

Reflecting on the travel ban
Highlights from the spring Board meeting
Call for papers for St. Louis
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REA Board Issues Public Statement on Travel Ban

We, the Board of the Religious Education Association, an international organization made up of scholars and practitioners of multiple faiths, are deeply concerned by recent actions of the Trump Administration that express racism and religious intolerance. We acknowledge the recent call from academics across the globe to boycott attendance at conferences held in the United States while entry of persons from predominantly Muslim countries has been made difficult and in some cases impossible by an executive order, court proceedings notwithstanding. As thousands of scholarly colleagues state:

“The Order institutionalises racism, and fosters an environment in which people racialised as Muslim are vulnerable to ongoing and intensifying acts of violence and hatred. Among those affected by the Order are academics and students who are unable to participate in conferences and the free communication of ideas. We the undersigned take action in solidarity with those affected by Trump’s Executive Order by pledging not to attend international conferences in the US while the ban persists. We question the intellectual integrity of these spaces and the dialogues they are designed to encourage while Muslim colleagues are explicitly excluded from them.” (<https://goo.gl/b8ExvL>)

Sensitive to this important issue, the Board, in its recent retreat, discussed the ramifications of relocating future conferences in 2017, 2018, and 2019 out of the United States in light of the concerns of our members traveling from other countries. With the

recognition that our 2017 program is focused on the theme of Encounter across multiple faiths, these issues are particularly poignant. In the end, we have decided to host our 2017 Annual Meeting in St. Louis as planned, including excursion and conversation with local leaders in Ferguson. The extensive planning we have already done to contextualize the theme of Encounter in St. Louis with local leaders, concerns about international students who are unable to safely travel outside of the US at this time, and potential financial losses in canceling our contract with the hotel led to this decision.

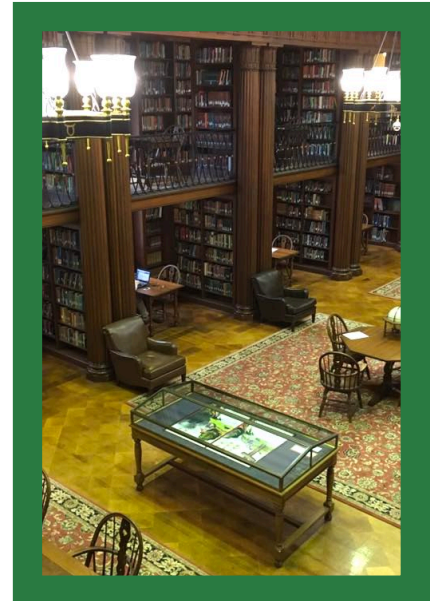
For similar reasons, we have also decided to keep our 2018 annual meeting in the Washington, DC, metro area. Our theme will be related to confronting hegemony and creating brave spaces as a prophetic stance against the racism and religious intolerance being emboldened by such policies. We as the Board have unanimously and enthusiastically approved hosting our 2019 annual meeting in Toronto, Canada as a small but intentional move towards solidarity with our colleagues.

*Voted unanimously this 5th day of March 2017
REA Board of Directors*

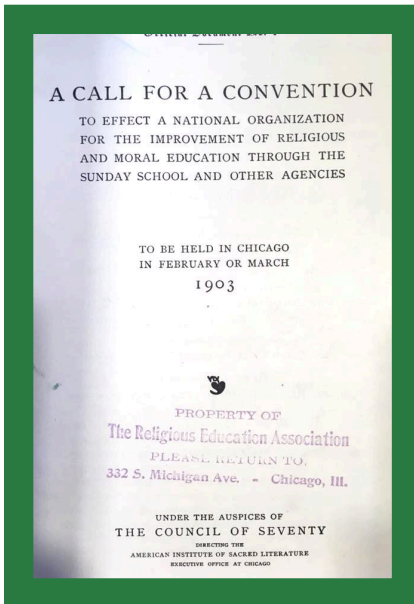
Exploring the REA Archives at Yale

History is an excellent teacher. Encountering her is like coming home intellectually. This is how my stay at Yale Divinity School in the second week of March 2017 felt, when I was researching the archives of REA in the basement of that famous institution. Beforehand it was my firm conviction that the president of an association needs to familiarize himself with the past in order to make wise decisions for the future. Many issues discussed by the executive board during the spring break in St. Louis reappeared in my reading and researching of the archives. I just can offer a glimpse of what I have learned.

