

# eREACH

9.3

July 2019



Details for the upcoming November meeting  
Resources to share

## Join us in November in Toronto!

The registration process for our upcoming 1-3 November meeting is now open — with early bird registrations at reduced rates available until September 15. The Call for Papers committee has accepted 71 proposals, with scholars coming from all over the world. This meeting promises to be both rich and engaging, with significant amounts of our plenary time structured through examples of collaborative pedagogical practices. The April issue of eREACH had extensive information about the various plenary speakers and other events for this meeting.

Keep in mind that the registration process is managed via our US website, so all costs are noted in US dollars.

## REGISTER NOW!

## From our program chair, Hanan Alexander

Please join us for an important and exciting REA meeting in Toronto this November. Our theme will be “Coexistence in Divided Societies: Pedagogies of the Sacred, of Difference, and of Hope.” In a world of increased tribalism, divided by religion, politics, race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexual orientation and more, as scholars and practitioners

of religious education we have a particular obligation to seek peaceful coexistence through education.

Our conference will begin with a Kairos reconciliation exercise celebrating the traditions of the indigenous peoples on whose land we will be coming together. This will be followed by stimulating plenary sessions on the hermeneutics and theology of difference, overcoming difficult histories, and dialogue between religious and science education. I will deliver a Presidential Address challenging religious educators to participate in taking back the democratic public square from the extremes that have come to dominate.

We will enjoy an all-star team of international featured speakers, including Professor Deborah Kerdeman from the University of Washington, Professor

Michele Voss Roberts from the University of Toronto, Professor Eli Holzer from Bar Ilan University, Professor Jabari Mahiri from the University of California Berkeley, Dr. Magda Gross from Stanford University, Professor Tsafirir Goldberg from the University of Haifa, Professor Wenh-In Ng from the University of Toronto, Professor Michael Reiss from the University College London, Professor Yusef Waghid from Stellenbosch University, and Dr. Sybrina Atwaters from Georgia Institute of Technology.

All of the plenaries will be interactive, involving discussions and deliberations among participants. Additionally, we will enjoy a wonderful array of collegial presentations, papers, and posters from our REA colleagues on this important theme, along with the long-standing REA tradition of camaraderie, collegiality, and collaboration, and meaningful opportunities for inter-faith dialogue and communal worship. I look forward to seeing you there.

*REA program chair and President-elect, Hanan Alexander*



## From our president, Kathy Winings

This past year, the faculty at my institution began a review of the Master of Religious Education degree that we offer. As a member of that review committee, it has been both sad and exciting to see the overall changes in our field. It has been sad because there are fewer Religious Education degree programs in our field today than when many of us first entered the discipline. At one time many of our seminaries and divinity schools offered a degree in religious education. Now, out of the more than 270 member schools accredited or affiliated with the Association of Theological Schools, there are less than twenty

schools that offer the MRE, MACE or MA with a concentration in RE or a Practical Theology program. This is not news to many of us in REA as we have watched this process develop over time.

At the same time, however, I have been excited to see so many interesting and extremely relevant courses developed and taught by our RE colleagues. In addition to the basic cornerstone courses that each of us continue to teach, I have been amazed at the intriguing titles and themes of courses developed across the spectrum of schools. There are courses focused on inter-religious education, religious education in a religiously and culturally diverse world, educating for social change, RE and ecology, conflict management, our digital cultures and spirituality, community ministries and RE, education for peace and justice, creativity and religious education, RE and womanist and feminist theology, RE in the Latinx context and education for peace building and non-violence, to name a few. So, while the number of religious education degree programs have decreased, our colleagues have been able to continue to make strong contributions not only to theological education but also to men and women of today and tomorrow.

The review has only confirmed for me the impact that our field and discipline continues to have on our world and on our future. Outlining the basis of spiritual formation, teaching the tools and pedagogies that our students will be able to use and providing a forum for students to delve deeply into the value of religious education have always been the bedrock of what most of us do in our institutions, whether educational or denominational/faith based. But we quickly learn that religious education goes far beyond these foundational concepts and skills. When I saw the titles of courses offered by our colleagues, I was reminded of the research project being undertaken by Jack Seymour that was outlined in the last eREACH.

