



CFP for November meeting
Highlights of your Board at work
Exciting innovations for this year's meeting
and more inside

Photo of four past, present and future REA presidents taken at the REA Board of Directors retreat (Bud Horell, Mai-Anh Le Tran, Mualla Selçuk, Bert Roebben).

From your president...

At the request of REA members, the next two REA:APPRE Annual Meetings will be held at downtown hotels. The 2016 Annual Meeting will be Nov. 4-5 at the Wyndham Grand Hotel in the central commercial, art, and historic district of downtown Pittsburgh, PA. Among other attractions, we will be near the Andy Warhol Museum, Heinz Hall and History Center, the Fort Pitt Museum, and the Duquesne Incline. The 2017 annual meeting will be Nov. 3-5, 2017 at the St. Louis (MO) Union Station Hotel.

The Board of Directors met for its annual retreat March 10-13, 2016 in St. Louis. Some of the time at the retreat was spent discussing upcoming Annual Meetings. Specifically, Bert Roebben shared with the Board his plans for the 2016 Annual Meeting in Pittsburgh. As we engaged in conversation with him we were energized by thinking about how the 2016 Annual Meeting will explore ways religious educators can provide what Bert calls “safe and solid learning environments” in which people of faith can develop a firm sense of identity as a member of a particular religious community while at the same time being able to celebrate and learn from the diverse religious outlooks/worldviews of our contemporary, global age.

Mualla Selçuk spoke at the retreat about her initial plans for the 2017 Annual Meeting. The meeting will focus on the theme of encounter, and how REA:APRRE can be a place that encourages inter-faith, intercultural, and international conversations. It will explore

how religious educators of diverse backgrounds can work together to build a world in which religious groups define themselves in relation, rather than in opposition, to one another.



At the retreat the Board also decided that the 2018 Annual Meeting will include a celebration of the 115th anniversary of the founding of the Religious Education Association. If you have ideas about what we might do to mark this important milestone in our history, please share them with me and other members of the Board.

The Board is working with a professional consultant to design and conduct a survey of our membership. At the Board retreat we previewed and discussed a first draft of the survey. I encourage you to complete the survey when it is sent to you. The survey will guide the Board in planning for annual meetings and other programming and in setting priorities for our organization.

During the recent retreat we also discussed how in the past few years the Board has re-envisioned the role of the Standing Committees and asked them to take a more active role in sustaining a focus on the major contexts of religious education. In the months ahead I will be following up with the chairs of our Standing Committees to continue our discussions of how we can support religious education as a field of study, connect with religious education efforts in faith communities, and continue our efforts to explore the role of religious education in public life.

At the recent retreat the Board also discussed the Harper and Wornom Awards, ongoing efforts to network with other organizations and groups, possibilities for local meetings within the United States and internationally, reflection from the Senior Working Group, and other issues as well. The Board also expressed its gratitude for the ongoing work and significant contributions of Lucinda Huffaker, our Executive Secretary, and Mary Hess, our Networking Coordinator.

In 2016 the Board will focus on the fourth of our four mission commitments: “interpreting the nature, purposes, and value of the field of religious education to the wider society and those preparing to become professors, researchers, or other leaders in religious education.” If you have ideas or projects that can help us to highlight and embrace this mission commitment more fully, please share them with me and other members of the Board.

Harold (Bud) Horell
REA:APPRRE President

CFP for November meeting deadline is May 1st

There are mainly two ways to deal with the complexity of religious education (RE) nowadays. One consists in the continuous problematizing and complaining about the lack of traditional religious commitment and the disturbing impact of religious diversity in the world. The other starts with a positive appraisal of new spiritual developments in church and society and the longing for more inclusive educational patterns to deal with this diversity in the congregation and the classroom. It goes without saying that a sound and realistic understanding of the contexts in which RE operates should be the starting point for every kind of RE work. But the virtue of hope cannot be dismissed in the very center and at the ultimate horizon of that work.

This “pedagogy of hope” (Paulo Freire) can be interestingly connected to a “theology of hope” (Jürgen Moltmann). The concern of the educator for the human flourishing of the learner (child, adolescent or adult) is always rooted in, shaped by or directed to an “ultimate concern” (Paul Tillich): making learners sensitive for the acceptance of being ultimately accepted, whatever their story is, whatever their backgrounds and longings, their fortunes and misfortunes are. How can the educator become such a hope generator (Roebben 2013, 12-14)?



