuel” African Methodist Episcopal Church of Charleston, South Carolina, the President appealed to the language of religious imagination to address a grieving community whose “life space [was] punctured” (Fowler 1981, xii) by the insidiousness of systemic racism. It was a day and week in which a country stood “in the presence of [an] abyss” reverberating with both jubilation and lamentation: historic judicial decisions in favor of the right to love and the right to health for all; international terror attack; condemned killers on the loose; nine lives ripped from loved ones by bigotry and hate; division over an enduring emblem of that bigotry and hate....

On that Friday, a political leader turned rhetoric into kerygma into a didactics of emancipatory hope when he beseeched hearers toward what the late Religious Educator Maria Harris had beckoned us to long ago: the forms of contemplative, ascetic, creative, and sacramental imagination, constitutive elements of what make “religious education” an enterprise of “religious imagination.” Contemplative: How do we teach about the sacred worth of the Other as Thou (not demon, thug, animal, criminal, enemy)? Ascetic: How do we teach that individual freedoms are determined by the intricacies of interdependence? Creative: How do we teach that a better world is within reach because we are co-creators of that alternate future? Sacramental: How do we teach that nothing in this world is profane, that the mystery of “amazing grace” would somehow unveil our blinders and enable us to see the holy mediated in the midst of gritty reality? (Harris 1987, 3, 20, 22)

Dear members of REA:

The conference theme of our association this year invites us to probe the “connecting, disrupting, transforming” power of the human imagination. If “in imagining possibilities, human beings act as prophets of their own existence” (Ricoeur 1956, 127), then may we be emboldened to *#OccupyImagination* as teachers of religion. What might that look like for you? Following Harris’s guides, what care, what forms, what steps, what time, and what risks would you take? How might you help occupy REA’s imagination, so that our collective work becomes part of that “roadway toward a better world”?

Tell us on Facebook. Write me. Challenge one another. Join us in Atlanta.

Mai-Anh Le Tran, President of REA

References: Fowler, James W. 1981. *Stages of faith: The psychology of human development and the quest for meaning*. 1st ed. San Francisco: Harper & Row.

Harris, Maria. 1987. *Teaching and religious imagination*. 1st ed. San Francisco: Harper & Row.

Ricoeur, Paul. 1965. *History and truth, Northwestern University studies in phenomenology & existential philosophy*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Teaching Charleston, SC

Last year’s REA meeting was focused on “(un)learning violence and religion” and there were myriad resources for engaging systemic racism shared there. Now we find ourselves, once again, facing the deeply painful reality of racist violence — this time striking at the heart of a Christian community while at prayer. Dr. Chad Williams, Associate Professor of African and African-American Studies at Brandeis University has begun to collate teaching resources for critical engagement that can be used in the context of “teaching Charleston.” You can find [the collection online](#), and continue to contribute using the hashtag *#CharlestonSyllabus*.

Connecting, Disrupting, Transforming: Imagination's Power as the Heart of Religious Education

[Our November meeting](#) promises to be an stimulating opportunity for learning with and from each other.

Join us for an exciting two session pre-conference workshop planned for Thursday, November 5th on Using Technology to Spark the Imagination in Classroom and Online Teaching/Learning. This year's workshop is especially aimed at people who are new to teaching online, or who would like to enhance their basic skills.

In Session One (10 am to 12:30 am) you will learn how to choose and use essential synchronous/asynchronous tools effectively to create content, design effective presentations, and communicate in online environments. Session Two (1:30-4:00 pm) will focus on the social web. You will learn how to grow your own Personal Learning Network to model online habits that can enable you and your [students](#) to be life-long learners in the 21st century. The Pre-Conference will be led by [Kristen Treglia](#), Senior Instructional Technologist at Fordham University.

Then, as the conference unfolds, this year's plenary presentations include:

- [Emilie Townes](#), Vanderbilt University, *Reflecting on Teaching and Imagination*;
- [Fred Edie](#), Duke Divinity School, *Imagining the Untapped Depths in Liturgy and Ritual*;
- [Nick Stuart](#), Odyssey Networks, *People of Faith Imaginatively Engaging the World to Nurture Compassion, Justice, and Hope*;
- [Graham Rossiter](#), Australian Catholic University, *Decoding the Contemporary Religious Imagination: A Critical Appraisal of Media Orchestrated Imaginations and the Rise of "Consumerist" Religion*;
- [Kyle Kramer](#), Passionist Earth and Spirit Center & [Timothy L. Van Meter](#), Methodist Theological Seminary of Ohio, *Nurturing Care for God's Creation: An Opportunity to Expand the Religious Educational Imagination*

There will also be a short video on Maria Harris's *Teaching and Religious Imagination*.

