

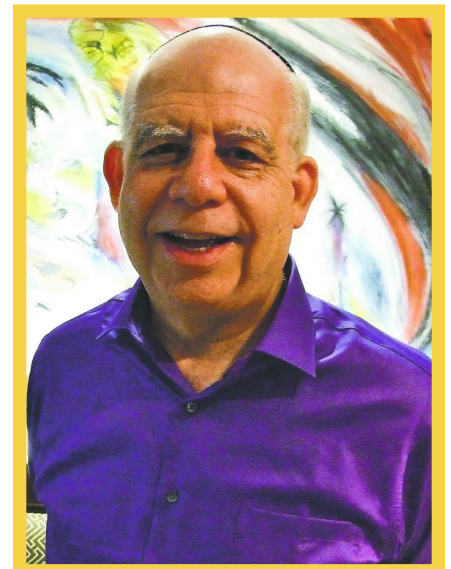


Highlights of the upcoming Toronto meeting
CFP for November Meeting - Deadline is May 1st
Members publishing many new books!

From our program chair and vice president, Hanan Alexander

We are planning an exciting program for the upcoming REA annual meeting at the Holiday Inn International Airport Hotel, Toronto, Ontario in Canada from November 1-3, 2019. The theme of the conference will be **Coexistence in Divided Societies: Pedagogies of the Sacred, of Difference, and of Hope.**

There are growing tensions in diverse democratic societies around the world today, in part due to a rising populism on both the right and left of the political spectrum. Some of these tensions arise from disputes both within and among religious traditions, from ultra-Orthodox and fundamentalists on one side, to secular humanists on the other, with roots in Christian, Muslim, and Jewish heritages, among many others. No doubt education in general, and religious education in particular, have an important role to play in helping to negotiate and mitigate these tensions. As an interreligious and international association of scholars and practitioners of religious education, it is incumbent on our association to create and consider pedagogies of different kinds to address this growing chasm among conflicting and often incommensurate points of view. Hence, the conference theme.



The conference will open with the **Kairos Blanket Exercise**, a unique participatory history lesson, developed in collaboration with Indigenous Elders, knowledge keepers, and educators in Canada, that fosters truth, understanding, respect and reconciliation among Indigenous and non-indigenous peoples. This session promises to be especially meaningful given some of the brave but difficult conversations many of us experienced surrounding issues of race in our association at last year's REA annual meeting in Washington, DC.



In addition to parallel breakout sessions featuring papers and presentations on the conference theme, I will offer a Presidential address with responses from **HyeRan Kim-Cragg**, Professor of Preaching at Emmanuel College, University of Toronto, Canada, and **Hosffman Ospino**, Professor of Hispanic Ministry and Religious Education at Boston College, USA. We are also planning three additional plenary sessions. Each plenary will feature a panel of leading international scholars and practitioners plus an opportunity for interaction among people participating in the session.





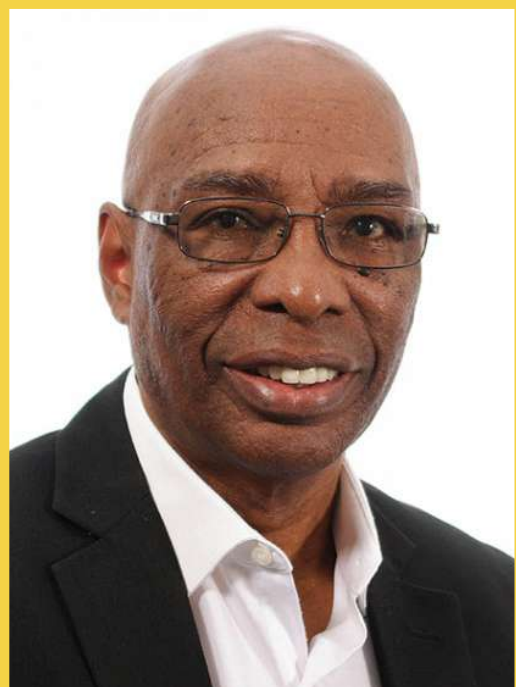
The first plenary is on the topic: “Hermeneutics of the Other and Theology of Difference.” It will feature **Deborah Kerdeman**, a former President of the Philosophy of Education Society who serves as Professor of Philosophy of Education at the University of Washington, USA;



