



Reflecting on the years of COVID  
Call for proposals open for REA2022  
Plans for future meetings

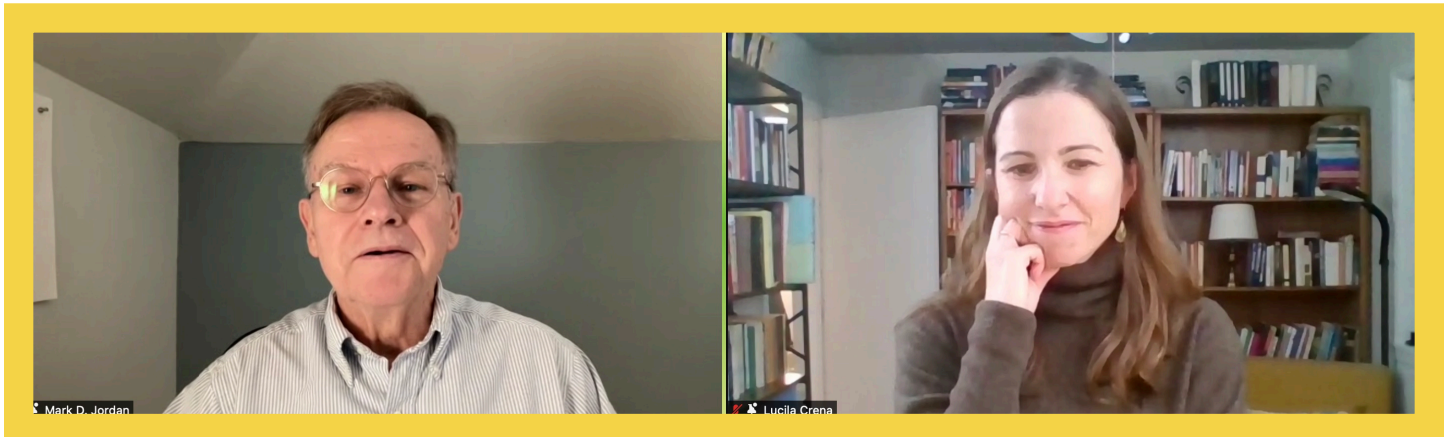
## Reflections amidst COVID-19

I am writing this in November of 2021, approaching two years from the beginning of the global COVID-19 pandemic. So very many of us have had to struggle with new pressures, deep uncertainties, distancing from friends and family, and uncounted and sometimes unshared new burdens. Religious educators know in our bones how crucial context is to learning. Yet this past stretch of time has also taught us — perhaps more than we want to know! — about context collapse. About what it can mean when we no longer share the same physical spaces, and when digital tools have become one of the few lifelines making it possible to reach out to sustain relationship.

As we all navigate through these uncertainties, the REA wants to invite each and every one of us to share what we are learning, to offer insights into the varying realities across the globe, and to continue to stay connected. Synchronous tools like RunTheWorld (in which we held our 2021 annual meeting), Zoom (in which we held our Fall gathering and smaller working groups), and various asynchronous tools (Mailchimp, WordPress, etc.) have become the landscapes in which or by which we gather. Let us know if you want to gather with colleagues, we can help to share an invitation, make a Zoom space available, and so on.

We are continuing to place recordings of these events on the videos page of our website, and to do our best to publicize the Proceedings, websites, and other resources from our various gatherings. If you were unable to attend the recent Fall Gathering, for instance,

you can still read the paper Dr. Mark Jordan offered, and watch his discussion with Dr. Lucila Crena, which in turn sparked more discussion amongst gathered participants.



I would also highlight the various presentations from our REA2021 annual meeting this past summer. Recordings of the plenary sessions are available, and they include powerful work from Rita Nakashima-Brock on moral injury, a fabulous panel of artists and creative teachers talking about sexuality, gender, and wholeness from various perspectives (Mark A. Hicks, Su Yon Pak, Yohana Agra Junker, and Christine Hong), and of course our own president, Boyung Lee's, compelling address.

The REA has always been attentive to pedagogical creativity and now more than ever we need to bring our capacity for imaginative learning into broader engagement. Share with us what you're learning, and help us to connect!

