



Register for our Fall Gathering!  
Mourning Rabbi Dr. Sarah Tauber  
Religious Education in a Time of COVID-19  
and more inside

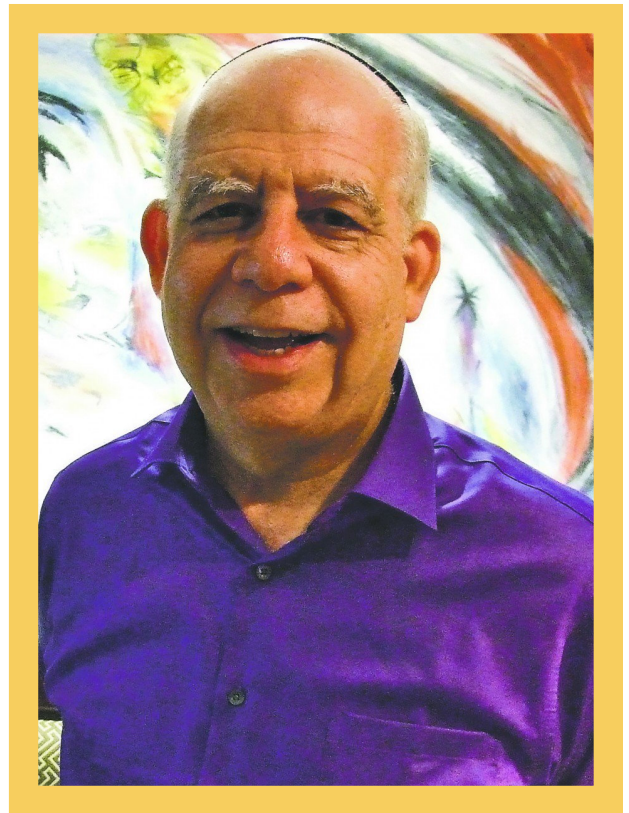
## Religious Education in a Time of COVID-19

Most religious traditions can be conceived as lying on a continuum between two extremes. On one end of the continuum are traditions whose faithful believe that their mission has been transmitted across time, unaltered since the moment of revelation; on the other end are religions whose members see their message as being transformed afresh with each new generation. Whereas followers of traditions toward the one side of the spectrum often hold that their own beliefs, customs, and ceremonies are more or less the same as those of their ancestors, adherents to religions toward the other side are willing to adjust their way of life to changing challenges and circumstances. Traditions situated toward the one extreme tend to prize continuity over adaptability; those located toward the other, generally appreciate innovation as much as conformity. Pedagogies common to one tendency often emphasize convention over creativity; pedagogies common to the other, seek invention in addition to stability. The former might be associated with rigid forms indoctrination, concerned more with ends than with means; the latter with elastic types of informal learning, dedicated more to processes than to products.

Many, though certainly not all, of us in the Religious Education Association represent religious communities that see themselves as situated toward what might be called the “progressive” side of this continuum. We take great pride, as we should, in our positions with regard to social progress, especially our vocal opposition to racial, ethnic, gender, economic, and other forms of injustice and our willingness to listen to the scientific

community when it comes to the so-called “facts” about the novel coronavirus. Similarly, although we hail from many different faiths, we join together, also as we should, in criticizing our co-religionist whose communities might see themselves as situated more toward the “conservative” side of this continuum—ultra-Orthodox among Jews, evangelicals among Christians, Islamicists among Muslims--both for their unwillingness to recognize and address injustice as they should and for their stubborn tendency to ignore medical science when it comes to the virus--wearing masks, social distancing, and washing hands--putting themselves and everyone around them at risk. This is the huge political, cultural, and religious chasm that divides societies around the world today. It is a social sickness no less severe and threatening than the medical condition that brought it into such stark relief.