When deep, complex pluralism reigns, the educator needs to be concentrated and flexible at the same time. This is a paradox, coined by the American philosopher of education David T. Hansen as “tenacious humility”: the educator concentrates on the learner, steps aside but needs to offer him/herself through the content at the same time, so that the learner can flourish (Hansen 2001, 157-191). People need a “cosmopolitan” education: the educator needs to be present and learn together with learners in “reflective openness to the world and reflective loyalty to the local” (Hansen 2009, 137). It goes without saying that this old pedagogical paradox is now accelerated by the same cosmopolis, surrounding us and our future generations. And it

goes without saying that the aims of education and the normativity of the educational act need to be discussed again in that very process.

Three professional roles can be ascribed to the educator: on the micro-level of the learner he/she is fostering identity; on the meso-level of the group or the classroom he/she is enhancing and celebrating diversity; and on the macro-level of the congregation or the school he/she is building community. He/she accompanies learners on the road to self-clarification, he/she makes the group or the classroom safe for diversity and he/she contributes with his/her teaching profession to a “culture of recognition” (Jäggle et al.

2013) – in the congregation, in private and public schools, in theological education institutions (Gregory Jones and Paulsell 2002) or in a variety of ways in the public sphere (Moore 2004). In these three tasks the professional educator or teacher can develop his/her personal vocation and role identity.

In 2016 the REA conference will discuss this theme thoroughly. The scenery of downtown Pittsburgh will be a constant reminder of the post-industrial and post-secular context in which RE with children, young people and adults can flourish – in all its complexity and variety. For me the location is very similar to my own working place in Germany, at the University of Dortmund, situated in the vibrant multicultural and post-industrial Ruhr-Region. So here is the invitation to you, reflective practitioner, researcher or scholar in RE: come and join us in this interesting learning space! The [call for papers submission process](#) will be open through the end of April, and we invite you to consider questions such as:

- Which kind of leadership is needed in religious learning communities in a globalized world?
- What is the professional role of the educator/teacher on the above mentioned micro-, meso- and macro-levels of RE?
- How does he/she relate to normative conceptions of education in general and RE in particular?
- What can we learn from other disciplines, such as sociology and psychology of religion, educational sciences, learning theories, etc., on the role of the educator/teacher?
- How should the relationship between learning and teaching be reconsidered?
- How can the educator/teacher find a spiritual ground for his/her vocation?
- What could be the contribution of scholarship in RE to general educational research circles?
- In responding to these issues, the 2016 REA conference will be in tune with one of the four strategic aims of REA: “through interpreting the nature, purposes, and value of the field of RE to the wider society and those preparing to become professors, researchers, or other leaders in RE”.



- D.T. HANSEN, *Exploring the Moral Heart of Teaching. Toward a Teacher's Creed*. New York/London: Teachers College at Columbia University, 2001.
- D.T. HANSEN, “Dewey and Cosmopolitanism” in *Education and Culture* 25 (2009) 126-140.
- L. GREGORY JONES & S. PAULSELL (eds.), *The Scope of Our Art. The Vocation of the Theological Educator*, Grand Rapids (MI)/Cambridge (UK): Eerdmans, 2002.
- M. JÄGGLE et. al. (eds.), *Kultur der Anerkennung. Würde – Gerechtigkeit – Partizipation für Schulkultur, Schulentwicklung und Religion*. Baltmannsweiler: Schneider Verlag Hohengehren, 2013.
- M.E.M. MOORE, *Teaching as a Sacramental Act*, Cleveland (OH): Pilgrim Press, 2004.
- B. ROEBBEN, *Seeking Sense in the City. European Perspectives on Religious Education*, Berlin: Lit-Verlag, 2013 (second enlarged edition).

Please submit your proposals by May 1st

This year we will give the poster session a power boost!

Are you a junior scholar, preparing a PhD and looking for constructive comments from fellow researchers? Are you a senior scholar, reframing your findings and insights in a new way, working on a publishable paper and inviting colleagues to join you in your reflection? Are you a group of researchers, working together on a project and eager to know what others think and could contribute to your project? Well, then we invite you to present a poster at the 2016 conference.