The Saturday morning breakfast for students (Ph.D., Ed.D., D.Min., and MA) will feature a conversation with Graham Rossiter and Nick Stuart on *Imagining a Vocation as a Religious Educator*.

We're looking forward to learning together!

Harold (Bud) Horell
REA 2015 Annual Meeting Program Chair

Registration now open!

Registration for our November conference is now [open on the conference website](#). This year the basic registration for the conference — including payment options — will be handled separately from the signup for breakout sessions. Register now, then later on in the summer you will receive an email which directs you to a special page allowing you to log in to something called “Sched” which is a web tool and mobile app that will allow you to sign up for specific breakout sessions, personalize your own information for the conference, build a schedule that can be accessed on your mobile devices and more. Conference participants continue to tell us that networking at the meeting is very important to them — we hope this new tool will make that even easier! Also, don’t forget that reserving a hotel room is a separate process. You can [reserve your hotel room online](#), or you can call (404) 261-9250 and tell them you are attending the REA conference.

Register Now

European Doctoral Programs

Each newsletter we intend to highlight one or two of the PhD programs in our field, and at least one of the many denominational and other groups our members are active in. This issue we’re introducing the doctoral programs in the European context, as well as the Association of Presbyterian Church Educators. If you’d like your program or organization to be featured in our next newsletter, please [contact Mary Hess](#), Networking Coordinator.

This description is contributed by: Siebren Miedema (Amsterdam) and Bert Roebben (Dortmund)

The situation in Europe differs from that in the United States. Although there are some specific MA-degrees for religious education (RE) and youth ministry, there is for instance no standard two year course program for PhD-students in RE. All PhD-students contact an individual supervisor in a theology or pedagogy department and start the process. External PhD-students, having a part-time or full-time job outside the university, are primarily writing their dissertation. For internal PhD-students with assistant jobs at universities or with special funding opportunities, there are provisions being made to help them in doing their research and in writing their thesis. In what follows we focus on the situation in the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany.

From the early 90s on all academic disciplines at the Dutch state and denominational universities were combined in so-called national Schools of Research. For theology and religious studies the Netherlands School for Advanced Studies in Theology and Religion (NOSTER) brought together senior staff members meeting certain criteria (e.g. having earned a doctorate and having published widely nationally and internationally) and their internal PhD students (i.e. students on the payroll of a university). NOSTER also provided special courses that PhD students could follow while working on their dissertation. Within the university departments for theology and/or religious studies the supervisors and their PhD students made a decision from the very start of the research project which NOSTER or other courses could be helpful for the research project of the student. Some universities also offered two year research master programs in theology/religious studies in which the second year was intended to be the first year of a four year PhD track for internal students if they wanted to continue and had the good fortune to get a position on the payroll of a research group.

Most universities in the Netherlands started around 2005 to develop their own disciplinary organized graduate schools. Instead of focusing on a national level, the faculty has gradually become the focal point of the research and the national networks were used as complementary support. Recently most universities make a half year of coursework compulsory for both internal and external PhD-students. This is especially for external PhD-students a big change, and we should see whether this is putting up a barrier for them to start with a dissertation project at all.

In Belgian and German universities PhD-students are supported in their writing with extra courses on writing skills, research methods and presentation qualifications. Sometimes they receive funding for visiting conferences and presenting their work. Extra opportunities are provided to delve deeper in their work in collegial groups in faculties and between faculties. This is very often the case and is much welcomed by the students at stake. In Germany where RE is mainly taught in theological faculties and institutes (in more than 75 locations) some provisions are made for a so called *Graduiertenkolleg*, a specialized set of meetings for PhD-students in a specific field. For RE however such a consortium has not been established yet, although the plans for such an initiative were almost finished in the Ruhr-Region (Bochum, Dortmund and Duisburg-Essen), but the funding did not succeed. Some junior RE-researchers are attending other more general *Graduiertenkollegs* in order to be more involved academically in solid research activities.

Briefly: if a non-European student has the intention to study European approaches to RE (focusing for instance on schools and their specific RE organization and didactics) he/she is invited to contact a specific supervising professor (in German called the *Doktorvater*) and to develop a program together with this person. We are always prepared to help anyone who is having plans in this direction to find a interesting place to work on a PhD.