Yet, the situation is not quite so simple; for the tendencies to ignore compelling moral demands that derive from our religious inheritances and to deny the possibility of objective facts established by the scientific community are not products of the so-called political and religious right alone. On the contrary, the arguments on which those situated on the more conservative side of our continuum rely to ignore injustice and deny science resonate with positions embraced by many of us on the progressive side as well, if perhaps unintentionally. Even if those on the conservative end of our continuum too often prioritize neoliberal ideology or literalist theology over empirical science and common sense morality, those on the progressive side of the spectrum very frequently embrace a suspicion of the corrupting influence of power grounded in critical social theory that challenges the possibility of objective knowledge and transcendental moral imperatives altogether. If truth and goodness are but reflections of human interests, on what basis are we to determine which facts are fake or whose interests are more just?



What’s needed, it would appear, is some form of critical dialogue across these differences; but even that seems nearly impossible today. Whereas the religious extremes and their political counterparts share little but an increasingly strident animosity toward one another, the middle ground, where robust deliberation and debate once took place, has been hollowed out by rules of engagement which too often require faith commitments to be left at the door of a public square dominated by forms of unbelief that lionize science at the expense of religion. Clearly, whatever forms of dialogue we embrace will need to accept emerging biological facts, including those relating to novel coronavirus and ways it may affect different populations, even if the policies for which we advocate may reflect different interpretations of human interests. And it must



unequivocally condemn hatred in all of its forms, including, but by no means limited to, white supremacy, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, misogamy, and homophobia. Dialogue and hate are not compatible! But how can such a discussion become possible in today's hostile environment?

This requires cleansing our own faith communities of animosity toward difference and opening up our traditions to engage others in conversation. To accomplish this, we must be willing to step back and receive others who are different from ourselves rather than primarily stepping forward to assert ourselves upon them. We must also acquire an appreciation for listening to and learning from the views of others rather than merely preaching and teaching our own, whether those alternative views are critical or supportive of our own positions, dedicated to belief or unbelief or to religion or science, and regardless of where they may be situated on our spectrum. The cultivation of opportunities to meet, receive, and engage others who are different from ourselves lies at the very heart of what we mean by the term "education" in the title of our guild, the Religious Education Association. "Education" in this sense, is concerned both with proper ends as well as means, with products as well as processes, and it has a huge contribution to make to our ailing civilization across the globe at this frightening moment in history.

Join us for our on-line Fall Gathering on November 5-8, 2020. Take part in the conversation; listen to colleagues; and honor us with the opportunity to learn from you. We may not be among those who will discover the vaccine for Covid-19, but together, we just might be able to contribute to a cure that can heal our broken world.

*Hanan Alexander, President, REA, University of Haifa, Israel*

## 2020 Fall Gathering

Join us during what would have been our annual meeting -- November 5-8 -- for a new event: a fall gathering! We imagine this time as a chance to connect with each other, engage with a few key ideas, and hold the business meeting required by our by-laws.

The entire event will be held via zoom, and will be free of charge. We think this is a great opportunity to introduce people to our organization, so please invite anyone you think might be interested! Perhaps you have some students who could not previously afford to come, or some practitioner friends who couldn't take that much time away.

We have planned a number of activities, and once you register you will be sent a link that will allow you to "dip in and out" as you please.

Here's what is currently planned (check [the schedule on our website](#) for the most recent updates)

**Thursday 5 November**

8:00am – 9:30am (ET)

*Times Like These*

This will be a structured time to decompress and dialogue about the current state of the world (i.e. global pandemic, economic crisis, racial injustice, election, etc).

9:30am – 11:30am (ET)

*Board Meeting*

12:00pm – 2:00pm (ET)

*Conversation & Connection Time*

These times, repeated throughout our gathering are for more unstructured catching up, connecting and having open conversation

2:30pm – 4:30pm (ET)

*Orientation, Introduction to REA & Lightning Talks*

This will be a brief orientation for new members and introduction for all to REA.

There will be time for Lightning Talks, when people have 90 seconds to speak about something they are passionate about or currently working on.

5:00pm – 7:00pm (ET)

*Why REA...Why Now? Plenary*

This Plenary will be a time to think about why we are a part of REA and what REA might be called to do and be as we move forward.

