

eREACH

12.4

December 2022



Reflecting on REA's JEDI work
CFP open for upcoming July annual meeting
Propose a theme for the 2024 meeting!
and more inside

REA Board Commits to Supporting JEDI Priorities

The REA Board just concluded our Fall Board retreat, shortly after the November 2022 Fall Gathering. Your REA Board shares energy and enthusiasm for the excellent presentations and engagement at the Fall Gathering, for the 2023 Annual Meeting, and for the hard work of Christine Hong, our new Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion officer. The Vice President and JEDI officer met with the Advisory Council during the annual meeting to develop strategic priorities for REA. ([Link to advisory meeting notes](#)). The priorities below were driven by that process, and the REA Advisory Council will continue to help monitor and update the priorities. All members are invited to the Advisory council meetings during the annual meeting. In this light, the Steering Committee has identified the following priorities for 2023-2024 REA JEDI implementation:

1. We will take a systemic approach that makes Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in the REA an organizational priority and a critical lens for analyzing and recommending justice-related change to all areas of our organization.

- Under Dr. Hong's guidance, we will practice checking our work as a board and steering committee through a JEDI lens as a practice of accountability.
- We will work in collaborative and transparent ways with one another and with membership about our activities and decisions. Regardless of leadership changes in

the REA, we commit to setting the precedent for practices of collaboration and transparency.

- We are committed to ushering forth a JEDI-perspectival change for the REA from understanding the organization as a domestic/international organization to cultivating an understanding of REA as a Global organization. We commit to global accountability for how we organize and gather. We commit to more integrated inclusion of global practitioners and scholars, and to multi-religious commitments in leadership

2. We will address the themes emerging from Advisory Council meetings (held during each annual meeting) in accountable ways toward the building and implementation of the next annual meeting.

- The Advisory Council gathering at the 2023 annual meeting will follow-up on the themes and concerns that emerged from the 2022 Advisory Council meeting. That is, any JEDI-related historical issues, ongoing concerns, and/or action items requested by the Advisory Council at its meetings will be re-evaluated and (if necessary) expanded upon at subsequent Advisory Council meetings. The REA Board and Steering Committee will check-in with the Advisory Council on how we are doing with JEDI implementation, “What did we accomplish and what still needs work in the coming year?”

3. Toward REA’s Global identity, we will move the REA annual meeting to a digital, online meeting format in perpetuity.

- We will devote more funding each year for regional and/or small group gatherings that develop relationships, convene activities to be shared at conference time and/or online, and that develop individual and collaborative articles for submission to the Religious Education journal. We will send REA Board officers to regional gatherings.
- We will soon hold the capacity to offer simultaneous translation for presentations and events at the annual meeting. This will allow members to offer and engage the conference in multiple languages. While we are building this capacity, we will utilize translators for live translation and pre-translated presentations.
- We are already a Global and multilingual REA – moving towards functioning this way would quickly change how we perceive one another and RE and beyond RE in houses of worship. Holding our annual meeting online will allow for accessibility for our Global membership to participate in meeting activities across time zones.
- Moving to an online meeting format will create access to the REA annual meeting in ways more affordable and accessible to our Global membership.
- Moving to an online meeting formation supports REA’s commitment to an ecologically sustainable world by reducing our organization’s carbon footprint.

4. We will address white flight (the “fleeing” of white members in engaging the REA in the midst of the raising of JEDI priorities) in the REA.

- We will cultivate accountability with white members and between white identifying members to continue the work of JEDI with one another.

5. We will create a JEDI resource page on the REA website with links and portals to information that our membership can use to learn more about JEDI and to implement JEDI strategies in their own work and scholarship.

6. We commit to creating mentoring networks for students and those seeking professional development in the academy and in religious/spiritual leadership.

- We will create opportunities for students to gather at the REA annual meeting.
- We will invite students to lead ritual and participate in other forms of leadership at the REA annual meeting.
- We will partner with institutions with religious education cohorts and students, and ask them to partner with us to sponsor and include in their budget student's annual membership to REA.

