



Annual Meeting will be in Atlanta
6-8 November 2015
Resource highlights
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Connecting, Disrupting, Transforming: Imagination's Power as the Heart of Religious Education

Looking forward to our next annual meeting, November 6-8, 2015 in Atlanta, GA

On the first day of Spring 2015, I watched the snow fall and accumulate in my backyard, adding three fresh inches to the snow, more than a foot deep, already there. The arrival of spring weather in central Connecticut, where I live, has been delayed. After spending some time watching the snowflakes dance gracefully to the ground, I began to imagine the arrival of warmer winds, sunny spring days, and the emergence of the crocuses and then daffodils. I imagined the end of the brutally cold winter we experienced this year. Eventually, I began to reflect on how important imagination is to daily living. Imagination nurtures hope. It helps us to make sense of life. Through the power of imagining we can see beyond the present and look at life from a broader perspective.

For me, imagination also plays a critically important role in my professional life. Imagining what the lives of my students are like helps me to connect with them, and to consider how best to shape the courses I teach so that they address students' interests and needs. As I travel to work on public transportation I periodically take time to talk with the panhandlers and homeless folks I encounter along the way. Imagining what their lives are like disrupts my own; it leads me to question my own taken-for-granted assumptions and to imagine how society is seen by those who live on the margins. It also

informs and energizes my efforts to explore with students how people of faith are called to imagine and work to bring about a more humane world. Most significantly, my work as a religious educator is sustained by my ongoing imagining of the ways education, and religious education in particular, can be a transformative reality within the world.

How has the power of imagination shaped your life and work? What comes to mind when you bring together your sense of religious education and your understanding of the imagination? The next Religious Education Association Annual Meeting (Atlanta, November 6-8, 2015) will explore Religious Education and the Imagination. In preparing for the conference the association welcomes proposals for research papers, colloquia, workshops, and posters. The call for papers and proposal submission guidelines can be found at religiouseducation.net/rea2015.

Harold (Bud) Horell

Fordham University, Assistant Professor of Religious Education
REA 2015 Annual Meeting Program Chair

Call for proposals deadline May 1st

The call for proposals deadline is rapidly approaching. There are [instructions on the website](#) for submitting your proposal. Please help us to share the call widely, and to remind people that they can propose a RIG paper, workshop, colloquy or poster without currently being a member. Once their proposal is accepted, however, they will need to join our Association.

Online registration will open on July 1.

Conference location is the Atlanta Marriott Buckhead Hotel & Conference Center 3405 Lenox Road NE Atlanta Georgia, a 6 minute walk from the MARTA-Lenox Station. The conference room rate is \$119 per night, single or double. The Buckhead area is known for its excellent restaurants and shopping.

Second Horizons book

We are pleased and proud to announce that a second book in the Horizons series is about to go to press. *Open Minds, Devoted Hearts: Portraits of Adult Religious Educators* is written by Dr. Sarah Tauber. The book is an excellent demonstration of the qualitative research method of portraiture, highlighting adult religious education and illustrating practices of effective educators. While grounded in a specific tradition (Judaism), it stimulates interfaith conversation about the role of clergy educators and adult education. More details and cover art will be available in future issues of this newsletter.

Highlighted Resource

In each issue of the newsletter we are going to highlight one useful web resource which our members have been involved with in some way. This issue we'd like to introduce you to [Storypath](#).

[Storypath](#) is a site which connects children's literature with stories of Christian faith.

Begun in October, 2009, the site had its genesis in the knowledge and enthusiasm of Dr. Pamela Mitchell-Legg and Dr. Rebecca Davis. These two professors shared a love of books for children and adolescents and a conviction that these books could serve as a rich resource for those involved in

educational ministry in the church. The material took shape as students in the *Using Children's and Adolescents' Literature in the Church* class on the Charlotte campus used what they had learned to craft learning resources that could be used in a variety of settings. With help from staff at the William Smith Morton Library on the Richmond campus, the blog finally emerged as a way to share this enthusiasm, creativity and knowledge with the broader church. Writers have continued to come from this class which is offered every other year, and the site also draws on other writers who share this appreciation for the ways that books connect people and our faith story.



In August, 2010, the site added weekly Lectionary Links. Ann Knox, Director of the Instructional Resource Center at the William Smith Morton Library had long been intrigued with a series of books written in the mid-90s by Janet Lloyd in which she had linked children's books to Lectionary texts. Although various ideas about how to continue this work were explored, publishing an updated print version was never financially feasible. With the advent of [Storypath](#), a way opened up to share these connecting points between children's books and the Biblical story. Noell Rathbun-Cook, a gifted teacher and preacher, is the primary curator and author of that section of the site.

The resources at [Storypath](#) are divided into book reviews, lesson plans using children's books, and other ideas for using children's literature in different settings. Occasionally guest bloggers are also asked to contribute their ideas for using children's books in their own work settings or homes. The site uses keywords and tags to make their enormous database available, and you can search for books by age of child, theme engaged, specific scripture reference, and much more.

What's happening in our PhD programs and the various associations in which REA members participate?

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 highlighting the doctoral programs at Jewish Theological Seminary and Garrett Evangelical Seminary, as well as the Christian Education Network of the ELCA. If you'd like your program or organization to be featured in our next newsletter, please [contact Mary Hess](#), Networking Coordinator.

Jewish Theological Seminary

The [William Davidson Graduate School of Jewish Education](#) offers an EdD in Jewish Education, and is a key school of the The Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City. JTS is North America's largest pluralistic school of Jewish education, granting graduate-level degrees in Jewish education and providing services to educators currently in the field. It is a cross-denominational institution that welcomes students from diverse Jewish backgrounds.