Michelle Voss Roberts, Principal and Professor of Theology at Emmanuel College, University of Toronto, Canada;



and **Elie Holzer**, Ochs Chair for Teaching Jewish Religious Studies and Director of the Stern Institute for the Study and Advancement of Religious Education at Bar Ilan University. This session will include interfaith text study of the story of Sarah, Hagar, Isaac, and Ishmael from the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament, and the Koran.

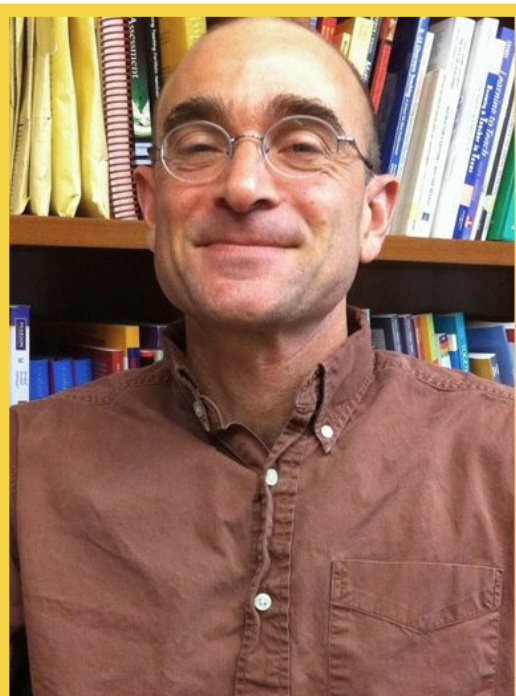


The second plenary will deal with the theme, “Disrupting the Consequences of Difficult Histories through Education.” It will feature **Jabari Mahiri**, Briton Family Professor of Urban Education at the University of California, Berkeley, and author of *Deconstructing Race: Multiculturalism beyond the Color-Bind*;

Greer Anne Wenh-In Ng, Professor of Religious Education Emeritus at Emmanuel College, University of Toronto;



Tsafrir Goldberg, Sr. Lecturer in Education at the University of Haifa;



and **Magda Gross, Sr.** Research Associate at the Center to Support Excellence in Teaching, Stanford University.

The session will be accompanied by examination of pedagogic cases of disrupting difficult histories, taken from teaching African American experience in the US, the Asian and Indigenous experience in Canada, the Israel/Palestine conflict in Israel, and the Holocaust in Poland.





One aspect of our current social divides involves a raging debate over the possibility of “post-truth,” “alternative facts,” and “fake news.” Among other issues, this debate revolves around the proper relation between empirical evidence on the one hand, and various political, cultural, and religious narratives on the other. One way to consider this debate is by addressing relations between science and religion. Hence, the final plenary of the conference will feature the theme: “Science and Religious Education in Divided Societies.”

The panel of speakers for this session includes **Michael Reiss**, Anglican Priest and Professor of Science Education at University College, London, and President of the International Society for Science and Religion; **Yusef Waghid**, Distinguished Professor of Philosophy of Education at Stellenbosch University, South Africa, and author of



Conceptions of Islamic Education and African Philosophy of Education Reconsidered; and **Sybrina Atwaters**, Assistant Director for Outreach in the Center for Student Diversity and Inclusion at the Georgia Institute of Technology. This session will feature an exercise for addressing tensions surrounding the teaching of evolution from Muslim, Jewish, and Christian perspectives.



In addition to these challenging sessions, the conference will offer both faith-based and interfaith worship experiences, and the usual camaraderie and collegiality for which REA meetings have long been famous. We look forward to seeing you there.

