

Highlights of the upcoming November meeting
Horizons series second book released
and more inside...

The Power of Imagining in Education and Religious Education

From our Program Chair and Vice-President, Harold (Bud) Horell, Assistant Professor of Religious Education, Fordham University

During my student days I did a teaching internship at the Jefferson Park Children's Writing Center, an afterschool center in one of the poorest neighborhoods in the Boston area. More important than my assigned tasks as a tutor and leader of after-school activities for the children who visited the center, was my role as an educational imagineer. The Walt Disney Company uses the term "imagineer" to refer to those who design its theme parks and other entertainment venues. At Jefferson Park I wasn't designing entertainment venues. I was helping children design their own lives, that is, to construct a meaningful sense of life for the present and future. On the one hand, I guided the children in celebrating the joys of life and appreciating the strengths found in their families, churches, and city. On the other hand, in a neighborhood in which hope for the future was often in short supply, I listened and helped children imagine how they could make sense of their lives and world, how they could imagine ways of transcending the limitations of material poverty, poor schools, and an anticipated lack of future employment opportunities.

From the earliest days of the Religious Education Association to the present, religious educators have recognized the importance of nurturing the imagination. In discussing personal development and character formation in his classic [A Social Theory of Religious](#)

[Education](#), [George Albert Coe points out](#), for instance, that: “it is imagination that puts me in touch with myself and with my immediate environment. It does it by holding before me my own yesterday, or my own hour-ago, and also holding before me the picture of some possible future good” (198). From about the mid twentieth century onwards religious educators have also recognized the important role of imagination in the ongoing development of the field of religious education. For example, drawing insight from Sharon Parks analysis of an academic teaching/learning community as a “community of imagination,” [Maria Harris explores](#) how images of knowledge, authority, and temporality have shaped the field of religious education, and how religious educators must continually renew (that is, imagine and reimagine) the images that guide the field if religious education is to remain a vital mode of inquiry (363).

November 6-8, 2015 we will gather for the 112th Annual Meeting of REA:APPRRE at the Marriott Buckhead Hotel and Conference Center in Atlanta, GA to explore the power of imagination in religious education. We will begin the conference by engaging in an imagination exercise and then, in plenary one, we will explore the role of imagination in teaching/learning. The breakout sessions will offer an array of presentations on imaginative ways of teaching and learning, with a number of sessions also exploring the role of imagination in the ongoing development of the field of religious education. [\(Please read the RIG papers before the meeting. They are available on the 2015 Annual Conference website via individual session links.\)](#) The second plenary session will explore the importance of nurturing the religious imagination within and beyond ecclesial communities if we are to educate people to connect with self, others, and God, while at the same time being able to recognize and challenge those aspects of our lives and the world that are not truly life-giving. In plenary three we will explore how cultivation of religious imagination can enable people of faith to challenge the media-orchestrated imagination of consumer culture. Plenary four will focus on how we can encourage people to imagine/envision care for nature and the planet Earth as central to religious education.

The 112th Annual Conference will provide an opportunity for working groups (formerly known as task forces) to gather and imaginatively renew their commitments to addressing specific religious educational issues. Students (all PhD, DMin, and master’s degree students) will be invited to gather on Saturday morning to explore imaginatively what it means to have a vocation as a religious educator. Time has been set aside for communities of practice, including Christian denominational groups, to meet. There will also be time for people from across the country and around the world to reconnect and network during and after the community lunch on Saturday, the free evening out for dinner on Saturday night, and at other times throughout the conference.

In the final plenary I will offer summary comments about the annual meeting and invite you to imagine the ongoing development of religious education. My hope is that our November 2015 meeting will provide numerous opportunities for us to deepen our understanding of the power and importance of imagination in the dynamics of teaching/learning, and the critically important role of imagination in our efforts to envision the present and future of the field of religious education.

Join us in Atlanta in November

All the details you need for registering for our annual meeting in November can be found on [the meeting website](#).

The 2015 annual meeting will take place at the Atlanta Marriott Buckhead Hotel, which is centrally located in the heart of the Buckhead neighborhood, within walking distance to Lenox Square Mall, Phipps Plaza and the MARTA- Lenox Station. It is also an easy walk away from Buckhead restaurants and nightlife. The hotel has a fitness center that is open 24 hours a day, and an outdoor heated pool. There is also a 24 hour business center available.

Reservations can be made online or by calling (404) 261-9250. Tell them you are attending the REA conference. Please remember to make your reservations **before October 15** in order to receive the conference rate of \$119/night (before taxes). You should receive this rate for Wednesday the 4th, if you are coming in early for the pre-conference. If you have any problems registering, please contact Lucinda Huffaker.