First of all, it was a magic feeling, holding in my hands the official invitation from the so called “Council of the Seventy” to religious and educational leaders from the USA and Canada to convene (February 10-12, 1903) in Chicago in order to establish a “Religious Education Association.” The invitation was signed by the initiator, professor William Rainey Harper, the first president of the University of Chicago, who became the first executive secretary of REA. Professor Frank Knight Sanders, Dean of Yale Divinity School, was the first President of REA. In his presidential address at the second convention one year later in Philadelphia (March 2-4, 1904) he concludes: “For there is a great work to be done; we have but made a beginning; the field is limitless and inviting. We need to make a working platform so broad that all earnest and reverent souls can find a place for themselves upon it. We need to define religious education in such a way that it shall not mean sectarianism or sentimentalism but a kind of culture which is indispensable to the normal man (sic!) – a culture as naturally belonging to public education as to private, a culture which shall



stand pre-eminently for religious reality and breadth and power” [Official REA Bulletin #3, p. 15].

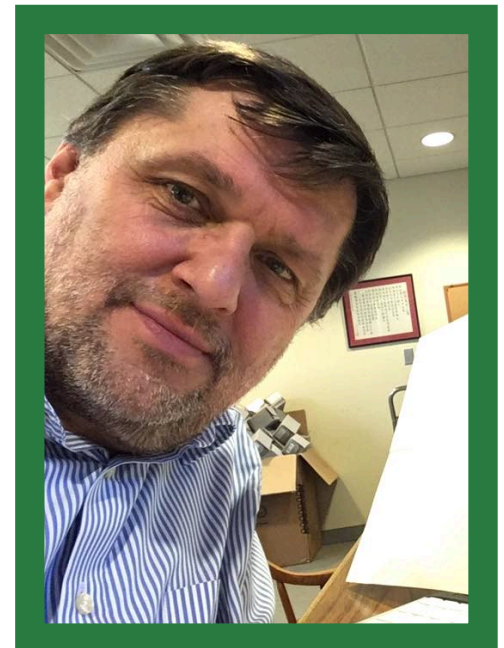


The proceedings of the three first conventions (Chicago 1903, Philadelphia 1904, Boston 1905) appeared as edited books. Papers of the 1906 conference in Cleveland (OH) were published in the first volume of the new journal *Religious Education*. In the introduction to the very first issue of the journal one can read the famous words describing the threefold purpose of REA: “To inspire the educational forces of our country with the religious ideal, to inspire the religious forces of our country with the educational ideal and to keep before the public mind the ideal of religious education, and the sense of its need and value” [Religious Education 1 (1906-1907), p. 2].

The very readable book by Stephen A. Schmidt, *A History of the Religious Education Association* (Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press, 1983) covers the history of REA from 1903 until 1970. According to Schmidt, REA had to be reinvented several times, always in response to societal and cultural developments.

Many interesting documents until 1970 and afterwards (including the merger of REA with APRRE in 2003-2004) describe the permanent need for recontextualisation (see the history pages of the REA:APPRRE website).

My research time at Yale was limited: I could only access the documents until the thirties of the 20th century. But I was deeply moved when I was listening to the voices in the papers, reflecting their struggles and hopes, their responsibility to provide good education, addressing the social, cultural and moral changes in North America. After 25 years an internal evaluation of REA took place (in fact similar to our membership survey in 2016!), and a new policy statement was developed. In an anonymous typed document in preparation for the statement, the author argues: “The REA offers to workers of every faith opportunity to meet for free discussion, each speaking for himself alone and not as a representative of any institution of interest. The Association is the only organization that provides such a ‘clearing house for thought’. Its central objective is to make of itself a fellowship of men and women working at a common task, regardless of race or inherited faith.” And he adds in handwriting: “and thereby realize in practice the real brotherhood of man” [REA Archives, Box 1, Folder 17].