As noted in that announcement, Jack has asked members to send him syllabi from their introductory courses along with their bibliographies. The project will hopefully give some insight into “what holds (the field) together and what range of commitments are represented.” Some of the questions Jack is hoping the project will answer include: “How do we address our interfaith and international character? How do we deal with race, class, and gender? and What do we want to teach our students?” When I look at the course titles from the program review, it communicates so well the range of commitments of our colleagues. Consider these titles: “Peace Building with Youth: Unlearning Violence, Learning Nonviolence;” “Relational Youth Ministry in an Age of Networks;” “Teaching Peace in Congregations;” “Inter-cultural and Inter-religious Intelligences and Teaching for Openness;” “Educating for Justice and Transformation;” “Afrocentrism in Education;” “Women, Development and the Journey of Faith;” and “Religious Education and Our





Ecological Context.” These are just a few of the amazing course titles that I discovered in the review. What these titles tell me about the range of commitments of my fellow educators is their deep commitment to demonstrating how a peace filled world can be initiated through religious education and their concern to continue to challenge students to understand how to effectively address conflict and become peace builders. I see a commitment to providing forums in which our students consider what it means to live faithfully and genuinely in our intercultural and interreligious communities. From the course titles that I found, religious educators are not shy about addressing critical issues so as to live out of their deepest faith commitments.

Of course, a scan of book titles from religious educators also testify to their deepest commitments as well. *Educating for Redemptive Community, Teaching for a Culturally Diverse and Racially Just World, Children, Youth, and Spirituality in a Troubling World, Being Black Teaching Black* and *Interfaith Curriculum for Peacemaking* are just the tip of the iceberg. Nor does it even begin to note the journal articles, conference papers and dissertation themes that affirm how committed religious educators are when it comes to meeting the vital issues and challenges that we face in our contemporary cultural milieu. Truly, the body of work of our colleagues in the field remind me of not only their dedication to making a difference in their students’ lives and in the lives of those around them but their dedication to laying the foundation for religious educators who will come after them.

We also want to offer our congratulations to Dr. Nancy Lynne Westfield on becoming the Director of the Wabash Center. Lynne is an example of a colleague who has made decided contributions to these vital issues and to theological education through her teaching, her scholarship, and by her presence. Together with many other RE colleagues who are consultants and contributors to Wabash projects, Lynne has already contributed to the great work of the Center. In her new capacity as Director, she will be able to guide and support the Center’s work on a new level. The Wabash Center has long been a contributor to REA through its support of the doctoral student breakfast and through its many projects and programs in support of our discipline. REA wishes Lynne and the Wabash Center great success in the coming years.

*REA President, Dr. Kathy Winings*



## Explore governance changes with REA Board in web meeting

A number of changes are being proposed by the REA Board to our governance structures that involve revision of the bylaws adopted in 2005. Among them are separating the program chair position from the presidential line and moving to two-year terms. Other recent changes that do not affect the bylaws include creating an Advancement Committee, convening an Advisory Council, and scheduling the REA Annual Meeting in June 2022 instead of November. All of these changes have been carefully and extensively discussed strategies for making the work of the Board of Directors more efficient, transparent, and effectively attuned to the wisdom and vision of our diverse membership. They will allow us to draw on the passions and talents of members who are eager to design and implement an annual conference, committed to leadership and administration of the association, or compelled by the vision and mission that guide us.