Plan ahead for our meeting in Toronto!

The [Call for Papers](#) process has been open for more than a month now, and will close as of **May 1st**. There are many useful resources at our website for preparing to respond to the call. Please share the call widely, and remind people that they do not need to be members of REA to submit a proposal, although if their proposal is accepted they will need to join. Please also remind your graduate students that there are a limited number of travel awards available to students who are presenting at REA.

The hotel for November's meeting — the [Holiday Inn at the International Airport in Toronto, Ontario](#) — is already accepting reservations for our meeting. Rooms are 139CAN, exclusive of taxes, and given the exchange rates may be lower than in recent years for many people.

There are differing entry requirements, based on your country of origin, for coming into Canada. Please consult the [Canadian government site](#) for more details.

There are some exciting options to explore in Toronto, if you are able to come in a day early. Dr. Alexander will be speaking at Emmanuel College that Thursday afternoon in a free public lecture.

Members of our Association will be leading walking trips into the city that day, which can be easily reached by public transit from the airport. Unfortunately it is about a 45 minute trip into the city, so it is not readily accessible during our actual meeting times. We recommend coming in a day early, or staying a day longer.



Spring Is Here: A reflection from our president Kathy Winings

For me, the transition from winter to spring is highly anticipated and eagerly awaited. It is also, though, a great time for reflection. While many of my family members, friends and colleagues use the transition from the end of one year to the beginning of the next year as their time to reflect, create new habits and make changes in their life, I use the arrival of spring as the time in which I undertake such reflective practices. I am not sure why I changed my reflective habit to the springtime. Maybe it was because of the shift in the weather and changes in the natural environment as tiny buds began to make their appearance, when hints of pale green began to appear and as the irises began to bud around my house. Maybe it was because this was a time for spring-cleaning. Whatever the reason, my annual reflection begins somewhere around mid to late March. The rebirth promised by spring both inspires and challenges me. I have also utilized this process in my coursework.



To aid my reflection process, I have been focusing on listening. It is amazing what we hear around us when we really focus on listening. And it is often equally amazing what we do not hear. Living in the United States, one thing that I cannot help but hear is the political rhetoric in an increasingly divisive society. As this nation approaches the 2020 election year, the cacophony only promises to get louder and more divisive. Great Britain is experiencing a similar challenge around the issue of Brexit. Much of the time I just want to cover my ears to shut out the noise. I do not know what I am most upset about: what I am hearing or what I am not hearing. What I am hearing is pain, anger, accusation, blame, hurt, frustration and promises to be different, to name a few. I am also hearing reports of shootings and bombings as more and more religious sites and schools, where innocent people gather, become the target of people's extreme anger and hatred. What I am not hearing, though, is understanding, compassion, a supportive heart, wisdom and silence. Of course I know that it is there, but it is being drowned out by the anger and hurt. As I reflect, I realize how prescient Jesus was when he spoke about having ears but not hearing (Matt. 13:9).

The older I get, the more I come to understand how important listening and silence can be. It is in the midst of silence that we can hear what it is that our divine creator wants and needs us to hear. It wasn't until I was in seminary that I learned that it was as important to spend time listening to God during prayer as it was to tell her things. A group of us had gone to Mt. Tremper, the local Buddhist monastery, for services. Sitting in silence and learning to quiet the noise inside me and to listen was one of the hardest things I had ever done. That was the beginning of my journey to focus on listening in my annual reflective process. Listening also has been important in my classrooms. In my

first few years as a teacher, both in the public school context and in the seminary, I used to spend a good deal of my time speaking and talking with students both in and out of the classroom. Over time, I learned that much more was learned by everyone, myself included, when more time was spent listening to the students and when we all took time to simply sit in silence.

