



Responding to COVID-19
Position ad for executive secretary
REA board retreat news
free resources and much more inside!

REA and COVID-19

What a change from January. I hardly know where to start or what to share! The world is engulfed by the COVID-19 pandemic, and each of our communities is struggling to respond. The steering committee of the REA board meets regularly, and the first decision they've made in response to this pandemic is to postpone the deadline for responding to our [Call for Proposals](#) for the November meeting. Ordinarily that deadline would be mid-May, but given all of the physical distancing, remote instruction, and just generalized anxiety and action, the steering committee has pushed that [deadline to July 1st](#).

It is not yet clear whether we will be able to gather in person in St. Louis, Missouri in November, but REA is committed to finding a way to continue to share research and collegial gathering. So stay tuned for more details as the way forward begins to be more clear. In the meantime we pray that everyone is doing what they need to do, and that the peace which passes all understanding finds its way through you on a daily basis.



Mary Hess, REA Networking Coordinator

Taylor & Francis pauses journal print publication

Dear REA Members,

Many of you enjoy receiving the print version of *Religious Education* in addition to online access. I want to alert you to a delay in print production of the upcoming issue of the journal. But we are still working to set up each of our five yearly issues so that when print production resumes we can get back on schedule. Please note that this does not impact online publication, which will continue. So keep reading the journal online, and please continue to send your submissions for peer review and publication! Below is a note from Taylor and Francis, our publisher, with more details. Stay safe and well. Best regards,

Joyce Ann Mercer, Editor

From Taylor and Francis, publishers:

Due to the ongoing impact of the coronavirus pandemic, we want to share an important update on decisions T&F has made to manage publishing operations during the pandemic.

With great reluctance T&F has decided to stop printing journals from April 10 until further notice.

We are seeing disruption to the distribution supply chain for printed journals: as of the first week of April the postal services of 42 countries have stopped accepting inward deliveries. In addition, many air mail services in and out of our major print hubs in the UK, US and Singapore are no longer operating due to reduced air freight capacity. Finally, a significant number of institutions we mail journals to are closed for business and are no longer accepting post.

We apologize for how this will have affected you and your members, and want to reassure you that online access to our journal content is not affected. Your journal will continue to publish online according to the usual schedule on Taylor & Francis Online.

We plan to resume printing in May and, at the point we do start to print again, your members will receive the print issues that would have been dispatched during the period in which printing ceased. We will keep the situation under close review, especially with regard to public health concerns, and keep you updated with any changes.

REA2020 in St. Louis

With the COVID-19 crisis still unfolding, the REA Board has as yet made no decisions concerning holding the 2020 REA annual meeting in St. Louis in person. However, planning continues for a most exciting program! The theme, “Gender, Sexuality, and Wholeness: Religious Education for Confrontation and Healing,” is attracting significant speakers and artists, and Program Chair Boyung Lee is carefully incorporating feedback from the past several meetings. The [Call for Proposals](#) is now open online, and you can submit your proposals until the [deadline of July 1st](#).

The three plenaries include two panels and an interactive opening session with [Tef Poe](#), a St. Louis based activist, hip hop/theatre/film artist, a founder of the [HandsUp United](#) movement, and currently a fellow for the [Commonwealth Project](#) at Harvard University. Four breakout sessions will provide additional opportunities for the exchange of ideas through member presentations, and starting our meeting at 1:00 pm on Friday will add to the generous unstructured time for smaller affinity group meetings. Three particularly exciting additions are a pre-conference workshop led by Rita Brock and Kristen Leslie on moral injury, individual student mentoring sessions with established scholars, and a publishing workshop with *Horizons* authors and editors.

Finally, we expect that savings in other areas of the REA budget will allow a significant reduction in meal prices so that more of our members can participate in lunch and banquet programs.



Watch for updates on the 2020 meeting as the circumstances of the current health crisis continue to develop. We pray for sufficient resolution so that we can meet in St. Louis in November.