The Board has scheduled two Q&A zoom meetings for any members who are interested in discussing these recent and proposed changes: **July 18th at 2 pm eastern US time**, and **September 5th at 3 pm eastern US time**. You can be a part of either of these meetings by clicking on this zoom link at the announced time: <https://zoom.us/j/331364489>

## Help the Steering Committee with Anti-Oppression Task Force

*If you see a problem, be part of the solution.* —Paraphrase of Eldridge Cleaver

In the last [eREACH](#) we reported on the Board's commitment to put together a high level accountability task force to confront and engage issues of difference and race in our Association. The Steering Committee had hoped to get the Anti-Oppression Task Force up and running by now but is still having trouble finding people who are ready and prepared to dig into this work. The Steering Committee urges members to share names of people (you can nominate yourself!) who would be helpful in gathering and analyzing data, strategizing for change, and working with the Board on implementation and assessment. It would be difficult to overestimate the importance of these tasks! Finding the right people is less about finding someone who has *time* and ability and more about finding those with expertise who are *passionate* about REA and how it fulfills its mission with integrity. Please contact Lucinda Huffaker about your own interest or to recommend someone else: [secretary@religiouseducation.net](mailto:secretary@religiouseducation.net).

Members of the Board along with Executive Secretary Lucinda Huffaker will be reaching out to some of our members with special expertise in the areas of anti-racism, inclusion, and institutional diversity to help with this work. We hope you will respond affirmatively. If you have experience and want to help, please contact us!

## Wornom Innovation Grant Applications Encouraged

Summer is a great time to be creative! Apply for a Wornom Innovation Grant to get funding for your good ideas. This is a one-time \$3,500 award for innovative religious education projects and initiatives that further knowledge and deepen the practice of religious education, or that expand the field of religious education to a new area that is not traditionally associated with religious education. The annual application deadline is September 15. Awardees will be invited to present their work at the following year's REA conference. [Review the guidelines and apply online](#). Professors and mentors: please pass this information on your graduate students and others you are guiding in developing projects.

We are two years into the reconfiguration of these awards. The Harper Wornom Committee has worked hard to re-imagine the award as a grant to support innovation in religious education. The 2017 awardees — Lakisha Lockhart and Callid Keefe-Perry— have been working with [ARC: Arts | Religion | Culture](#). They and other ARC members have been developing a project that taps into the power of the arts to speak to unaffiliated “Nones” and religiously diverse young adults together in intercultural communities of shared learning, spiritual formation, and artistic collaboration. Central to the project is a partnership between ARC and [The Sanctuaries](#), a DC-based organization.

Jeffrey Schein, the 2018 awardee, is collaborating with a group of religious educators from multiple faiths (Judaism, Islam, Christianity) to explore how educational practices from within a specific religious tradition might valence and nuance understanding of the relationship between faith and digital lives. The grant also supports the further development of web access to the project materials.

The application process for a Wornom award is straight forward, brief, and is accomplished via [an online application form](#). We are currently accepting applications until September 15, with the awardee to be announced at our Toronto meeting.

## Digital Literacy for Ministry Toolkit released

In June of 2012, the Virginia Theological Seminary began to explore more seriously the ways in which digital tools are transforming ministry. Generously supported by grants from The Arthur Vining Davis Foundation and VTS's faculty and staff, the Center developed [a research project](#) which sought to explore the ways in which digital and hybrid spaces are emerging contexts for legitimate, responsive, personal, and impactful ministry. It is clear from this research that new media tools and cultures have become an essential (and non-trivial) component of ongoing religious leadership formation in the twenty-first century.

This project has identified communal, dispositional, constructive, and embodied literacies necessary for ministry as follows:

- navigating hybrid and digital cultures
- convening hybrid and digital community
- maintaining a posture of experimentation
- cultivating a spiritually wise digital habits
- presenting authentically and pastorally online
- connecting media theory and theological reflection
- creating and curating faith-based media artifacts

These literacies flow through a variety of pedagogical examples located on [the toolkit website](#), and the resources for engaging them are all available there for free use. Many of our members — Lisa Kimball and Kyle Oliver among them — have been instrumental partners in this research. This [Digital Literacies for Ministry website](#) is a powerful resource not only for ministry, but for theological and religious studies educators.

## Member News

Congratulations to our members who have recently made transformative vocational moves and received major awards!

**Faustino Cruz** has been [elected the president](#) of the International Academy of Practical Theology.

**Thomas Groome** has published [Faith for the Heart: A Catholic Spirituality](#), Paulist Press (flyer at end of this newsletter).