Transportation options from the airport include taxis (roughly \$45) and public transit (on MARTA take the Gold line, in the direction of Doraville, getting off at the Lenox station, which is roughly .2 miles from the hotel). A single MARTA trip will cost \$2.50. Please note that onsite parking will be expensive, we are sorry to note that fees for parking at this hotel are \$10 a day, or \$24 for overnight parking.

Please help us spread the word on the meeting! You can get free pdfs of flyers at the program website: <http://www.religiouseducation.net/rea2015/2015/04/share-our-meeting-flyers/>.

Register for sessions and read papers

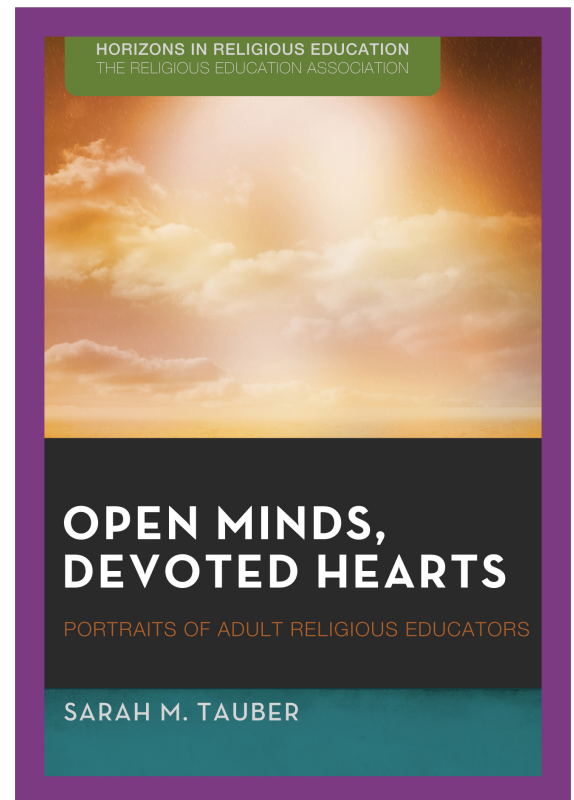
Please help us plan for sessions and select appropriate rooms by putting the sessions you plan to attend on [your personal schedule](#). Once you log in to Sched there, you can hover your pointer over particular sessions to see who will be presenting, and who has chosen to attend that session. Sched, our online tool for doing this, also allows you to create a profile for the meeting, an important opportunity for networking with other people at the meeting who share your interests, but whom you may not have met.

It is also truly important that you read the papers for your sessions **PRIOR** to coming. Links for these papers are part of the description of sessions you will see by clicking on or hovering over a session title. Just click those links to read or download each paper.

Second book in Horizon series has been released!

Open Minds, Devoted Hearts: Portraits of Adult Religious Educators, written by Sarah M. Tauber, with a forward by Dean Blevins and a preface by Elizabeth Caldwell and Jack Seymour, is now available. The book is 184 pages long, and is available in both print and as an e-book.

How do religious educators meaningfully engage adult learners? How do they invite adults to begin a learning journey and inspire them to stay on it? In an era of "spiritual but not religious," how can religious educators, and clergy in particular, respond to the yearnings of adults for connection, wholeness, and purpose? *Open Minds, Devoted Hearts* offers examples of three outstanding congregational rabbis whose teaching answers that call to action. Incorporating biographical portraits and educational scholarship in innovative ways, the book provides a comprehensive exploration of how the themes of narrative, transformation, and spirituality bring adult religious educators and learners into a powerful interactive educational process. The portraits and accompanying analysis reveal how constructing personal meaning and building sacred community through study situates adult learning as a dynamic centerpiece of an energized congregational life.



Interview with Sarah Tauber

What got you interested in this research question in the first place?

I got interested in this research because of my long standing curiosity about how clergy in their capacity as congregational educators reach and inspire adults to find connections to religious life through teaching, rather than, for example, through preaching from the pulpit. In my case, why do some rabbis succeed in bringing congregants closer to communal participation and personal meaning making through teaching whereas others do not? There was also a personal dimension to the research, as I have had the good fortune of being the recipient as a learner of such teaching from several rabbis throughout the course of my adult life.



What surprised you about your findings?