*REA Networking Coordinator, Mary Hess*

## Call For Papers now open for REA2022

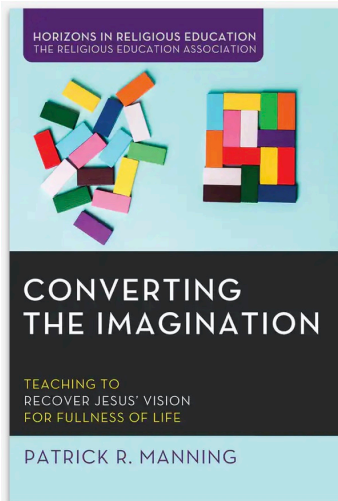
As previously announced, the REA2022 annual meeting will be held in St. Paul, Minnesota at the University of St. Thomas from July 5-8, 2022. Becoming Good Ancestors: Courageously Co-creating is the theme, which this year was written in a collaborative process led by Dr. Patrick Reyes.

We are working to ensure that there will be ways to participate even if you cannot join us physically. Please read the



guidelines for submitting a proposal carefully, and note that all proposals must be submitted through our online form.

## Patrick Manning's Horizons book honored as Lilly finalist!



We are excited to announce that Patrick Manning's 2020 Horizons Series book — Converting the Imagination: Teaching to Recover Jesus' Vision for Fullness of Life — has been named a finalist in the Lilly Fellows Program. The biennial Lilly Fellows Book Award honors an original and imaginative work from any academic discipline that best exemplifies the central ideas and principles animating the Lilly Fellows Program. These include faith and learning in the Christian intellectual tradition, the vocation of teaching and scholarship, and the history, theory or practice of the university as the site of religious inquiry and culture.

## Join the REA session at this month's AAR

The REA is a “related scholarly organization” to the American Academy of Religion, and at this year’s AAR meeting (which stretches from November 18-23) we will be offering an in-person opportunity to connect and share. That session will take place on Saturday, November 20th at 11 am in the River Center conference room #11. Given the events of the past few years, many organizations and systems are in the midst of transition and transformation. The Religious Education Association (REA) is no different. This year at the American Academy of Religion, the REA committee on academic disciplines and institutions will host a conversation about changes in the field. Topics for discussion will include new challenges that religious education scholars are facing, new hopes for the future of religious education, and new ideas for how the guild supports scholars in their own transformational moves. All members of REA and any people interested in Religious Education are welcome to attend. Please note that the workshop with Dr. Lynne Westfield, executive director of the Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning, and the Rev. Stephen Lewis, president of the Forum for Theological Exploration, originally scheduled for this year’s AAR has been moved to our annual meeting in July 2022.

## Updates on our next annual meeting

Extensive planning is now underway for our next annual meeting, to be held July 5-8 in St. Paul, Minnesota at the University of St. Thomas. This will be our first in-person



gathering since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, and it will also be our first annual meeting to be held at a university.

Plans include several field trips to local sites of interest, including a Sacred Sites tour, which will offer an opportunity to learn about Minnesota history from a Native perspective through story-telling and experiencing the sites in silence / meditation / reflection; a visit to the Minnesota Hindu Temple, which is the largest Hindu temple in North America; and a visit to George Floyd Memorial Square, led by local religious leaders.



We are excited to note several elements of this shift in our traditional venue.

Our main sessions and most of our breakouts will be held in the brand new Iverson Center for Faith, which is a fully accessible building that includes prayer rooms and foot-washing (wudu/ablution) stations for those of the Islamic faith, as well as multiple large and small spaces equipped with extensive digital technologies.

Participants who choose to stay on campus will be housed in brand new dorms that are arranged in small suites. These suites are fully air conditioned, and come equipped with small kitchens (including a refrigerator and sink), all necessary bedding, as well as an *en suite* bathroom. You will be able to register to share in either a two bedroom or a four bedroom suite.

UST dining facilities are all accessible, and your full conference pass will come with a three meal a day dining card that will make a wide range of meals available, including extensive vegetarian and gluten-free options, as well as access to UST's "grab and go" campus store.

UST has extensive athletic facilities at the Anderson Athletic and Recreational Center, and you can access them for a 10\$ day pass, which includes olympic-sized swimming,



multiple weight lifting and cardio machines, and so on. As this newsletter goes to press the Center still requires masks in some settings, due to COVID restrictions.