Executive Secretary Bids Farewell

As you will have read in January's eREACH, I have decided that it is a good time for me to step down as your executive secretary. REA is in excellent condition, and it is an exciting time with regard to its commitments and leadership. I am pleased and gratified by the work we've done over the ten years that I've been in this role!

Serving as executive secretary has been more personally fulfilling than I could have imagined. Having the opportunity to be at the center of an organization and work that I care deeply about has brought an extra dimension of meaning to my professional life. I've had the privilege of partnering with remarkable people on the Board. How

interesting, inspiring, and fun working together has been! I can't begin to thank adequately the individuals who have helped guide and support REA all these years, giving so generously of their time and expertise. Having the new Advisory Council is a culmination of a desire to gather more outstanding scholars into conversation—to enlarge the benefits and joys of collaboration and camaraderie.

I want to say a special thank you to Mary Hess, who has shared REA staffing with me since 2014 as

Networking Coordinator. I could never have fulfilled my responsibilities to REA without her. In addition to her timeless labor and wise and far-reaching perspective on our field, she has provided me with stalwart support and counsel. We have shared much, and she has repeatedly "talked me off the ledge" when I was anxious! I trust her work for REA will always be recognized and appreciated.

As I say my farewells, I want to take this opportunity to challenge you as members to take ownership of this Association and see that it continues its proud historical commitments and influence. We represent the best of scholars, researchers, and practitioners collaborating in speaking and working for equity and religious literacy. Take responsibility for advancing the field of religious education, and step up when REA needs your leadership.

Finally, I hope what I've said makes you want to play a fundamental role in REA and inspires several of you to apply for this position. Your creative and generative work can make a difference that will shape our field!

Lucinda Huffaker, REA Executive Secretary



Are you drawn to leadership in REA?

Apply to be our executive secretary—the deadline is May 15th

You are invited to apply for the position of executive secretary. Dr. Lucinda Huffaker is retiring after ten years of dedicated service in the position. The primary tasks of the executive secretary are administering all aspects of the association and overseeing daily operations. The executive secretary works closely with the REA networking coordinator, the program chair of the annual meeting, the officers, and the board of directors to see that the mission of the REA thrives. A full position description is available from the search committee co-chairs: Dr. Mary Young (young@ats.edu) and Dr. Jack Seymour (jack.seymour@garrett.edu). A successful executive secretary will have an advanced degree in and knowledge of the field of religious education. The person will have a high degree of self-direction and administrative competence as well as collaboration and communication skills. The REA is committed to inclusion and embodies commitments to interfaith, international, and intercultural religious education. Please apply by May 15, 2020 by sending a CV and a list of three references to both Dr. Young and Dr. Seymour. Candidates will be accepted as long as the position remains open.

Advisory Council Report

The first meeting of the new REA Advisory Council to the Board was held immediately following the Annual Meeting on Sunday afternoon, November 3, 2019. The Council was created as a way to gather input from the collective wisdom of a broad range of members to inform the work of the seventeen-member Board. Twenty-four people, representing eighteen different perspectival groups in REA, discussed these questions and reported to the Board:

1. How or where (or does) the group you represent in the Council find a home in the REA mission and commitments?
2. What do you want to tell REA? What have you heard in these past few days that REA should attend to?
3. What are some dreams you have for REA?
4. What are some challenges that REA needs to engage?

Notes from these discussions and actions that the Board has already taken based on suggestions from the Advisory Council [can be found here](#). There is also a list of the Advisory Council and the groups they represent. If you are interested in serving on the Advisory Council, you can find more information on our website.

If you know of other groups that should be represented in this group providing input to the Board, please send that information to the [Executive Secretary](#).

The Advisory Council is not the only way to connect with the board. The steering committee of the board meets monthly and wants to know your concerns. As the board monitors COVID-19, we hope to be in regular communication with you, our members. Please send your news, updates, questions, or concerns to [Mary Hess](#), our networking coordinator.