What surprised me about my findings were two aspects: (1) How consistent the three rabbis were in their understandings of what makes for good teaching of adults. Each rabbi was interviewed separately and yet as I sifted through the interviews with them and my observations of their teaching I was surprised by the strong overlap in their perspectives. (2) These rabbis see themselves as teachers first and foremost, and they construct and co-create congregational life from that strongly felt part of their clergy identity. They are purposeful in finding ways to model how much they value education as the core

of their vocation. And doing so does not mean that the other parts of their clergy identity are neglected (such as pastoral roles, preacher roles, etc), but that at the heart of how they see themselves is a vocation to teach.

What are the next questions you're going to pursue?

My next questions revolve around studying more closely the interaction between adult learners and clergy in congregational settings in terms of how clergy “welcome” adults into their communities through teaching and learning, in particular adults who may be seeking a religious and spiritual home but have not yet found it. I would like to explore more about how that process unfolds with a focus on learners. I would love for anyone who has a story about a great learning experience with clergy [to write to me](#) about it in connection with the book. I would be fascinated to read these, and hope they could become part of my next research project.

Highlighted resource

For more than thirty years [The Congregational Studies Project Team](#) has been an informal coalition of scholars and researchers who share an interest in congregations. The team members meet a few times each year for discussion of common projects and for mutual professional support. Its members, in various combinations, have written numerous books on congregations and sponsored national conferences and institutes on congregational studies. The Lilly Endowment funds the continuing work of the congregational studies project team, and has recently funded a major redesign of the team's website. [StudyingCongregations](#) holds a treasure trove of resources from the team's decades-long work, including a host of “ask the expert” articles, conceptual frames for research, an archive of pertinent research, and free pdfs of the team's renowned toolkit.

Member news

We will have more to say in memory of outstanding educator **John Hull** at the annual meeting, but for the time being please read [the fine memorial](#) that Robert Jackson wrote, and which appeared in the *Guardian* newspaper.

Russell Dalton announces his forthcoming book: *Children's Bibles in America: A Reception History of the Story of Noah's Ark in U.S. Children's Bibles* (Bloomsbury, 2015). It will be released on November 19, 2015 as part of Bloomsbury: T & T Clark's Library of Biblical Studies. The book will retail for \$120.00 (though it will be available for less from some online sellers), so this is one that he suggests you could request your library to purchase rather than buying it for your personal library. [More information is available online.](#)

John Falcone announces *Pathfinder*, a cliff-hanging teen adventure told in full colour Manga style. It presents the story of Jesus as relayed in the Gospel of Mark through the eyes of early Christian young adults on the cusp of Nero's persecution in Rome. It has already been tested in 600 British schools, and now he is looking for feedback from US readers. Over the next 12 months students and teachers will receive sections of the text to review and comment upon; at the end, they will gain free access to a soft-copy version of the final text, to be published in Fall 2016. The production team – including leading Bible scholars and top Hollywood animation writers – will incorporate student feedback into the final text. If you are interested in learning more, or if you know about people who might be! – [please contact him.](#)

Boston College president William P. Leakey, S.J., recently appointed **Thomas Groome**, a professor of theology and former chair of the STM's Department of Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry (DREPM), as director of Boston College's Church in the 21st Century Center. Groome assumed his duties on July 1 and will continue to teach at the STM. **Jane Regan**, STM director of continuing education and associate professor of theology and religious education, has been elected to replace Groome as DREPM chair. She will also now serve as director of STM summer initiatives.

Robert Jackson announces that his recent book, *Signposts - Policy and practice for teaching about religions and non-religious world views in intercultural education*, written for the Council of Europe, is now available as [a free pdf download](#) from the European Wergeland Centre website.

Jos de Kock announces that the [Journal of Youth and Theology](#) will now be published by highly respected Brill Publishing. The [Journal of Youth and Theology](#) is an international, ecumenical, peer-reviewed journal founded 14 years ago and published by the International Association for the Study of Youth Ministry. Research articles mainly have theology as a core discipline but are often interdisciplinary, combining the theological approach with sociological and psychological perspectives. The journal is of

interest to scholars in religious studies, theology, religious education, sociology, pedagogy and psychology.

Jack Seymour announces his new book: *Teaching Biblical Faith: Leading Adult Bible Studies*. It is written to use in seminary classrooms, particularly in teaching the Bible classes, yet is written accessibly so that it could be read and used by lay people seeking to enhance the ways they study the Bible. It begins with the usual exegetical, book-by-book approaches and moves to lectionary, praying the scriptures, liberation approaches based in African American and Hispanic communities, and ends with teaching the way of Jesus and interfaith approaches.

Our journal *Religious Education* announces that **David White**, C. Ellis and Nancy Gribble Nelson Professor of Christian Education and Professor in Methodist Studies, is now serving as the journal's book review editor. David follows Lib Caldwell, the journal's book editor since 2007, in this role. Please contact David if you would like to review a book for *Religious Education*, or to make a suggestion about a book to be reviewed.