7:00pm – 8:00pm (ET)

*Black Experience Working Group Meeting*

8:00pm – 9:00pm (ET)

*Conversation & Connection Time***Friday 6 November**

8:00am – 9:30am (ET)

*From Lament to Advocacy: Black Religious Education and Public Ministry*

This will be a Plenary led by the Black Experience Working Group

12:00pm – 2:00pm (ET)

*Conversation & Connection Time*

Rev. Dr. Sarah Erickson, President of Association of Leaders in Lifelong Learning for Ministry (ALLLM), will be available to discuss ALLLM from noon-1pm.

2:30pm – 4:30pm (ET)

*Highlight on Horizons*

Conversation about how to use the Horizon Books in the classroom.



7:00pm – 8:00pm (ET)  
*Adolescent Girls Working Group Meeting*

8:00pm – 9:00pm (ET)  
*Conversation & Connection Time*

### **Saturday 7 November**

12:00pm – 2:00pm (ET)  
*Conversation & Connection Time*

8:00pm – 9:00pm (ET)  
*Conversation & Connection Time*

### **Sunday 8 November**

9:30am – 11:30am (ET)  
*Business Meeting*

This is an important time in the life of the organization,  
please join us for this meeting to which all members are cordially invited.

12:00pm – 2:00pm (ET)  
*Advisory Council*

2:30pm – 4:30pm (ET)  
*Board Meeting*

8:00pm – 9:00pm (ET)  
*Hope for Tomorrow/ What's Next*

This will be a structured time to wrap up our time together by expressing our plans  
for moving forward and the hopes that will carry us through these times.

## **Why REA?**

In the midst of social distancing it can be challenging to stay in touch with the wider field of religious education — we are all so busy just trying to manage our immediate contexts! It can help to remember why we care about a particular organization and people, and towards that end REA has created a [flipgrid](#) (a great online free tool for short videos). We invite you to go to the site and leave us a few minutes of reflection on why you care about the Religious Education Association. Maybe you have a memory from a particular meeting, or a piece of learning you did with us. Maybe you first met a cherished colleague through REA. Take a moment and [share your memories!](#)

## REA Mourns Board Member Rabbi Dr. Sarah Tauber



We are deeply saddened to share the news that Rabbi Dr. Sarah Tauber has died.

Sarah had a very rapid, seven-week decline from pancreatic cancer and is survived by her parents, Joseph and Phyllis, her brother Daniel, and her two young adult children, Benjamin and Hannah. She was an incredible colleague—she co-founded the Religious Persecution & Vicarious Trauma working group at REA with Jennifer Haddad Mosher — and a wonderful friend.

Dr. Mosher wrote to us that "I am so grateful that REA published her book, *Open Minds, Devoted Hearts*, but am so grieved that there will not be more books, lectures, honest and excellent questions, that we all have been deprived of her brilliant mind and her deeply encouraging and humane presence as a teacher and a mentor in religious education."

Here is [a video of Sarah teaching](#) that you might enjoy as we pray and offer condolences for her family.



## Calling All Book Reviewers!

Writing a book review is a fantastic way to contribute to the academy. Reviews highlight new research, draw attention to worthy titles, and help shape the future direction of a discipline.

REA's journal *Religious Education* relies on scholars, researchers, and students to write timely and insightful reviews of books related to the field of religious education. Recent reviewers have assessed books about formation with children and youth, interfaith education, social justice, and digital media, to name only a few topics.

Please consider contributing a book review to the journal. Whether you're a longstanding member of REA or a new graduate student, your review will serve our association and the wider arena of religious education. Review this [list of potential books for review](#) or, if there's another title that you'd like to review, feel free to contact me.

If you have a book that was recently published or one about to be released, please let me know and we'll be sure to include it on this list. While we cannot always review every title that's recommended, we make every effort to find reviewers for books by REA members.

Dave Csinos ([dcsinos@astheology.ns.ca](mailto:dcsinos@astheology.ns.ca))  
Book Review Editor, *Religious Education*

## Colleagues studying COVID-19 impacts

We are now more than six months into the global pandemic, and researchers are busily at work seeking to observe the various ways in which this pandemic is impacting religious communities and religious education. We know already that there is a group in Europe which includes some of our members focused on ministry practices ([CONTOC](#)), the Lutheran World Federation has [done a survey](#), Karen-Marie Yust at Union Presbyterian Seminary is working on [a study of children's ministries](#) during this time, Dean Blevins and others have been part of a major project called "[Salt and Light](#)"; and Rabbi Justus Baird (and others from our membership) have contributed to [e-books on digital ministries](#) in this era.