The shifting world order and the economic crisis both in North America and Europe in the thirties deeply influence the intellectual, organizational and financial dynamic of REA. In 1932 the board decides to plan an “exploratory year,” so that REA can redefine

itself and its mission in these harsh times. Based on a paper written by Professor Harrison Elliott of Union Theological Seminary, consultations take place all over the country. The reports with the responses that I have seen are amazing. They can be considered as an important and representative source for research on education in times of intensive societal change.

Many interesting things could be mentioned here. And much more work still needs to be done.

But let me just finish here by giving the floor to one of those consultative voices, namely Galen M. Fisher, recording secretary of REA in 1932, working at the 'Institute of Social and Religious Research' at Columbia University. He says: "The basic formula [of REA] (...) should be retained (...), creating stronger confidence among intelligent men and women of the three faiths that religion is indispensable to sound character, both individual and social, and that the central affirmations, the convictions common to all, remain unshaken. The widespread lament over the crumbling of traditional standards and the loss of confidence in political and business leaders may constitute an opportunity for an inter-confessional, non-institutional body, like the Association, to take a leading part in restoring public confidence in those elementals in which Jew, Protestant, and Catholic are substantially agreed and in reinforcing religious and character-building institutions."

Indeed, history is a great teacher, especially today! I am looking forward to learning more from her in the months and years to come.

Bert Roebben is the President of the Religious Education Association

REA Board Discusses Association-Wide Survey

Nearly the entire board of the REA was able to meet in St. Louis recently, for a working retreat in which the newly completed Association-wide survey was discussed. You can access [the final report here](#), but a few highlights include:

- We sent out the survey to more than 1000 people (members, people who have published in the journal, and other contacts), and ended up with a 31% response rate (above industry standard).
- The people most likely to come to our annual meetings are members who have published in our journal.
- Perhaps similarly, the people most likely to come are also people who describe themselves both as professors and practitioners.
- We clearly have work to do on a number of issues. One striking difference was evident on the question of how well our organization has addressed its commitments to cross-cultural engagement and antiracism. White members believe we are doing somewhat well or very well, while members who are people of color chose not well, or only somewhat well.

The Board is committed to improving our practice as an organization on these issues.

The survey also included questions about a possible name change. Here 94% of respondents replied “no” when asked if the current name of the organization, Religious Education Association, has been a deterrent to their professional advancement.

We are thoroughly grateful for the careful work and fine analysis provided by our consultant, Deborah Gin. To explore the survey in depth, please visit the final report online.

Assessing the Pittsburgh Annual Meeting



The Board spent a lot of time poring over the results of the evaluations provided by people attending last year’s annual meeting in Pittsburgh. Given the positive reception of the experimentation around the schedule, the Board has decided to keep this new schedule for the 2017 meeting in St. Louis, but with a few tweaks.

The meeting will begin as it did last year, with the first plenary on Friday morning at 9 am. Unlike last year, however, the community luncheon will remain precisely that — a community luncheon, and the business meeting has been moved to immediately following the Friday evening reception.

This coming year the Board is also intent on providing specific support for the development and effectiveness of working groups, so that each day there will be specific times provided for working groups to utilize. In the first breakout session following the 2017 opening plenary, working group leaders are invited to lead encounter groups which serve as an opportunity to introduce the goals and process of their commitments — to “encounter” their groups, if you will. Then on Saturday the lunchtime has been reserved for working groups to convene as an opportunity for social sharing — people who have not been part of these groups are especially invited to choose one to learn about. Finally, on Sunday morning a significant block of time has been set aside for working groups to meet to work in whatever ways make sense to them.

Given the collaborative nature in which working groups function — they come into and go out of existence as deemed necessary by members who are interested in particular topics — the Board believes that they are a crucial element of the REA’s work and are an important route to supporting the Association’s goals.

The Board was also pleased with the response to the poster presentations. (See below for more information about how one member used that format.) Additionally it was clear from the evaluations that the lightning round space was useful, but could be even more effective. In 2017 we will have a mechanism at the meeting which people can use to sign up — on first come, first served basis — to offer a lightning announcement. This mechanism will include a way to leave a URL, connecting details, and other brief information.

Improving the REA Business Meeting

While there was clear agreement that moving the business meeting to a more central time period made sense, there was also frustration with how the meeting unfolded. The Board has decided that starting in 2017 the business meeting will open with a consent agenda. For members who are unfamiliar with this mechanism, it is a process used by many organizations (including many of our members' faculties and organizations), to streamline decision-making.