We will be on the University of St. Thomas St. Paul campus (UST also has a campus in Minneapolis and one in Rome). This campus is nestled into a professional and upper middle class neighborhood that borders the Mississippi River. The Minneapolis/St. Paul International airport has multiple flights every day that connect all major — and some minor — cities around the globe. You can take a taxi, Lyft, or Uber from the airport (for approximately \$25 USD) or catch the Metro transit light rail train, which connects to a bus that will drop you off a block from the residence hall.

If you drive to our conference, your full conference pass will include parking in an underground garage, which contains a level two electric charging station.



You will be able to register for the conference in one of two ways. The full package of the conference in person will include all meals and lodging in A/C controlled dorm suites. A second option will be to choose a conference-only pass. This pass will give you access to all of the conference sessions — plenaries as well as breakouts — many of which will be available in an online fashion (using zoom).

If you choose to join us in St. Paul, but do not want to stay on campus, we want to encourage you to consider staying in one of the many AirBNB options in the neighborhood, or the elegant Celeste of St. Paul boutique hotel (which was renovated from a convent) and is located nearby. There are, as well, many international chain hotels in the Twin Cities. Make your reservations early, however, as many of these options book months in advance.



Whether you stay on campus or in a hotel, know that the Twin Cities — Minneapolis and St. Paul — of Minnesota are noted for their “foodie” character, which includes many multiple starred restaurants, craft breweries and distilleries, as well as multiple cuisines from around the world.

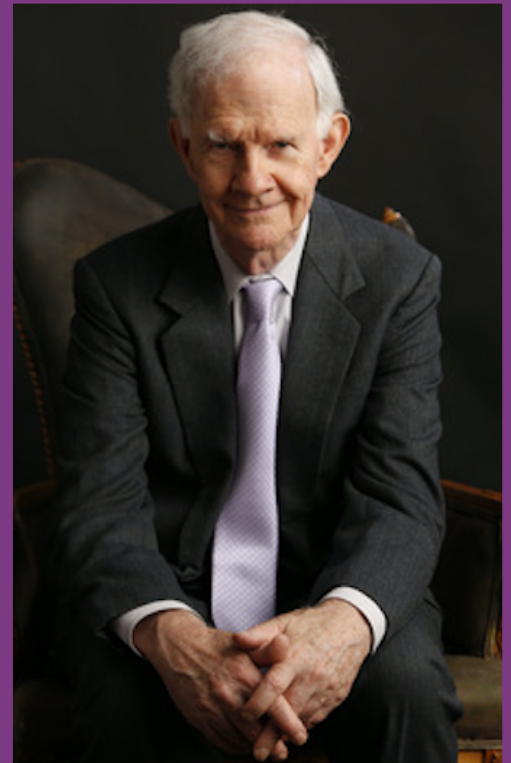
## Mourning colleagues who have died



If you have been following REA’s social media accounts, you will be aware that this past year we have lost three beloved colleagues: Mercedes, Iannone, Gabriel Moran, and Steffano Montano. Mercedes died on April 1, 2021, Steffano on September 24, 2021, and Gabriel on October 15, 2021.

We are conscious that there may well be other colleagues who have died since last we gathered, and we hope that you will send us information on these friends

so that we can include them in the memorials on our website, as well as in the shared remembrance we always do at our annual meetings. Please send any such notes to our REA secretary, Heesung Hwang.



## REA2023 and REA2024

Long time members of REA will know that we have to plan our annual meetings years in advance. The shift to a summer meeting, and to a university campus, was complicated these past two years by the COVID-19 pandemic. The REA Board has decided to hold our 2023 meeting at UST in St. Paul, MN as well, so as to minimize the challenges of this shift. But we are actively seeking venues for the 2024 annual meeting. The dates for that meeting are July 8-11, 2024. We encourage you to send us your ideas! What city would you like to visit in a July meeting? What university has the capacity to host our participants, and to ignite curiosity about its environs? Please send your ideas to our executive secretary [Lakisha Lockhart](#).

In addition to planning for venues, we are actively encouraging members to propose a program theme for our annual meetings. [Full details are available on our website](#), and the REA staff would welcome any questions as you consider how to propose a meeting theme. The deadline for proposals for the 2023 meeting is January 1st. Once these proposals have been authenticated by the REA board, they will be put to a vote of the membership and we will be able to announce the theme of the 2023 meeting at our 2022 annual meeting.