As we continue to work through this time, we know how important religious educators are to the health and well-being of a community. Let us know about the work you're doing, the research insights arising, and anything else it would help to share!



## Pop-up Zoom meeting builds resources for teaching

We tried something new in August, with a quickly advertised "pop-up zoom" session where members could check in with each other, and share resources. We've started [a page that collects these resources together](#), and you can add your own via a form on that page. Check it out!

## Call for Grant Proposals: Science and Theology

The "New Visions in Theological Anthropology" project at the University of St Andrews has announced two new rounds of course development grants in Science and Theology.

Deadlines for grant proposals are 31 October 2020 and 28 February 2021.

Our project seeks to encourage research and teaching on science and theology/religion. We encourage the development of new courses which use empirical research in some aspect of theology/religion. While we are especially drawn to the pairings of (1) Moral Theology & Evolutionary Biology, (2) Spiritual Formation & Developmental Psychology, and (3) Ecclesiology & Cognitive Science, we welcome proposals for any syllabus that engages theology with empirical science.

Since developing any new course will take time away from other research, we have launched this series of Course Development Grants and offer stipends of £2,000.

[Full details including how to apply are online.](#)

## REA at AAR is virtual this year

The [American Academy of Religion](#) has placed its entire annual meeting online this year, and that includes the REA at AAR session. This year we are collaborating with the Transformative Scholarship and Pedagogy Unit on the theme: "Attending to Trauma: Innovative Pedagogies for Teaching on Gender and Sexual Violence in Religious Studies Classrooms"

Members of AAR will be able to access the session which will be live on Thursday, December 3, from 4:00 PM-5:30 PM (EST UTC-5). REA Vice-president and 2021 program chair, Boyung Lee Dean of the Iliff School of Theology, will be presiding over the panel.

The panel will explore innovative pedagogical approaches that instructors of religion use to teach about gender and sexuality, especially in relation to the sensitive subject of

trauma from gendered and sexual violence. The panelists, who are seasoned teachers of religion, gender, and sexuality, will share ways that they have created space for both academic learning and healing, helping students to understand the institutional aspects of gender and sexual oppression and violence while also being attentive to the life experiences of students in religious and theological studies. The panelists are:



**Jeremy Posadas**, Austin College "From Sympathy to "Sissification": Pedagogical Approaches for Dismantling Sexual Violence"

**Almeda Wright**, Yale University "Radical Ways of Knowing: Education at the Intersections of Race, Gender, and Religion"



**Patrick Reyes**, REA Vice-president, Forum For Theological Education: "The Purpose Gap: Bodies (That) Matter"



## Member news

**Ina ter Avest** is pleased to announce the publication of a new book, co-authored with many people in our field: *[Facing the Unknown Future: Religious Education on the Move](#)* (Waxman, 2020).

**Annie Lockhart Gilroy** is glad to announce her latest book, *[Nurturing the Sanctified Imagination of Urban Youth](#)* (Urban Loft Publishers, 2020)

**Nam Soon Song** is excited to announce the book *[People of Faith, People of Jeong \(Qing\) The Asian Canadian Churches of Today for Tomorrow](#)*, a collection she edited along with Ben C. H. Kuo, Dong-Ha Kim, and In Kee Kim (Wipf&Stock, 2020)

**Karen-Marie Yust** is delighted to announce that Union Presbyterian Seminary has received a \$4.5 million dollar grant from the Lilly Endowment to create [a research and innovation hub](#) that broadens ways of being religious in families and makes church more meaningful in their lives.

## Resources

The **Abolitionist Teaching Network** has released a substantial new guide, published online and free of charge, entitled *[Guide for Racial Justice & Abolitionist Social and Emotional Learning](#)*.