Two new HORIZONS in Religious Education books

The editors of the REA series, [HORIZONS in Religious Education](#) are pleased to announce that books number five and six will be available for purchase in the near future. *Out on Waters: The Religious Life and Learning of Young Catholics Beyond the Church* by James Michael Nagle and *Converting the Imagination: Teaching to Recover Jesus' Vision for Fullness of Life* by Patrick R. Manning are soon to be released by Pickwick Publications of Wipf and Stock Publishers.

Out on Waters focuses on young Christians who have left the church. How do we tap into their learning, how do we engage their concerns for justice and faith, and how do we practice religious education outside of communities of faith? While drawn from interviews with young Catholics outside the church, the book speaks across the religious spectrum as we seek to engage the impact of religious learning on public life. Lively stories offer options for our work as religious educators.

Drawing on theological, psychological, and cultural studies, *Converting the Imagination* provides both an analysis of the crisis of meaning in our secularizing society and offers an approach to teaching for meaning. The model of teaching is drawn from Jesus' everyday practices and commitments. The book seeks to re-enliven the contribution that the Christian imagination and vision can offer to public life.

We congratulate both authors and know these books will be an asset to our classes. We ask you to order them for school libraries, to purchase them for your personal library, and to consider using them in your summer and fall classes. In the next issues of eREACH, we will have interviews with both authors.

Your REA Board hard at work

Although it was held before the COVID-19 restrictions, the REA Board of Directors met virtually over three days rather than holding its annual spring meeting at a retreat center. Sixteen Board members met together and in small groups periodically over the extended weekend to conduct the following business:

- Orientation of new Board members
- Discussion of the definition and parameters of scholarship in religious education, particularly as that relates to annual meetings and the journal
- Update from the Diversity and Inclusion Work Group
- Reports from standing committees, Treasurer, and student representative

- Updates on the planning of the 2020, 2021, and 2022 meetings
- Review of Advisory Council discussions

Board actions include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Read and/or distribute at the annual meeting guidelines for our work together, for example, “Pay attention to a diversity of voices and perspectives and characteristics of constructive engagement.”
- Develop a more formal mentoring process for students.
- Enhance the review process for conference proposals by recruiting reviewers representing a diversity of research interests, contexts, and methodologies.
- Support unfolding plans for the 2020 REA program, emphasizing the need for fewer plenaries, more REA member speakers, and more unstructured times for affinity group meetings, conversations, and relaxation.
- Approve a new process for selecting program themes and program chairs, arranging for the REA membership to select those by rank voting. The process will begin this summer with proposals for the 2022 REA meeting.
- Determine that the Board will undertake education in antiracism and learn inclusion and equity in its practices, under the guidance of the Diversity and Inclusion Work Group.
- Act on Advisory Council recommendations (see separate report).
- Explore fundraising strategies.

The Board always welcomes your comments and suggestions. The Steering Committee meets monthly by web conference. The next scheduled Board meeting is in November at REA 2020.

Propose an annual meeting theme and nominate yourself as program chair!

As we have reported in [previous issues of eREACH](#), and at the business meeting during the REA 2019 meeting in Toronto, we are moving to a summer meeting for the 2022 meeting, which will be held in Saint Paul, Minnesota. At the same time, we are moving to a process which seeks to open up the theme of future meetings to much wider input from our membership.

REA invites people to nominate themselves as program chair through proposing a theme for the 2022 meeting. We are asking people who want to propose a theme and nominate themselves to begin by reading through all of the [information on our site](#). It includes what is required of a program chair, what the available budget entails, and what you will need to have available when you fill out the application. Please read carefully through the [program chair guidelines](#), particularly the [program chair \(year one\)](#) and [program chair \(year two\)](#) position descriptions so that you know what your responsibilities will be if your theme is selected and you are elected as program chair for the 2022 summer

meeting. It is also important to understand what the REA by-laws require in an annual meeting, particularly Article IX.

Once you have reviewed all of the information and gathered the necessary elements, you can complete your proposal on our website. We are asking that people who would like coaching on this process to submit a draft of their proposal for the 2022 summer meeting theme by July 1st so there is time for a response and revisions. The final deadline for completed proposals is August 1st.