## REA searching for a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer

REA is seeking a part-time Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer. This individual would be someone with interest, commitments and expertise in creating diverse, inclusive, and equitable spaces and events. This individual would be someone with interest and expertise in connections among diverse groups of individuals – through social media, pop-up workshops, and other events – a colleague in religious education who will enable REA members and friends to not only see and understand the necessity of diversity, inclusion and equity work, but to experience it in action through various events, conversations, and organizational actions.

The DEI Officer will collaborate with the REA leadership to assess the need for, and recommend and/or lead training initiatives on racial justice, cultural diversity, gender differences, disability, sexual harassment, and other topics designed to increase awareness and support of equity and inclusion values. The DEI Officer, working closely and collaboratively with the president, REA leadership and the staff, would also make sure that REA's leadership make-up, programs, and operations embody its declared diverse, equitable and inclusive commitments. The DEI officer will help with building more inclusive and equitable relationships across our current membership and with other groups and organizations, providing leadership in hosting regional gatherings and listening sessions, and naming areas where diversity, equity and inclusion are needed.

Time commitment would be approximately 15 hours each month, plus REA Board & Steering Committee meetings and the Annual Meeting. This position reports to the Board of Directors. Many more details are available online, including information about compensation for an initial three year contract.

Deadline to apply is Dec. 20, 2021. Please send a resume and cover letter via email to [secretary@religiouseducation.net](mailto:secretary@religiouseducation.net).

## Resources for caring for creation

The last few months — and particularly COP26 — have led many of us to seek out deeper and more complex ways to respond to what is rapidly becoming known as climate catastrophe, no longer simply climate change. What follow are resources shared by members, and we hope they will both ignite your curiosity and help you curate other resources to share with us and through us, with the REA community.

The Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism has extensive web resources on climate justice.

IFEES/EcoIslam: The Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences (IFEES) is a UK based charity dedicated to the maintenance of the Earth as a healthy habitat for all living beings. Their work since the mid 1980s has been directed towards creating mass awareness and include research, the production of teaching materials, training and project development. They note that “we offer this work as a gift to our fellow humans whoever and wherever they may be.”

Hindu Climate Action is a project of the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies. The OCHS is an academy for the study of Hindu cultures, societies, philosophies, religions and languages.

Laudato Si' is the second encyclical of Pope Francis, and in it he ties together a range of social justice principles while calling for a “broad cultural revolution” to confront our environmental crises. The link here is to the wikipedia article, since it has voluminous links out to other resources for the encyclical.

Nia Tero is a US-based non-profit working in solidarity with Indigenous peoples and movements worldwide with a mission of securing Indigenous guardianship of vital ecosystems. Nia Tero is committed to an antiracist and inclusive culture centering Indigenous rights, wisdom, practices, worldviews, and protocols.

Joanna Macy is a long time advocate for all of creation, and in recent years has turned her attention to responding to climate despair. This short video is an interview in which she shares how she believes climate crisis can be a spiritual path.



Art as a Strategy for Climate Justice is a recording from an event that was sponsored by the USDAC, which is a non-governmental entity bringing together artists and activists in support of justice movements.

Several members — along with celebrities such as Ezra Klein and Barack Obama — have enthusiastically invited people to read Kim Stanley Robinson's recent book, The Ministry for the Future. This novel is part of what is being called “cli-fi” fiction, that is, fiction which takes seriously the challenges of climate catastrophe while using current science to suggest pragmatic responses.

Yale Environment 360 is an online magazine offering opinion, analysis, reporting, and debate on global environmental issues. They feature original articles by scientists, journalists, environmentalists, academics, policy makers, and business people, as well as multimedia content and a daily digest of major environmental news.

## Member news

Long time member and journal editor **Joyce Mercer** has been named the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs at Yale Divinity School, making her that school's chief academic officer.

We are delighted to share that REA Board member and chair of the Proposals Selection Committee, **Hosffman Ospino**, has been named 2021 recipient of The Cardinal Cushing Medal for Advancement of Church Research.

We are actively seeking more news about our members. Please send any updates you'd like to share (books you've published, transitions you've made, resources you'd like us to know about), to Mary Hess, REA Networking coordinator.



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

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