Association of Presbyterian Church Educators

The Association of Presbyterian Church Educators, Inc. (APCE) is an association made up of those who are serving or have served in educational ministries, as ministers, professional or volunteer educators, or students, in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Reformed Church in America, The Presbyterian Church in Canada, the Moravian Church in America, and the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

The purpose of APCE is to advance educational ministries in the Church and increase the ongoing witness of our faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. APCE encourages professional recognition through certification and/or designation, provides opportunities for improvement of professional skills, supports personal enrichment, actively advocates for church education, serves as a channel to and from denominational structures and recognizes achievements and innovative contributions of church educators.

APCE has both [a robust website](#), an [active Facebook page](#), and [a semi-annual magazine](#) which is available online. REA member, Kathy Dawson, was recently named the [APCE 2015 Educator of the Year](#). APCE holds a large meeting every year at which religious educators gather to learn from each other and exchange ideas. The next APCE meeting will be held in Chicago, January 27-30th.

Zeta Lamberson, President, and Von Clemans, President-Elect, will be our guests at this year's REA meeting. We look forward to sharing with them our famous REA hospitality, and to talking with them about ways REA and APCE might interact for mutual benefit.

Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions

In every issue of eREACH we will feature a web-based resource which may be of interest to our members. This month we are featuring the [Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions](#) website. If you have a resource you'd like to share, please contact our networking coordinator, [Mary Hess](#).

The Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions has [a very robust website](#), full of resources for engaging in inter-religious learning. They also host an event every couple of years that brings together more than 10,000 *inter*-religious participants from all over the world. Their [next gathering will be held October 15-19](#) of this year in Salt Lake City.

From the [Council's website](#):

“We live in a world of difference. Yet, we are interdependent. Nowhere is learning to live with difference more important than religion.

Too often, religion is misused as an instrument for division and injustice, betraying the very ideals and teachings that lie at the heart of each of the world's great traditions. At the same time, religious and spiritual traditions shape the lives of billions in wise and wonderful ways. They gather people in communities of shared beliefs and practices. When these diverse communities work in harmony for the common good, there is hope that the world can be transformed.

Over the years, the Council has initiated dialogues and nurtured relationships among people of difference. In doing so the Council has provided a framework for expressing many visions of a just, peaceful and sustainable future. In the process, religious and spiritual communities have discovered a shared commitment to ethical principles. The Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions seeks to promote interreligious harmony, rather than unity. The problem with seeking unity among religions is the risk of loss of the unique and precious character of each individual religious and spiritual tradition; this understanding is key to our framework.”

Ask Your Editor

Question:

“I know that authors are not allowed to submit articles to our association’s journal, *Religious Education*, that have been published elsewhere previously. The author guidelines clearly state that the journal only accepts submissions of original, unpublished work. If I present a paper at the REA annual meeting and it is published online in the conference proceedings, does that count as having been “published elsewhere”?”

Response:

Thank you for noticing that the guidelines for submissions to *Religious Education* require authors to state that the articles they submit to the journal have not been published in another place or submitted to another journal for review simultaneously. We want to publish original articles that make a contribution to the field and address matters of importance to scholars and practitioners of religious education. The submission of articles that are revised versions of conference papers, however, is standard practice with professional journals, and most professional organizations like ours now publish their proceedings online. Editors of journals across all disciplines fully expect that scholars use conference presentations to share their ideas and get feedback on their work to strengthen it before submission to a journal. Publication in the conference proceedings of a professional organization such as the REA therefore does not constitute a previous publication of the article in this formal sense. Feel free to present your paper at the REA and allow it to appear in the conference proceedings. Then submit it to the journal for review after you have the chance to re-work it using the good feedback you get from your colleagues at the meeting.

Joyce Mercer, Editor-elect and Book Review Editor
Religious Education

Member News

For many years eREACH was a place in which members could share news of their accomplishments, transitions, publications, and other interesting items of note to colleagues. We are interested in rejuvenating that part of this communication tool, and with this issue we will begin sharing such news. Please contact [Mary Hess](#), REA's networking coordinator, with any information you would like to share!