Highlights from the 2022 Fall Gathering

This year's informal Fall Gathering — a chance for members to connect between our more formal annual meetings — drew participants from around the world. The theme was “Reimagining religious education after pandemic” and featured a panel led by Tamar Wasoian, with contributions from a wide range of REA scholars and practitioners:

- Rabbi Dr. Michael Shire, Professor of Jewish Education, Hebrew College Boston
- Lauren Daniels, Director of Lifespan Religious Education, Horizon Unitarian Universalist Church, Carrollton, TX
- Rev. Carrington George Moore - Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Boston, Massachusetts, Executive Director at Common Cathedral
- Dr. Yildiz Kizabdullah, Professor, Religious Education Department, School of Divinity Ankara University in Turkey
- Clara Scott, Chair of Church and Ministry, Associate Director Methodist House of Studies, Professor of Christian Education, Spiritual Formation, and Youth Ministry
- V. Rev. Dr. Anton Vrame, Director of the Department of Religious Education for the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, and Executive Director of the Orthodox Christian Education Commission
- Scott Thumma, Professor of Sociology of Religion and director of Hartford Institute for Religion Research, Hartford International University. He is also the Principal Investigator for 5-year Lilly Endowment grant studying the impact of the pandemic on churches, and the Faith Communities Today project.
- Karen-Marie Yust, Rowe Professor of Christian Education and Director of the Children's Spirituality Research & Innovation Hub at Union Presbyterian Seminary
- Hoffsman Ospino, Associate Professor of Hispanic Ministry and Religious Education at Boston College
- Dr Mrs Olusola Ayo-Obiremi is a Christian of the Nigerian Baptist Convention faith tradition and she serves as Dean, Faculty of Education in the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso, Nigeria.

A video recording of the session will soon be available [at the REA YouTube site](#).

Our next annual meeting will continue to be fully online — start now to prepare for regional gatherings!

It has become clear, in the two years of this pandemic, that our members are eager to stay connected. While we clearly deeply value in-person meetings, the benefits of going fully online are only beginning to be evident. Right now our international participation has more than doubled, and our ability to learn from each other across large geographic divides is growing. As you can see in the JEDI priorities listed above, moving into fully online spaces for our more formal annual meetings has become a generous and important next step in our life together.

At the same time, precisely because we value and respect the learning and creativity that emerges when we gather in-person, the Board of the REA has decided to urge members to gather in more regional or even local gatherings, which the Board wants to find ways to support financially. You might choose to gather during the same time as the annual meeting, to participate with the online sessions, or perhaps you want to gather prior to that meeting to prepare and engage, or following that meeting to extend the learning. All of these are lively options. The Board has pulled together a pool of funds, and is asking people who are willing to organize regional gatherings to prepare a short application describing what you want to do and what you think you need to make it happen. You can find [full details and a form for applying for a regional meeting grant](#) on our website, the deadline is January 1, 2023.

Submit a proposal for our next annual meeting in July 2023

The [Call for Proposals submission process is now live on our website](#). A new generation is being shaped by educators in various contexts (families, schools, congregations, public settings) who have different and sometimes contradictory aims for religious education, even though most root their work in a sense of responsibility for leading children on a religious pathway. This raises fundamental and challenging questions:

- Who has responsibility for children's religious education?
- Whose children are they?
- Who has the authority to say how the religious development of a new generation could or should unfold?

Please review our [Call for Proposals](#) for more details about this theme and the proposals we will welcome. The CFP electronic submission process is now live, with a deadline for proposals of January 31, 2023.

We are seeking nominations for REA leadership!

The Religious Education Association has issued an open call for candidates looking towards our elections in July of 2023. We have several open positions within our organization and would like to extend an invitation for interested members to apply.

The positions that are currently open are listed and described on the REA website. If you are interested in being considered for one or more of these positions please fill out the form on that site and provide us with your information. For best consideration please submit by January 1, 2023. Thank you in advance for considering being a part of the leadership for this organization.