The basic timeline for this new process is imagined as follows for the 2022 - 2024 programs.

2022 program:

- Deadline for submissions July 1 or Aug 1, 2020.
- Deadline for Board's vetting of proposals, Sep 1.
- Electronic voting start September and run through first day, Friday, of Nov meeting
- Announce Nov 2020 business meeting Sat night in St. Louis. Gives 1 year 8 months to plan, but much vision work will have already been done.

2023 program:

- Deadline for submissions, June 1, 2021.
- Deadline for Board's vetting of proposals, July 15.
- Electronic voting start August and end Oct 1.
- Announce immediately and again at Nov 2021 business meeting at AAR in San Antonio. Gives 1 year 9 months to plan.
- Winner becomes Program Chair-Elect immediately, Oct 2021.

2024 program:

- Deadline for submissions June 1, 2022.
- Deadline for Board's vetting of proposals, July 1.
- Electronic voting starts at Annual Meeting in July (with public presentation of proposals).
- Voting ends August 15. Announcement by Sep 1, 2022.

How will your institution encourage a commitment to lifelong learning in ministry?

Theological education has long included the ongoing professional support and enrichment of ministry leaders within its purview. And yet, whether due to cost-benefit analyses, struggling denominational support, cultural shifts, the narrowing of institutional foci, the past academization of the process of preparation for ministry, or some mixture of these and other factors, continuing education in recent decades has often been an afterthought in the theological education landscape.

Yet with recent seismic changes in this landscape becoming increasingly evident, the stage has been set for the continuing education for lay and ordained faith leaders to be reclaimed and renewed. In Canada and the US, the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) is currently in the midst of a process to update its Commission Standards in response to these cultural shifts. Revisions call for theological education that is more diverse, flexible, contextualized, outcome-based, and learner- and formation-centered (Yamada). According to the proposed standards, accredited schools will soon be asked to respond to these shifts by “demonstrating an understanding of learning and formation as lifetime pursuits by helping students develop motivations, skills, and practices for lifelong learning” (ATS section 3.5).

This affirmation of the value of lifelong learning in ministry in the new standards has been a long time coming. But will your institution be prepared when these new standards take effect?

Perhaps, then, it is providential that ALLLM, the Association of Leaders in Lifelong Learning for Ministry, became a Related Learning Organization of the REA just over two years ago. As a result, ALLLM now hosts its annual meetings in conjunction with the REA Annual Conference. With the coming shifts in the ATS standards, ALLLM brings an over fifty-year history of professional experience and wisdom to lifelong learning in ministry, a field which includes not only seminaries and divinity schools, but denominations and their judicatories, other non-profit organizations and associations, as well as independent consultants, online networkers, and many others. Together these entities have nurtured the faith and work of lay and ordained leadership alike, often in isolation from each other and operating with limited funds and their supporting institution’s limited understanding of what they do. ALLLM works to bring these practitioners together for community, networking, mutual resourcing, idea generation, and training that nurture a commitment to and for lifelong learning that is then passed on to the leaders they serve.



There are several reasons, therefore, that REA members might benefit from ALLLM’s affiliation with REA.

- If you are active in REA and are personally involved in continuing education at your institution, or are interested in preparing your institution for the coming ATS standard changes, you might consider becoming a Dual Member of both organizations, and/or attending ALLLM workshops which occur at various points during the REA Annual Meeting.
- Perhaps you yourself are not involved in continuing education, but you have a colleague at your institution who is, or who is interested in, developing some sort of CE program. If they are looking for a community to support and help resource them, please connect them with us!
- Some might be new scholars or currently work with prospective scholars who are interested in revitalizing and supporting the ongoing ministry of faith communities,

but who have not yet landed a position at a theological school. For you, gaining skills and resources in lifelong learning through ALLLM could be a way to diversify one's portfolio, network, and even explore alternative pathways for utilizing one's expertise.