The full-time doctoral program at JTS is designed to prepare academics and senior professionals for the growing educational needs of North American Jewish communities. The program prepares students for work in administration, supervision, curriculum development, and educational research, and for academic careers in the field of Jewish Education.

Key faculty include Bill Robinson, Ofra Backenroth, Barry Holtz, Jeff Kress, Shira Epstein, Sarah Tauber, Meredith Katz, Ofra Backenroth, and Aryeh Davidson.

Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary

[Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary](#) is a graduate school of theology related to The United Methodist Church. It is located a few miles north of Chicago on the Evanston campus of Northwestern University. Garrett-Evangelical is the result of the interweaving of three institutions:

- Garrett Biblical Institute, the first Methodist seminary in the Midwest, was established in 1853 by largely the same church people who founded Northwestern. Founders hoped that the school would shape mind and spirit toward an educated ministry.

- The Chicago Training School, established in 1885, was an important force for women in ministry and for developing service agencies throughout Chicago. CTS merged with GBI in 1934.
- Evangelical Theological Seminary, located in Naperville and founded as a seminary of the Evangelical Church (later the Evangelical United Brethren) in 1873, joined with Garrett Theological Seminary in 1974 to form Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary.

Garrett's PhD is in Christian Education and Congregational Studies (CE), and primarily prepares persons for teaching in theological seminaries and undergraduate church-related colleges as well as denominational leadership in education. Students learn how Christian faith is formed and embodied in communities of faith through the integration of insights from theology and the social sciences (psychology, education, sociology, anthropology). Two key emphases are (1) the traditions and practices of Christian religious education in congregations and public life that empower persons for faithful living, and (2) formation of youth in church and culture. Their interdisciplinary emphasis equips students to engage several fields in their research projects such as congregational studies, multi-cultural education, human development, qualitative research, history, and theology.

Key faculty in the program include Reginald Blount, Virginia Lee and Jack Seymour.

Christian Education Network of the ELCA

[The Christian Education Network of the ELCA](#) actually began in 2003 as the Lutheran Association of Christian Educators, or LACE. The organization changed its name in 2014 to reflect its sense that, far more than an association, it is a network of both professional and diversely gifted volunteers who are involved in lifelong faith formation ministries through congregations and many ELCA and partner organizations in a variety of roles.

CEN has a board of officers and regional network advocates, and maintains a monthly newsletter, carefully chosen website resources, a free mentoring program, and partnerships with the [ELEA](#), [YMNET](#), and the [Lifelong Learning network](#).

Ask a Member

Every so often someone emails our association and asks if there is a way to contact all of our members to ask a specific question, e.g., "How could I find church and adult or marriage ministries that specialize in helping adults cope with the 'empty nest' transition?", or "Do you know of any associations that represent K-12 educators in religious instruction?" It is REA policy not to give out our membership list except in a few limited circumstances, but we are eager to find ways to help our members

communicate with the public. Towards that end we are initiating a new item in this newsletter: “ask a member.” We’ll post the question, along with an email address to which you can respond (askamember@religiouseducation.net). So here’s our first question:

Colleagues, I am looking for some help. I am teaching a course, "Religion and Society in Tension" for my alma mater, the University of Kansas, next Fall (2015). I want to cover some causes for our society being in tension: greed (individual and corporate), gentrification and displacement, racism and the other 'isms, unfair housing policies, etc. I am looking for one to three textbooks that may cover such causes. I would consider a book of essays on such causes for our society in tension. It is a 300 level undergraduate course, an elective, and it will likely have religion majors and sociology majors. Something with case stories would be great. Any ideas? Thanks, Luke Brad Bobo

Please email any ideas/responses/suggestions to askamember@religiouseducation.net.

Seeking resources for the webpage

Every so often we also receive requests for links to resources and other tools that may be useful in religious education contexts. We have debated whether or not to collect such resources individually on our website. Sadly, we do not have the staffing or volunteer hours to do so, but happily there are several excellent resource sites already available which regularly curate resources. We have added [a page to our website](#) which now lists such large sites, and we welcome suggestions for additions to that page and in each issue of this newsletter we’ll highlight one such resource.

Looking for examples of using the Bieler video

We are seeking examples of ways in which you might be using the [Andrea Bieler video](#) from last year’s plenary at the annual meeting: “Remembering violence: Risky pedagogies and contested aesthetics.” Have you developed a study guide or questions for engaging it? Perhaps you’ve shared it with another department or discipline? Let us know!

Seeking scholarly assistance on evaluation

We are gearing up for our first association-wide survey since 2009, likely to go out sometime next year. As we work on designing and implementing this survey we are seeking members who have expertise in survey design and quantitative analysis. If you are such a person, please contact our executive secretary, [Lucinda Huffaker](#).

Your board at work on retreat

The REA Board recently met in LaPorte, IN at the Holy Cross Congregation Retreat Center. We are particularly grateful to the generosity of our Treasurer, Fr. Kevin Sandberg, and his community, for making this beautiful facility available. The Board worked straight through two days, focusing on ways to strengthen our networking and member involvement, streamline our work together, and put in place support for the upcoming November meeting. This year the Board will be focusing on the third of our four mission commitments: “creation of international networks of communication, cooperation and support in order to strengthen leaders in religious education, and religious education as a distinctive and vital field.” Look for several ways you can be more directly involved in reaching this goal, both in items in this newsletter, and going forward on our website news blog.



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 anything that comes from **admin@rea.religiouseducation.net** is 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.



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

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