Basically a meeting agenda will have a section at the beginning in which several items requiring votes will be placed. When the meeting begins, a vote is called on the consent agenda. At that point members may request that something be removed from the consent agenda and placed on the regular agenda for discussion. Once any such requests have happened, a vote on the items remaining on the consent agenda is held. A positive majority vote at that point means that everything on the consent agenda has been approved at once, and the meeting can proceed to hold discussion just on those items which the members feel warrant discussion.

It is likely, for example, that the slate of association nominees will be on the consent agenda. No one can remember a time in which the slate of nominees placed before the association membership was amended, so it will save time to work in this way. It is crucial to note, however, that anything placed on the consent agenda will be shared with the association well in advance of the meeting, and in a way which allows for questions and further clarification to take place. At the meeting, if someone asks for something to be removed from the consent agenda, it will be removed and placed on the regular agenda.

New Breakout Session Format

This year the Board is adding a new format for conference presentations. There will be three formats: Research Interest Group papers (RIGS), Poster Presentations, and Collaborative Presentations. The instructions for Collaborative presentations are:

“A group of three to four scholars may propose to build a breakout session (1.5 hours) in which they model collaborative academic inquiry around a particular topic related to the theme. Research and practical wisdom may be shared through

a panel presentation, a dialogue or interview, or other modes of embodied engagement. Preference will be given to sessions that bring together scholars who embody diverse cultural perspectives, methodological approaches, or religious traditions in their research.”

This shift was proposed because for the last several years we have had low attendance at workshops during breakout sessions. It is hoped that this shift may offer a creative alternative, including making it possible for members to propose panel presentations, or a group of papers that work well together.

Advancement Committee Proposed

Many of us are aware that the financial base of our organization has rested on income from the journal. Yet it is already clear that the future of print journals is a challenging one. Given that awareness, the Board has decided to explore the possibility of developing an advancement committee which will focus on “advancing” our association. Part of the work of this committee may well be raising funds, but we also want to consider ways to develop relationships beyond our typical membership base. Thinking about an advancement committee is one of the many steps the Board has taken as a way to follow up on the survey’s findings. If you are interested in helping with this effort, please be in touch with [Mary Hess](#), our networking coordinator.

CFP Deadline is May 1st

The deadline for the [call for proposals for our 2017 meeting](#) in St. Louis, MO, on November 3-5 is May 1st. Please share the information widely with your networks. We are pleased to be able to emphasize that you do not need to be a member of the REA to submit a proposal to our blind peer review process. If your proposal is accepted, however, you will need to be a member of the association to present.

Poster Session Excitement

Do you have emerging research that you would like to discuss with other educators? Do you have a new project that you would like to share with colleagues? Do you need a colleague whose perspective might be different from your own to give you feedback on your idea or research? Would you like to present your ideas/research in an informal setting that provides the opportunity for conversation, questions, and suggestions? Would you like to present your idea/research/program in a visual format?

If the answer is yes to any of these questions, I invite you to consider submitting a proposal for a poster session at this year’s annual REA meeting.

I presented a poster in the session at last year's meeting entitled "The Ecology of Education in the Fifth Ward of Evanston", and it was a wonderful experience. I loved sharing my emerging research and hearing from colleagues about how their experiences and research intersected with mine. I appreciated the informality and the flexibility of the format that allowed persons to stay for an extended conversation or to drop in for a quick perusal of the visuals.

By presenting some of my findings in charts, colleagues were able to quickly see the information and make connections of their own. And because I had to repeat some things several times, as new colleagues joined the conversation, I learned how best to summarize findings for different conversations.

A large number of REA members participated in the Poster Session last year, which meant I talked with long-time members of REA who shared past and present experiences and research, newer members who brought a variety of experiences and perspectives, and students who asked good questions.

The instructions for poster sessions, found on the REA website, indicate the variety of ways that your poster can be presented. I was one of the presenters who printed my poster in small sections and assembled them into a large poster once I arrived at the meeting.



I encourage you to consider this format when you submit a proposal for this year's meeting. It was a creative, fun, and rewarding way to present my emerging research, and the feedback I received was helpful, insightful, and interesting.