**The Noun Project** has begun [a robust collection of free to use photos](#) seeking to build a "global visual language which unites us." Their collection is a richly vibrant source of images which speak to the countless forms of diversity.

The **Canadian Multivocational Ministry Project** has just released [an extensive report](#). This report provides an explanation of the research participants, methodology, key findings, and discussion of ways to move forward.

The **American Academy of Religion** has published [an informative webinar](#) on writing book reviews.



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

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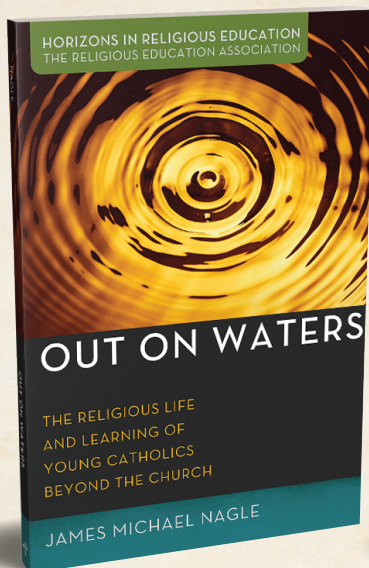
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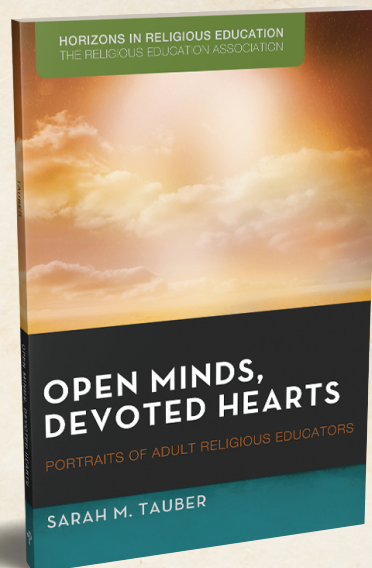




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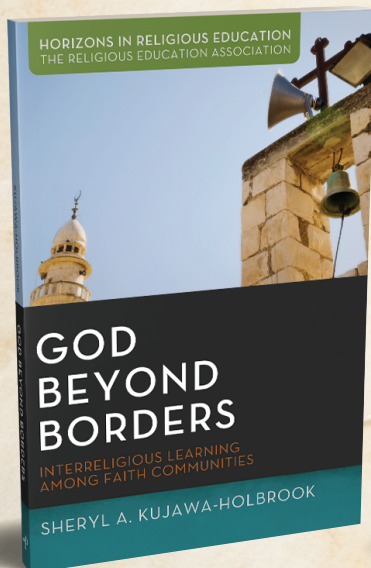


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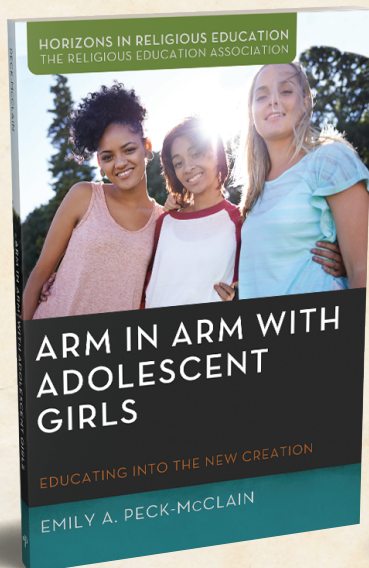


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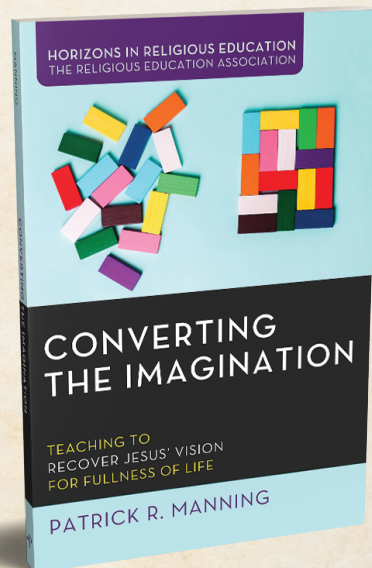
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