Ask our journal editor, Joyce Mercer

Question: I would like to post and share a copy of my article to an academic networking website such as *Academia.edu*. Does doing so violate my copyright agreement, since the article is/will be published in *Religious Education*?

Response: This has become a very common query as we all seek wider distribution of our work in the growing online context of scholarly access, while also striving to remain within the bounds of copyright law. Taylor and Francis, our journal's publisher, encourages you as an author to post the accepted manuscript — the version just prior to the published article — anywhere you wish. They suggest attaching the following statement, both to let people know that the posted version is not the final published document, and also to encourage people to find the published version for citation:

This is an Accepted Manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis in *Religious Education* on [date of publication], available online: [http://www.tandfonline.com/\[Article DOI\]](http://www.tandfonline.com/[Article DOI]).

This penultimate version is the one that has been through peer review and has been chosen for publication by the editor, but precedes the final PDF publication-version that the journal actually prints. The PDF of your published article should not be posted, unless you have chosen the “open access” option for publication at the time of authorizing your final page proofs with the publisher.

For further information, see “[Sharing Your Work](#)” on the Taylor and Francis website section called “[author services](#).”

Discussing “The Scottish Case”

Now posted on the REA website: [an interactive conversation](#) sparked by an article published in the January-February 2015 issue of *Religious Education*. The original article was written by Yonah H. Matemba, “Mismatches Between Legislative Policy and School Practice in Religious Education: The Scottish Case.” (Vol. 110, No. 1: 70-94. DOI: 10.1080/00344087.2015.989097). Graeme Nixon has written a response to this article. Although the journal does not ordinarily publish rejoinders, the Religious Education Association’s desire to invite ongoing conversation about matters provoked by scholarship in our journal led the REA to publish (with the author’s permission) Prof. Nixon’s article on the REA website. Please visit our website to [read this response](#). We encourage you to participate in ongoing constructive conversation in the comments area.

Preparing for AAR this November

The REA proudly advances our commitment to inter-professional and inter-institutional collaborations by keeping active as a Scholarly Related Organization (SRO) of the American Academy of Religion (AAR). Many members of the REA are also active members of the AAR; and our REA sessions in the AAR Program over the last three years reflect rich cross-fertilization of scholarly conversation.

At this year’s AAR Annual Meeting (also meeting in Atlanta, from November 21-24), the official REA session will be moderated by Kathy Winings, our current Chair of the Forum for RE in Faith Communities. Titled “Valuing the Teaching of Religion: Connecting, Disrupting, Transforming Power,” this session will feature Judith Bishop of Mills College (recipient of the AAR’s 2015 Excellence in Teaching Award), Andre E. Johnson of Memphis Theological Seminary, and REA’s members Boyung Lee and Sarah Tauber.

Further evidence of dynamic cross-disciplinary conversation is a session sponsored by the Association of Practical Theology at AAR, to which REA members Virginia Lee, Reginald Blount, Leah Gunning Francis, and Mai-Anh Le Tran will contribute as panelists.

Please share this information widely, and alert us to opportunities where the scholarship of Religious Education is making important contributions. If you will be presenting or moderating a session at this year’s AAR, please send us the information and we will add it to the AAR info page on our website.

APT announces biennial meeting and call for papers

The [Association of Practical Theology](#) announces its 33rd Biennial Conference in New York City from April 8-10, 2016. The theme is "Live, Move, and Have Being: Migration and Practical Theology."

Around the world today, across countries and within cities, people experience life-altering dislocation and relocation—migrating within and across the Middle East, Europe, Latin America, the United States, and many more places. People who want and need to move often confront great difficulties; others are moved against their will and risk much in resisting. In these migrations, dynamics of vulnerability and strength, force and choice, hope and despair, power and resistance are always present.

New York City, a place of migrations (into, within, and out of the city) for centuries, explores this theme of migration and practical theology. The theme invites deeper exploration of practical theology's role in making impactful sense of the migrations to which we are related today.

There is much for practical theology to consider under this theme, such as practical theology and immigration, migrant work, refugees, stateless persons, trafficking, incarceration and detention, migration and mental health/wellbeing, migrations through religions, housing, and all theologically significant migratory experiences, forced or chosen, especially as seen in relation to dynamics of vulnerability and strength, force and choice, hope and despair, power and resistance.

How can practical theology engage migrations today, in the service of freedom to move or to stay, such that people are more able to "live, move, and have being"? (Acts 17:28)

[Call for Papers and other conference information is available online.](#)



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