This year we are dedicating the first breakout session (directly after the presidential address at the very beginning of the conference) to what is new and emerging in the field of RE. We will be engaging this through posters and will select 20 of them! We believe that the future of our field is based on innovative research tracks and conversations around them. Hope can be generated through “hopeful” research.

Posters are a place to present such hopeful research. A poster presentation will allow the author(s) to meet and speak informally

with interested participants pertaining to research done, still continuing, or in preparation, thus stimulating the exchange of ideas and networking opportunities. Most important: this format offers an opportunity for both established and newer researchers. More information can be found on <http://www.religiouseducation.net/rea2016/call/guidelines/>

Yes, give the conference a power boost and come with a poster!

Learning from last year's conference evaluations

During the Board of Directors working retreat last month, the Board immersed themselves in the more than 800 individual pieces of evaluation data collected at last November's conference. The discussions were rich and constructive. Overall REA conference participants expressed much affirmation for the annual meeting, as well as offering a number of very useful kinds of constructive feedback. Our members clearly cherish their time with each other, and there was consensus that we should improve and expand upon our pedagogical commitments by ensuring that our annual meeting is as participatory, collaborative and collegial as possible. In particular respondents noted that they yearned for more time for networking, and more opportunities for conversation.

As a consequence of this discussion, the Board has radically re-imagined the conference format for this coming November, and is committed to seeking further input from our members through an association-wide survey which is being professionally designed and produced — look for the survey to arrive in your email inbox in early May.

Exciting changes for 2016 Annual Meeting format

This coming year our annual meeting — November 4-5 in Pittsburgh, PA — is shifting to a format the Board believes will enhance member participation and collegiality. Unlike in recent years, we will begin early on Friday morning with the first plenary, a presidential address, at 9 am. A mixture of plenary and breakout groups will convene throughout Friday, culminating in a community feast/fest that evening.

Saturday will follow with much the same format, a mixture of dialogical plenary sessions and smaller breakout groups, concluding the association's work in the late afternoon of Saturday. The REA business meeting will be held over lunch on Saturday, thus encouraging more members to be involved in the business of the association.

Instead of a pre-conference, we are working with a number of local groups to plan an exciting post-conference event on Sunday. This shift will allow members who choose to do so to attend a variety of local churches, mosques, temples and other religious institutions in the morning, and gather for lunch and the event (still to be announced) in the early afternoon.

Another critical shift in format concerns the varieties of proposed breakout sessions. This coming year the Board has decided that we will only accept four workshop proposals, and the proposal submission guidelines have been tweaked to ensure that the workshops offered will be substantive in content, and participatory and collaborative in format. Further, there will be no colloquia at this year's meeting. Members wishing to present research may do so in one of two formats, either as a traditional research paper (the RIG), or as a poster presentation. The poster presentation format has been proving particularly useful to members who wish to invite one-on-one discussion, and at the same time make their research available to large numbers of participants.



Third book in Horizon series is published

We are excited to announce the third book in the new [Horizons in Religious Education](#) book series, [The Grace of Playing: Pedagogies for Leaning into God's New Creation](#), by Courtney Goto. Courtney graciously offered insight into her process with the book in a recent email interview:

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

When I was a graduate student, I became interested in what I called “seeking the God of the Unexpected” by playing with and through art. As a self-professed, recovering “control freak,” I was attempting to think more deeply about grace-filled moments that coaxed me out of myself to participate in what I could not orchestrate or imagine alone. I realized that an important aspect of my spiritual formation involved powerful experiences of feeling surprised and moved in the process of improvising—whether it was through dancing, clowning, or practicing InterPlay (see www.interplay.org). I became intrigued by what one learns in encountering God in moments of creating with others.



What surprised you about the project?

I was surprised to discover the power of reflecting on my mother's liturgical art in terms of playing. For over 25 years, my mother (Naomi Takahashi Goto) has created visuals, including large-scale art for the sanctuary, to enhance worship at the Sacramento Japanese United Methodist Church. Until I started theorizing her work in terms of playing, I had not truly realized its richness--its theological, psychoanalytic, historical, and aesthetic dimensions. Though my mother has no formal training in theology, education, or art, she tells communal stories of faith through art, assisting members of the congregation to contemplate what it means to Japanese American Christians. As I have studied her work, I have realized that I had not been conscious of the ways in which my mother's art as well as her

mothering have shaped my own longing to create with others a world that is more life-giving than we know.