Board seeks approval of small by-laws changes

The Board is suggesting the following small changes to the REA by-laws, to bring us into more clear compliance with our actual procedures. These changes will be voted on in the annual meeting in July (underlined sections are the additional wording). The current By-laws can be found online.

Article VII, section 1a

The committees will be composed of a minimum of two additional members elected by the Association's membership to serve a two-year term.

Article VII, section 2g

... the previous Publications chair, and other members as the current chair selects. The Publications Committee Chair shall oversee both the Religious Education journal and the Horizons in Religious Education book series. The Publications chair shall hold quarterly meetings of the entire committee for updates and to aid in cross pollination of ideas and concepts between the journal and the book series. All reports from the journal and the book series will go to the publications chair to assemble and submit as one document to business and board meetings. The Publications outgoing chair and incoming chair will be responsible for working together to not only transition the position, but to make recommendations to the editor and to review papers submitted for inclusion in the annual meeting issue of the Religious Education, in which the incoming chair has been elected.

Propose a theme for our 2024 annual meeting

Our meetings are in some ways like gears in a machine — one begins spinning which touches off the next. Although we have not yet held our 2023 annual meeting, we are already seeking proposals for an overall program theme for our 2024 meeting. Planning starts well ahead, because of our desire to have an entire issue of our journal focused on the theme, as well as giving people lots of time to consider what they might like to share by way of their research and practice. The Board has discerned that the 2024 annual meeting will continue to be fully online.

Proposals are submitted online, reviewed by the Steering Committee, and then all viable proposals will be put to a vote by the membership. Our executive secretary, JEDI officer, and networking coordinator are pleased to answer questions and support your proposal. The final deadline for proposals of a program theme for the 2024 annual meeting is January 1, 2023.

Apply for a Wornom Grant

Since 2017, the REA's Herman A. Wornom Award has been directed toward supporting innovation in religious education. The Wornom Innovation Grant is a \$3,000 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 May 1, and details about past recipients are available.

Resources

Deep gratitude is owed to Alban for finding a way to restore the Practicing Our Faith website, which has long been a powerful resource for educators, based on the long time research and practice of scholars who are interested in the ways in which Christianity is practiced in daily ways, not so much credal or liturgical.

The University of Alberta offers a free and open online course, carefully curated and shaped to explore Indigenous Canada.

Pulling Together: A guide for Indigenization of post-secondary institutions is another free and open resource for thoughtfully and with justice bringing together learning materials

Religions for Peace has published a complete issue devoted to “Faithful Peace: Why the Journey to Build Resilience is Multi-Religious.”

The Human Restoration Project is informing, guiding, and growing a movement toward a progressive, human-centered education system. They are bringing together a network of radical educators who are transforming classrooms across the world, and their website is chock full of free and open educational materials.

The Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture at IUPUI has a teaching materials section on their website that offers a wealth of materials. As they describe it: “In public elementary and secondary institutions, teachers face many challenges in discussing religion in the context of American history, government, literature, and other areas. Parents with strong beliefs may object to the presentation of religious points of view they don’t share. Parents who believe in secular education may object to religion being discussed at all. The objective, of course, is to teach about religion without teaching religion. The Center is pleased to share instructional materials developed by its researchers and participating scholars for use in the classroom. From college syllabi and instructional videos to activities and helpful blogs, these materials help educators incorporate religious topics in the classroom.

Association of Religion Data Archives offers free access to an enormous amount of datasets. The Association of Theological Schools in the US recently shared a helpful essay on what is available there.

The Fetzer Institute is exploring “anti fragility” for adolescents through spirituality.

Member news

David Csinos is pleased to announce the publication of A Gospel for All Ages: Teaching and Preaching for the Whole Church (Fortress Press, 2022), which includes a forward by member HyeRan Kim-Cragg.

Aaron Ghiloni, Associate Editor of *Religious Education*, published World Religions and their Missions, second edition (Peter Lang, 2022). Aaron was also featured in an SBS news story about his work in Muslim–Christian relations in Australia.



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

Window ice by [Mary E. Hess](#)