In his book, [Practical Theology: An Introduction](#), Richard Osmer talks about the concept of “priestly listening” as a critical dimension of “attending” so that we are better able to attend to or relate to others with greater openness, attentiveness and prayerfulness. Margaret Ann Crain has also noted that listening is central to her teaching in her introductory comments in the beautiful collection of essays for the book [Educating for Redemptive Community](#). She further acknowledges that all of us need to utilize “deep listening” as educators and teachers.

Anne Wimberly has also discussed the role of listening [in her writings](#). For Wimberly, compassionate listening is essential in both religious education and pastoral care as one seeks to create deep relationships and soulful communities. We also find that the spiritual nature of listening is embraced by Jonathan Sacks, as noted in his online commentary “[Covenant & Conversation](#).” He reminds us that at the root of most conflicts are the fact that one person or one side feels that they are not being heard. So until we learn to listen to others, the conflict persists and will expand, creating a greater problem. Therefore, listening goes to the heart of our relationships and to who we are and can become.

During our most recent Doctor of Ministry intensive, I taught one of my religious education courses. Throughout the week, we spoke about listening and the role of listening in their dissertation projects. Each student’s project focuses on a ministry context with a profound listening challenge. One project deals with the challenge of interfaith and intercultural differences in an alternative home care situation with veterans learning to live with volunteer families. Another project works with generational challenges between first, second and third generations within a non-American immigrant population. A third project context involves effective pastoral care and counseling of those who are self-identified as “nones.” At the heart of each of these ministry contexts is the challenge of listening – senior veterans and well-intentioned families of diverse cultures and faiths challenged to listen to each other and to hear each other, one generation learning to listen to another generation, those in ministry learning to listen to those who view themselves as spiritual but not religious. We discussed issues of listening, hearing, silence and the learning opportunity that faces them as they continue with their projects. One thing we learned that week concerned our own challenges with listening and how much more we can improve our listening skills.

As I begin my own reflective process for this year, I recognize that this is a dynamic on-going process. I also have come to appreciate my colleagues in religious education who have written and shared about their own journeys in deep listening or, as Jack Seymour calls it, “paying attention.” I pray that all of us can become strong listeners as we go through this year because our global community is in desperate need of good listeners.

Syllabus / bibliography project announced

You are invited to participate in a research project! Several of us in our field have wondered what holds it together and what range of commitments are represented. A great way to explore this is to think about how we present our field to our students. What do we hope they will know, do, or be as a result of our courses? Send jack.seymour@garrett.edu the title, syllabus, and bibliography for your “basic” courses. He will review them and report back. Some questions we will ponder:

- In fact, what do we teach?
- Do any of us do a general course in Introduction to Religious Education or are all our courses grounded in our faith traditions?
- How do we address our interfaith and international character?
- How do we deal with race, class, and gender?
- What do we want to teach our students?

Send Jack the syllabi for your “introductory” courses and the bibliography. Let’s see what “holds” us together and what is the range of our commitments. Thank you for participating in this research project.

News from the Wornom Innovation Grants



The **2017 Wornom Innovation Grant** was given to a project entitled "Art, Faith, and the Pursuit of Justice: The Sanctuaries and Interreligious Interculturalism among Artists Working for Social Change."

Researchers Lakisha Lockhart and Callid Keefe-Perry, the 2017 recipients of the Wornom Innovation grant, presented partial fruits of their work at the 2018 meeting. They continue to develop their project, and more details will become available.

The **2018 Wornom Innovation Grant** was awarded to Dr. Jeffrey Schein for his project, “Text Me: Ancient Jewish Wisdom Meets Contemporary Technology.” For twenty-four years, Rabbi Dr. Schein was a Professor and Director of the Education Department at the Laura and Alvin Siegal College of Judaic Studies in Cleveland. He also served as the senior consultant to the Lekhu Lakhem project of the Mandel Jewish Center, a major initiative to change the

Jewish character of eighteen JCC camps across North America through the professional development of their directors. He served the Mandel Foundation as a member of the visioning professors group convened to enlarge the uses of the groundbreaking *Visions of Jewish Education* volume (Fox, Marom, and Sheffler)

This award makes it possible for Rabbi Dr. Schein to collaborate with a group of religious educators from multiple faiths (Christian, Jewish, Muslim) to explore how the educational practices from within a specific religious tradition might valence and nuance their understanding of the relationship between their faith and digital lives. The grant also supports the further development of web access to the materials.