For whatever reason that you might be curious about exploring lifelong learning for ministry through ALLLM, we are starting an upcoming webinar series, "Topics and Trends in Lifelong Learning for Ministry." Here you will find practical guidance on things such as how to plan a program or workshop, how to engage faith leaders, how to design your event flow, etc. These webinars will be great introductions to ALLLM that most theological educators, particularly those committed to good pedagogy and to the lifelong vitality of faith leadership, will find informative.

For more information, you can check out the [ALLLM website](#), connect with [ALLLM's Facebook page](#), and/or subscribe to ALLLM's monthly e-newsletter.

Joshua Lunde-Whitler

Help to fund REA during this difficult time

There are many ways to support REA financially during this difficult time. Every page of our website has a "donate" button on it, and many of you add financial support to your membership renewals. That's very helpful! But we also know that many of us are feeling the strain of lost work, funding that is not renewed, and so on.

Keep in mind that you can also support us by using designating REA as your "[Amazon smile](#)" partner. Doing so will bring a tiny percentage of your purchases there into our funding stream. It is also relatively easy to set up [a fundraiser through Facebook](#) — celebrate a birthday! honor a colleague who's retiring! — by selecting "nonprofit" on the Facebook fundraising page, and designating the Religious Education Association (Walnut Creek, CA) as the recipient.

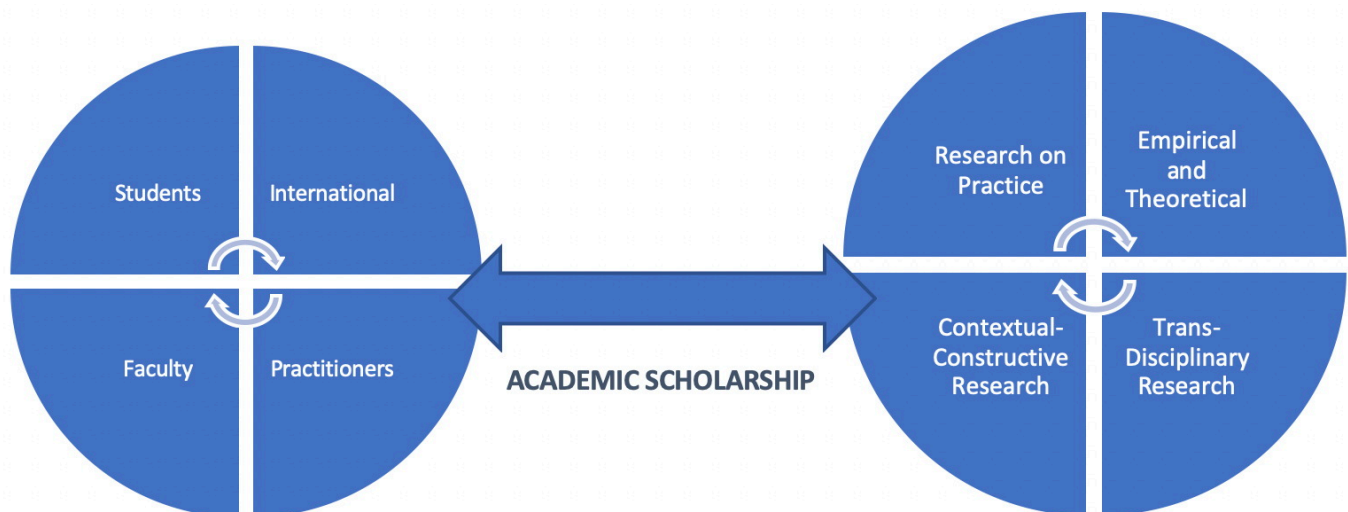
REA draft statement on scholarship

The following statement emerged from the REA board retreat discussions as a draft for consideration:

- (a) The Religious Education Association is committed to supporting and disseminating scholarship on learning and teaching in, from, and about religions at all stages of human growth and development.
- (b) The sorts of scholarship that the REA promotes are conceived broadly, from wide multi-faith and multidisciplinary lenses, including, but not limited to, textual, theological, philosophical, and historical studies; empirical social and educational

research, using quantitative, qualitative, mixed-methods, and other research methodologies; and reflections on educational policy and practice.