**Jos de Kock**, current chair of the Standing Committee on Academic Disciplines and Institutions of the REA Board, has been [appointed professor and rector](#) with effect from the academic year 2019-2020 at The Evangelische Theologische Faculteit in Leuven.

**Lisa Kimball** has been [appointed to](#) Associate Dean of Lifelong Learning and James Maxwell Professor of Lifelong Christian Formation, the James Maxwell Professor Chair of Lifelong Christian Formation, by the trustees of Virginia Theological Seminary.

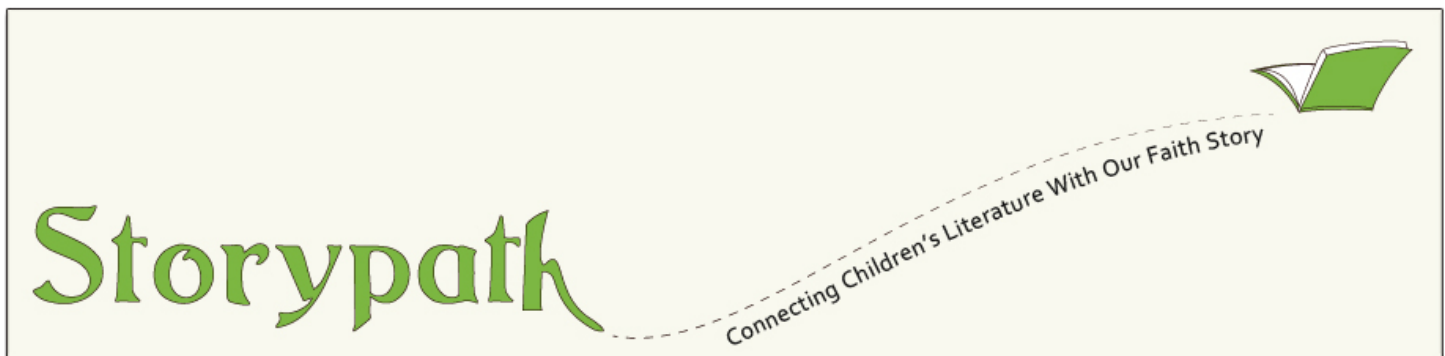
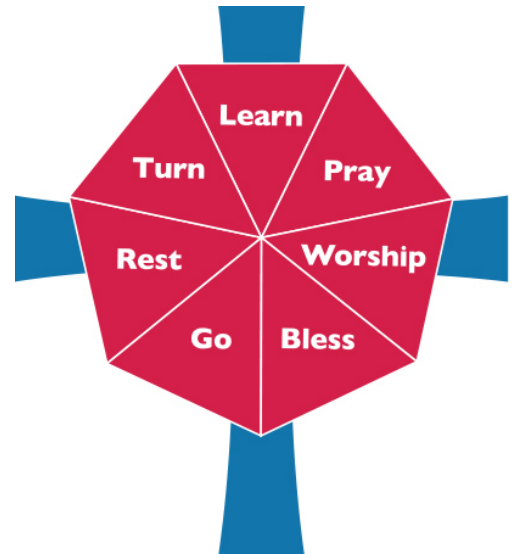
**Evelyn Parker**, the Susanna Wesley Centennial Professor of Practical Theology at Perkins School of Theology, has been selected for a [2019-20 Fulbright U.S. Scholar grant](#). Evelyn will spend six months based at the University of Western Cape and the South African Faith and Family Institute in Cape Town, South Africa, working on a project titled Role of Religions Leaders in Preventing and Intervening in Teen Dating Violence in South Africa.

**Nancy Lynne Westfield**, as mentioned already in our REA president's reflections, has been named the new [Director of the Wabash Center](#) for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion.

## Resources

Long time member and PhD candidate Rev. **Kyle Oliver** has recently recorded [a series of podcasts](#) with the Rev. Michael Curry, presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church USA. These podcasts expand upon and resource the Episcopal Church's "way of love," a new effort to support engagement with a Jesus-Centered life.

Based on seven practices — the practices' shorthand is "learn, pray, worship, bless, go, rest, turn" — the Way of Love offers a fresh take on an ancient challenge. [The website for this process](#) is full of free curriculum resources which can be downloaded and printed, as well as access to the podcasts.