What are the next questions you're working on?

Playing for the sake of faith involves both decentering and re-centering, which has subversive, transformative potential for faith communities. Although I do not use the language of playing, the spirit of my next book project is an extension of Grace. I explore the question of how participants in the field of practical theology might enact a more moral, ethical community by relating to one another as subjects (that is, as human

agents) across difference. I envision an epistemic community that practices confronting issues of power, privilege, and historic communal injury and revising basic scholarly habits of researching, writing, and teaching that privilege the assumptive world of those with the most social capital.

Resources

This quarter we have received numerous suggestions of resources for eREACH. Here is a brief compendium. As always, we deeply appreciate news of useful resources. Please send them to [Mary Hess](#), our networking coordinator.

The [REA Senior Scholars Think Tank](#) has been involved in a rich discussion of their vocational journeys. They have put together [a substantial set of reflections](#) on how they were “formed as a religious educator.” It’s an inspiring set of stories!

The [Racial Justice Collaborative in Theological Education](#) is a project of the Twin Cities Consortium of Theological Schools. It maintains a web-based bibliography which aims to collect not only excellent print materials but also some of the more ephemeral resources that float through social media.

The [Religious Literacy Project](#) of Harvard University is focused on enhancing and promoting the public understanding of religion. The site includes resources and special training opportunities for educators, journalists, public health workers, foreign service officers, interfaith/multifaith groups, students, and others wishing to better understand the complex roles that religions play in contemporary global, national, and local contexts.

The [Religious Worlds of New York](#) is a website full of bibliographic, photo, essay and webinar resources on the diverse faith traditions practiced in the city of New York. It is a rich resource for teaching about the everyday life of American religious diversity.

The [Saint John’s Bible website](#) has a powerful free curriculum resource called [Seeing the Word](#) which uses illuminations from that Bible to evoke reflections on specific texts, days in the liturgical calendar, and other elements of faith.

[Vocation Matters](#) is a blog published by the NetVUE project, which focuses on issues of vocation in the undergraduate education context. Scholars such as Mark Edwards, David Cunningham, Caryn Riswold and others write for this publication.

The [Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion](#) hosts a number of blogs: [Teaching Islam](#), [Race Matters in the Classroom](#), [Stories from the Front of the Classroom](#), [12 Surprises When Lecturing Less \(and Teaching More!\)](#), [Coulda, Woulda, Shouda: Reflections on the First Years of Teaching](#), and [Theological School Deans](#). These are excellent and brief reflections on issues of importance to teachers of theology and religion, written by many different people.

Member news

Jennifer Ayres has been tenured and promoted to Associate Professor of Religious Education at the [Candler Divinity School of Emory University](#).

Long time member and Harper award winner **Robert Jackson**, whose work has been central to our field, announces that his early and crucial book [Introducing Religious Education: An Interpretive Approach](#), now has a new forward and is being released as a [free pdf download](#).

Sheryl Kujawa-Holbrook has published [Hildegard of Bingen: Essential Writings and Chants of a Christian Mystic](#) (Skylight Paths).

The [Forum for Theological Exploration \(FTE\)](#) has appointed **Patrick Reyes** as the director of strategic partnerships for doctoral initiatives. He is responsible for managing the fellowship program for doctoral students, relationship building and providing support to leaders of theological institutions developing future leaders for the church and academy.

Editorial board member **Najeeba Syeed** has been promoted to Associate Professor of Interreligious Education at the [Claremont School of Theology](#).

Matthew Geiger, Rest in Peace



The hard-working and ever vibrant coordinator of REA's [Schools Work Group](#) has died after a valiant fight with cancer. We miss him terribly already, and are re-printing his obituary here.