- (c) The programs and publications of the REA engage these sorts of scholarship in a spirit of interfaith and interdisciplinary dialogue based on tolerance and respect for difference.
- (d) The sorts of engagement that the REA encourages include courteous expressions of substantive constrictive criticism grounded in such criteria as clarity of purpose and language, organization of ideas and logic of argumentation, methodological rigor (appropriate to the relevant discipline or research paradigm), and disparities of power and privilege.
- (e) In addition to the critical discussion of presentations and publications, the REA is also committed to addressing disparities of power and privilege in its organizational culture, including the manner in which conference sessions are conducted.
- (f) Plenaries at REA annual meetings should reflect the scholarship of REA members as well as the work of colleagues from beyond REA to inspire new ideas, encourage collaboration, and cultivate conference attendance.



Resources

Free access to COVID-19 research and support for remote learning — *Taylor and Francis*, the publishers of our journal, have been working to provide the research community with [free access to COVID-19 research](#) and to give support for remote and distance learning, including free access to ebooks. They have also launched a microsite at www.taylorandfrancis.com/coronavirus to consolidate journal and book resources on this topic. This is currently being updated based on daily keyword scans of articles in production to ensure that they are making all COVID-19 research free at the point of publication.

Religious Guidance from Multiple Traditions during the Pandemic — This is a [site being developed by scholars](#) in comparative religious studies, and held at Colby College in the US. It is collecting statements from religious leaders around the world. The site seeks to be representative, not comprehensive. It remains a work in progress; please share feedback and additional sources! The criteria for inclusion are as follows: (1) authored by a religious authority (mufti, rabbi, etc.) or organization in response to the 2020 coronavirus pandemic; (2) offers practical guidance, and (3) draws on religious texts or values.

A Care Package for Uncertain Times — put together by the [OnBeing Project](#), this site has a [substantial collection of essays, poems, recordings and other pieces](#) focused on finding solace and resilience in this time. It has contributions from multiple faith traditions, and from people needing to find solace even if they reside outside of religious organizations.

How to be your best self in a time of crisis — a [TED video response](#) offered by Dr. Susan David.

A Research Summary Report on “doing religion online” — Dr. Heidi Campbell is one of the key scholars globally who has been studying religion and online environments for the past two decades. This is a [synopsis of ten research articles](#) addressing important issues of how religious communities use the internet, and the ways churches are impacted by their use and experimentation. A summary is provided of each article, along with two to four quotes from each article that highlight key research findings. Article quotes are presented as “lessons” that each of these research studies can offer religious organizations and community leaders who are considering or trying to implement digitally mediated forms of worship. This overview also spotlights important social, ethical and theological implications of doing church online that can impact religious organizations.

Final Report of the US National Summit on Education and Religion — On September 27, 2019, experts gathered at the [Newseum](#) in Washington, D.C., for a National Summit on Religion and Education to discuss the past, present and future of K-12 religious studies education in the United States. Religious studies education

includes academic, constitutional, multi- and inter-disciplinary study about religion that educates and informs students about various religions. Religious studies education neither promotes nor denigrates religion. The summit did not take up questions related to devotional religious education that seeks to inculcate specific religious beliefs or practices. It did, however, issue a [final report](#) which is now available online.

Member news

Deborah Court, Bar-Ilan University, Israel announces the publication of [A Brief History of Knowledge for Social Science Researchers](#), which outlines a history of knowledge from Ancient Greece to the present day, in Europe and the Western world. This outline provides the basis for understanding where various research methods originate, and their epistemological, historical, political and social roots.

Dave Csinos announces the publication of [Little Theologians: Children, Culture, and the Making of Theological Meaning](#), from McGill-Queen's University Press.

Robert Jackson announces that [Religious Education for Plural Societies: The Selected Works of Robert Jackson](#) has just been published in paperback

Kyle Oliver has joined the team at the [Church Divinity School of the Pacific](#), managing communications and teaching Christian formation.



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

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