[Storypath](#) is a resource website focused on children's literature as a resource for faith communities. Begun in October, 2009, the resources shared at Storypath had their 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 of Union Presbyterian Seminary 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 of that seminary, this blog finally emerged as a way to share their enthusiasm, creativity and knowledge with the broader church. Writers have continued to come from the class which is offered every other year,



and they have added new writers who share this appreciation for the ways that books connect people and faith story.

In August, 2010, the site added weekly Lectionary Links for the Revised Common Lectionary. 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. When this blog began, it appeared that we might finally have a way to share these connecting points between children's books and the Biblical story. The site is now in the third cycle of the RCL and these Links have become one of the most popular resources on the blog. Beginning in August, 2016, they added links to the Narrative Lectionary as well.

The resources 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 will also be asked to contribute their ideas for using children's books in their own work settings or homes.



Indigenous Land Acknowledgements are increasingly a practice of organizations and people who are committed to challenging the erasure of indigenous peoples, knowledge, and practices under ongoing settler colonialism, and who are committed to working to dismantle the systems of oppression that have dispossessed Indigenous peoples of their lands and denied their rights to self-determination. The US Department of Arts and Culture (which is not a government agency, but rather a “people-powered department—a grassroots action network inciting creativity and social imagination to shape a culture of empathy, equity, and belonging”) has published a free online handbook for learning about and crafting such land acknowledgements.

The website also has a vibrant set of downloadable images for creating your own poster or other acknowledgment of land. Such acknowledgements are only a very small first step, but they can invite awareness where before there had been only ignorance.

## Save the date for the REA at AAR session

As has been our practice in the past, the REA will once again sponsor a session at the American Academy of Religion meeting taking place in San Diego, CA in late November. The REA session will take place on Sunday, November 24 from 6:30 to 8:00 pm in Marriott Marquis-Vista (South Tower - First Level).

This session will explore the identity of scholar-teachers who are also serving as deans, and the implications of that for understanding intersections of scholarship, teaching, leadership, and administration.

Our networking coordinator, Mary Hess, will pose a series of questions to four panelists, which will then be augmented with questions from the audience, probing panelists' experiences and perspectives on the deanship. What factors did they consider when discerning whether to accept the position of dean? What are the challenges of blending their identities as teacher, scholar, and dean? How might the knowledge and perspectives of the field contribute to the office of academic dean? What sorts of leadership challenges do they encounter that they might partly attribute to their academic field or training? With advanced degrees in education as well as religion, these panelists bring distinct and intriguing insights to a lively discussion about leading in higher education.

Panelists:

- **Faustino Cruz**, Dean and Professor of Practical Theology, Graduate School of Religion and Religious Education, Fordham University
- **Leah Gunning-Frances**, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of the Faculty, Associate Professor of Christian Education and Practical Theology, Christian Theological Seminary
- **Sheryl Kujawa-Holbrook**, Vice President of Academic Affairs and Dean of Faculty, Professor of Practical Theology and Religious Education, Claremont School of Theology
- **Javier Viera**, Vice Provost and Dean, Professor of Pastoral Theology, Drew School of Theology



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

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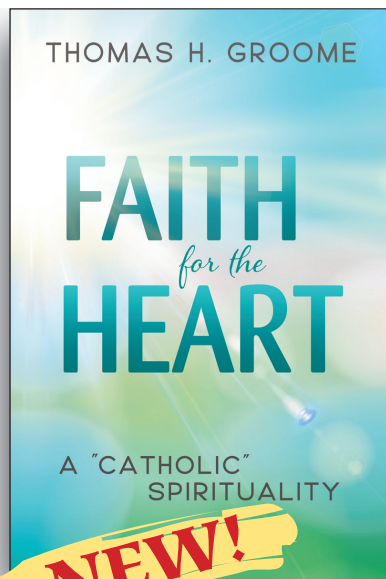


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**Thomas H. Groome** is a professor of theology and religious education at Boston College and author of books on religious education and Christian practice.

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