Virginia A. Lee
Associate Professor of Christian Education
Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary

Wornom Innovation Application Deadline September 15th

In 2016 the REA voted to cease presenting the Herman A. Wornom Award to institutions or organizations, and instead to use the funds to support innovation in religious education. Towards that end, the newly instituted [Wornom Innovation Grant](#) is a \$3,000 award for innovative religious education projects and initiatives that further knowledge and deepen the practice of religious education, or that expand the field of religious education to a new area that is not traditionally associated with religious education. The annual application deadline is September 15.

REA Members are eligible to apply for a [Wornom Innovation Grant](#). Proposals may be submitted for entirely new projects, for innovative developments within an existing project, or for bringing practices or insights from a different sector into religious education settings. Initiatives might include educational programs, practice-based research, or related projects. Members may submit only one proposal each year, and members may work together on a proposal. The grant is intended as a single-year award and is non-renewable.

The Harper/Wornom Committee will use the following criteria to annually select one winning project or initiative:

- **Innovativeness.** How creative is this project or initiative? How significant and new is it for the field of religious education?
- **Practitioner-orientation.** Priority will be given to practitioner (as opposed to academic) projects and practitioner projects with a connection to the academy.
- **Honors diversity.** How does the project foster forms of religious education that honor and engage elements of diversity (e.g., religious, cultural, sexual, ethnic or racial, and/or ways of knowing that honor multiple learning styles and other diversities)?
- **Contributes to the mission of REA.** The mission of the Religious Education Association is to create opportunities for exploring and advancing the interconnected practices of scholarship, research, teaching, and leadership in faith communities, academic institutions, and the wider world community.
- **Contribution to the field of religious education.** How is the project significant for the field of religious education? Priority will be given to projects whose results will be shared with practitioners and researchers in a way that contributes to scholarship and knowledge in the field.

[The application deadline is September 15.](#) The announcement of the winning proposal will take place at the REA Annual Meeting (applicants are encouraged to be, but are not required to be, present to accept the award). The winning applicant(s) will be asked to submit a brief written report about their project (including financial information) by October 1 of the following year.

Member News

Christine Hong has been appointed as [Assistant Professor of Educational Ministry](#) at Columbia Theological Seminary in Georgia.

Illiff School of Theology is pleased to announce that two students at Illiff who are also members of REA recently successfully defended their PhD dissertations. **Hannah Ingram's** is entitled "The Myth of the Saving Power of Education: A Practical Theological Approach" and **Emily Kahm's** is "Catholic Girls All Grown Up: A Practical Theological Exploration of Sexuality Formation in Young Adult Women."

Robert Jackson, who received the William Rainey Harper award from the REA in 2013, was awarded an honorary doctorate (Doc h.c.) by the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), Trondheim, on 10th March. The degree was awarded in recognition of Dr. Jackson's contributions to education about religions and beliefs in an intercultural context in Norway and internationally.

Boyoung Lee, currently chair of the Harper Wornom Committee has just been named [Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs and Dean of the Faculty at Iliff](#).

Marc Silverman has published a new book, [A Pedagogy of Human Moral Education: The Educational Thought of Janusz Korczak](#), which is available from Springer.

Alan Smith's article 'The double helix proves the existence of God': art and science in dialogue with Salvador Dali's religious imagination' appears in the Vol. 6 No. 2 of *Approaching Religion* (67-80). [This issue is available for free online](#).

Katherine Turpin has a new book out, [Drama Tweens: Engaging the Bible with Younger Adolescents](#), which is available from Wipf and Stock.

Mary Young has been named [Director of Leadership Education at the ATS](#).

Use REA Resources in Your Teaching

Please remember that we have made [the official Proceedings](#) of our annual conferences available for free on our website. These are beautifully produced as a book-form pdf (courtesy of Tenseg), and make a great teaching resource. We also commend to you the videos of plenaries from past REA annual meetings. These, too, [are available for free use](#).

Please remember that you can donate at any time you like from our website: simply click on the "donate" button which is on every page. 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](#).



eREACH is a newsletter of the Religious Education Association, an Association of Professors, Practitioners, and Researchers in Religious Education.

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