Matthew William Geiger died on March 9, 2016, in his home in Alexandria, Virginia, surrounded by his parents and loving wife Emily. He had battled cancer for the last two years. Matthew was the son of William Ebling Geiger, Jr. and Edwina Pordum Geiger. He was born on November 8, 1972 in Carbondale, IL, and moved with his family to Vermont in 1974. He graduated from Rice Memorial High School in South Burlington after receiving his primary education in Essex Junction schools. After one year at SUNY Oswego, Matthew transferred to UVM, where he completed majors in both History and Religion, as well as a minor in Philosophy, in 1997. He lived with Benedictine monks in Chicago while doing graduate studies at the University of Chicago, from

which he received a Master of Divinity in 2004. Following several adjunct instructor positions at local colleges, he began his high school teaching career at St. Mark's School

in Southborough, MA. He moved in 2007 to St. Stephen's & St. Agnes School (SSSAS) in Alexandria, where he taught in the Religion department up until his death. He continued his studies while doing award-winning teaching at SSSAS and earned a Doctor of Ministry degree from Virginia Theological Seminary in 2013.

Matthew's commitment to the service of others was evident from a young age. While at Rice, he was involved in missionary trips to Selma and to Caracas, Venezuela. He later traveled with teams to Guatemala and El Salvador. These experiences reinforced his growing commitment to service of those in need and inclusion of all in the human family.

Matthew found a confluence of his interests in scholarship and service in high school teaching. In his brief academic career, he made substantive contributions to the teaching practices of high school religion and ethics. He published papers and essays having their origin or foundation in his doctoral work ("Religious Education Person to Person: the Reflective and Relational Practice of 'Notebooking' in an Academic Setting") in major journals, one reviewer characterizing the work as 'groundbreaking'. Matthew's manuscripts recently accepted by *Religious Education* and by *British Journal of Religious Education* will be published posthumously. Matthew also gave a number of invited lectures and organized workshops at national meetings of the Religious Education Association. The substance of his teaching was one-on-one interactions with his students, and he was deeply committed to each of them. After his illness became known, he received countless cards, texts, and visits responses from former students who recalled specific conversations that they had with Matthew which were important in their paths to personal development. Matthew and his family were heartened and encouraged by these outpourings and offer their deep thanks and gratitude to all who reached out.

He enjoyed reading, classical music, and going anywhere with Emily. As a young man, Matthew loved playing sports, and was a Little League all-star pitcher and infielder. He was a four-year varsity basketball player at Rice, where he became an accomplished point guard and set a school record for assists. He continued to enjoy playing and watching these sports as an adult, and was a regular attendee at Washington Nationals games. He eventually forgave his father for raising him as a Buffalo Bills fan.

Matthew's greatest good fortune was meeting the math and economics teacher Emily Catherine Repp at SSSAS. Matthew and Emily were married in Alexandria, VA on July 18, 2009 and built a deep relationship based on mutual unconditional love. Emily remained Matthew's greatest strength and source of meaning during his illness. Matthew is survived by Emily, by his loving sister Karen Marie Geiger, and by his mother Edwina and father William. A viewing will be held at Fairfax Memorial Funeral Service on Sunday, March 13, 5-7 PM. A Mass of Christian Burial will be held on March 14, 11 AM, at Our Lady of Queen of Peace in Arlington, VA, and a memorial service will be held on March 16, 9 AM, for SSSAS students and faculty at the Virginia Theological Seminary. Matthew has requested that donations in his name be made to Monastery of the Holy Cross, 3111 S. Aberdeen St., Chicago, IL 60608 or on-line at <http://chicagomonk.org/get-involved/>.

Jack Seymour voted Editor-Emeritus

The REA Board of Directors has voted to grant Jack Seymour “editor-emeritus” status, which ensures that his lengthy and distinctive service as editor will be remembered on the journal’s masthead. Board member Virginia Lee brought the news to him on behalf of the board.



Please donate to our association

We are grateful for any donations you can make to our association. Your funding goes to support travel grants for doctoral students attending our annual meeting. You can donate via the “donate” button on every page of [our website](#). You can also use [AmazonSmile](#) as your starting point to Amazon, and a small part of your purchases will come to us.

Also, please remember to send us notes of recent books published. Not only will we cite them in this newsletter, but we will add them to [our Amazon bookstore](#).



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

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Image Credits

Janieta Bartz, presenting her poster at the Chicago conference in 2014, surrounded by her PhD-fellow Natascha Bettin and her supervisor (in German "Doktorvater") Bert Roebben.

Jack Seymour toasting his emeritus status alongside Virginia Lee and Margaret Ann Crain, photo by Tamar Wasoian.

Board member photos by Mary Hess.