The application for the \$3,000 [2019 Wornom Innovation Grant](#) is available on our website. The deadline for applications is September 15th. You must be a member of REA to apply.

Technology notes

We have recently updated our [terms of use](#) and [privacy policy](#). If you're curious about these, please take a look. If you have not already done so, the next time you renew your membership, submit a proposal, or register for a meeting, you will be asked to agree to these terms.

Keep us out of your spam filters! If you find that you are not receiving our informational emails, your email program may be putting our messages in your spam folder. One way to avoid that is to add nc@religiouseducation.net and mailchimp@religiouseducation.net to your contacts. If you know how to edit your email filters, you can instruct your email program to never send messages from religiouseducation.net to spam.

Board and Steering Committee Issue Statements

The REA Board recently issued [a statement making several commitments](#) in light of evaluation feedback from the November meeting. This statement has already been circulated and is available online.

The Steering Committee of the Board also recently issued [a statement in response to the massacre at the mosque in New Zealand](#). Please help us to share these with a broader public.

From your networking coordinator, Mary Hess

The past few months have been full of pain, and also REA statements. Whether it's [the statement](#) the Board made following the November meeting, or [the statement](#) the REA executive committee shared following the mosque massacre in New Zealand, these statements are only one element of how our Association seeks to embody our commitments.

I first went to an REA meeting in the fall of 1994. Since then I have watched this association ebb and flow in its ability to engage contemporary challenges. Last year's meeting was a challenging one, for all of the reasons noted in the Board statement. But I think it's also important to remember that our Association re-committed to facing the challenges of diversity following the 2016 Association-wide survey. We will stumble many times in this process, but I remain encouraged by the resilience and wisdom of our members.

I would like to ask that you pay careful attention to the many structural changes that the Board is seeking to implement in the years to come in order to address these Association commitments to its members. First and foremost, they have committed to putting in place an accountability task force explicitly charged with moving the Association to embody more clearly our commitments around diversity of all kinds.

Second, they are moving forward with governance changes that seek to open up and make more transparent our leadership processes. The Board is currently working out the details of reducing its size and creating a new, broadly representative and participatory Advisory Council. The Board has been very effective at generating advice about creative actions to address various issues, but not very effective in implementing it. The hope of this new governance proposal is that it will increase the Board's efficiency and accountability while maximizing the benefits of the wisdom and input that comes from people who have stepped into a more active role in advising the Association.

The Board believes that an Advisory Council — with members drawn from places of REA leadership (for instance, the chairs of standing committees and conveners of working groups), others invited from representative partner organizations (FTE, Wabash, ALLM, and so on), and others invited from our membership at large — will make possible a more robust and engaged constituency. This Council will meet on Sunday afternoon following the November meeting to provide input about the meeting, Board actions, and future projects.



Third, noting the increasing costs of putting on and attending our annual meeting, the Board has voted to try meeting during the summer on a university campus. Our 2022 meeting will be Wednesday through Friday, **July 6-8, 2022, at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, MN.** We will try this new arrangement for three years and evaluate the change. Implementation means not having a November 2021 meeting since we will meet the following summer. To help compensate for the omitted 2021 meeting, we will plan expanded REA sessions at AAR that November.

Fourth, in conjunction with the shift to a summer meeting, the Board is proposing that the Program Chair be separated from the Presidential line to become a two-year position focused on designing and implementing the annual meeting. Hence the Program Chair will be elected based on their proposal to lead a specific theme for the meeting. In addition to providing members with a voice in selecting program themes, this leadership change will focus the Presidential election on the vision, tasks, and skills incumbent to that position.