Dr. Leah Gunning-Francis announces her forthcoming book, [Ferguson and Faith: Sparking Leadership and Awakening Community](#). "The folks for Chalice Press and FTE invited me to write a book about clergy involvement in Ferguson, with a eye toward how they supported young emergent leadership. The book is a collection of stories of a few clergy and young activists that engaged worked for racial justice in the aftermath of Michael Brown's death. These are the stories that were rarely imaged on television, but if we taken seriously, can challenge faith communities to think critically about how God may call us to live into a future filled with hope. My hope is for this to be a valuable resource for seminarians, clergy, laity, and others that are interested in learning more about what doing justice as an expression of one's faith looks like." The book is scheduled to be released in early August, in time for the one-year anniversary (Aug. 9) of Michael Brown's death.

Dr. Richard Isralowitz announces the receipt of a major grant from USAID to support a joint Israeli and Palestinian effort to assess substance use among high risk youth on both sides affected by last year's war. He welcomes any inquiries from REA colleagues interested in the project.

Dr. Jennie Knight announces her forthcoming book, co-authored with Dr. Renee K. Harrison (Assistant Professor of African American and U.S. Religious History at Howard University Divinity School), entitled [Engaged Teaching in Theology and Religion](#). It is being published by Palgrave Macmillan, and is a book-length work dedicated to engaged pedagogies for theological education and religious studies, with implications for religious communities.

Dr. Evelyn Parker has been appointed to the newly established [Susanna Wesley Centennial Chair in Practical Theology](#), Southern Methodist University, Perkins School of Theology

Dr. Sarah Tauber is interested in connecting with members who might be interested in a research project on the subject of the intersection of adult learning and religious conversion. She writes "in the process of conversion to Judaism learning definitely plays a central part, and yet we know nothing about how that process evolves, its value and the like. The recent Pew reports have indicated that a pretty substantial percentage of adult Americans already switch religious traditions at some point in their lives, and when that includes switching within Protestant denominations the number gets very high. So...in the spirit of the REA I was wondering whether there are colleagues in the Protestant,

Catholic, and Muslim religious education world who would like to get together to discuss a bigger collaborative research endeavor on the subject. It could potentially be a blend of qualitative and quantitative depending on whose participating and how we set up the research. It could be a major addition to our understanding about formal conversion, but also about faith transformation more generally and how learning intersects that process.”

Are you presenting at the American Academy of Religion?

Many of you know that the REA is seeking to increase its visibility at AAR. We regularly hold a session there, and we would also like to put together a list of sessions where REA members are presenting. If you will be participating in some way in the AAR meeting in Atlanta this year, please send us the information so that we can make it available to other REA members. Details should be sent to our networking coordinator, [Mary Hess](#).

Bookseller will be at REA meeting

We are grateful to announce that we will once again have a bookseller present at the meeting in November. If you have a book you would included in the display, please contact [Lucinda Huffaker](#) as soon as possible.

REA in Wikipedia

We have begun to tend an entry in the Wikipedia on the [Religious Education Association](#). If you have experience in that ecology, please help us refine and expand the entry. We are particularly interested in including information that links to secondary sources, as those are highly prized in the Wikipedia structures. If you are not familiar with editing there, but have resources or information you would like to share, please contact our networking coordinator, [Mary Hess](#).



Don't miss your REA renewal notice

We have instituted a new process for membership, using software from WildApricot. This software allows REA staff to keep track of our members internally, and to offer immediate access to the journal once you've submitted your membership. We have heard from a few members, however, that they are not receiving their renewal notices. As we've tracked down the problem we've learned that certain email programs will direct our renewal notices to spam folders. Please check your spam settings, and make sure that you add **religiouseducationassociation@wildapricot.org** to your contacts so that these messages are allowed into your inbox. If you are ever unsure of your membership status, you can look yourself up in [our member directory](#), or you can check by clicking on "membership login and profile" at the bottom of any page on our website.

Donate to support your Association

Every year we hear from doctoral students, as well as our international members, how difficult it is to come up with funding to travel to our annual meetings. We have a small travel fund available with which to offer partial support, and we are grateful for the generosity of a few members who contribute faithfully to that fund. However, the need is increasing, and we are always seeking additional contributions! You can donate at any time you like from our website: simply click on the "donate" button, which will take you to our PayPal account, or click on [this PayPal link](#). From there you can use any regular credit or debit card, as well as other kinds of funds, to donate. We really appreciate your support and urge you to consider donating.

One other way to support us is to designate the Religious Education Association as your "smile" partner at Amazon.com so that your purchases direct a small percentage to REA. More details at smile.amazon.com.



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