The leadership shift, if it is approved by our members, will then unfold with the election of a program chair in November of 2020 or the 2022 summer meeting. Details will follow in the coming months with how to propose a theme for that meeting, and how to put yourself (or someone else) forward for that role.

Additional changes can be implemented over several years, and details and a timeline will be presented to the membership for their approval over the next few months.

I believe the REA Board has been working very hard and very faithfully to listen to our membership, and these proposed changes open up exciting opportunities for our Association. Please stay tuned as plans unfold and more details are forthcoming, and contact Lucinda Huffaker, Executive Secretary, or myself with your questions or comments!

Member notes

The faculty of Emmanuel College in the University of Toronto joyfully announce that **HyeRan Kim-Cragg** will join them as Associate Professor of Preaching in July.

Bert Roebben, past-president and program chair of the REA, is pleased to announce a new degree in ecumenical studies that his university — Universität Bonn — is offering. We rejoice with him in this new learning opportunity.

A season of new books being published

Hans Alma and **Ina ter Avest** are pleased to announce the publication of [Moral and Spiritual Leadership in an Age of Plural Moralities](#) (CRC Press, 2019).

Judith Ann Brady is pleased to announce the publication of [The Surprising Life and Times of a Dominican Sister](#) (AuthorHouse, 2019).

Mary Hess, Bert Roebben, Richard Rymarz, and Kieran Scott have all contributed chapters to [Global Perspectives on Catholic Religious Education in Schools](#) (Springer, 2019), edited by Michael T. Buchanan and Adrian-Mario Gellel.

Maria James and **Julian Stern** are pleased to announce the publication of [Mastering Primary Religious Education](#) (Bloomsbury Academic, 2019).

HyeRan Kim-Cragg is part of the team which has just published [Reading In-Between: How Minoritized Cultural Communities Interpret the Bible in Canada](#) (Wipf & Stock, 2019).

Randy Litchfield is pleased to announce the publication of [Roots and Routes: Calling, Ministry, and the Power of Place](#) (Abingdon, 2019).

Andre Mulder and **Bas van den Berg** are pleased to announce the publication of [Learning for Life: An Imaginative Approach to Worldview Education in the Context of Diversity](#) (Wipf & Stock, 2019).

Robert Pazmiño is pleased to announce the publication of a book he has written with **Octavio Esqueda**, [Anointed Teaching: Partnership with the Holy Spirit](#) (in both English and Spanish, 2019).

Many of our members are part of the team which has just published [Cultivating Teen Faith](#) (Eerdmans, 2018), including **Reginald Blount, Terri Martinson Elton, Lisa Kimball, and Gordon S. Mikoski**.

Resources available

[Resources for challenging Islamophobia](#) from [TeachingTolerance](#) (classroom sessions, videos, and more)

[15 stories and lessons to foster empathy in the classroom](#), offered by Global Oneness Project

[DIY: Imaginings](#) (a DIY guide to arts-based community dialogue) This book contains materials for hosting a vibrant, creative, equitable, and powerful community dialogue, including: (1) The basics to ensure your Imagining is right-sized, intentional, inclusive, interactive, and ethical. (2) Reasons to host an Imagining and what it can accomplish (3) Advice and examples from past [USDAC Imaginings](#) (4) Grounding your Imagining in what you know about your community—and what you need to learn (5) Building a core team (6) Promoting your Imagining (7) A Toolbox of Imagining elements you can use or adapt (8) Following up and building on your Imagining and (9) A public folder full of useful how-to materials

[A free set of short videos](#) curated from [Edutopia](#) and the [National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development](#) which describe and share examples of whole-hearted learning.

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](#). From there you can use any regular credit or debit card to donate. We really appreciate your support and urge you to consider donating.



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

eREACH is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.



Image Credits

Flowers in the rock, CC-BY Mary Hess, Photo taken on the campus of Seattle University.

Headshot photos, from each of the speakers' institutional sites.

Kairos Blanket Exercise, meme created by KAIROS Canada