



# eREACH

13.1

May 2023



Sign up now for our Annual Meeting in July  
Highlights of the upcoming meeting  
A draft of a code conduct  
and more inside

## Exciting plans for the REA Annual Meeting 2023 in July!

We are now less than two months away from REA2023, our annual meeting July 10-14. We will be exploring the theme “Whose children are they? Responsibilities for religious formation of a new generation.” Our program chair, Karen-Marie Yust, has worked hard with the REA Board to put together a compelling program that will take place entirely online using the Zoom platform. In addition, various members have put together regional meetings where you can gather in person — the Tulsa meeting will be coinciding with the online meeting — and where we hope to create a clear sense of shared presence.

The online conference is included with your membership fees, which means that you have to be a current member to receive the various zoom links. We also ask that you sign up for sessions [using our online schedule](#) so that we can facilitate good moderation and so that you can access the various resources — complete papers, workshop outlines, and other additional tools — that you will need to engage fully in the meeting.

We are also seeking artwork from the children in our lives, to create a memorable and tangible connection to their lives and imaginations. You can contribute artwork [using a form on our website](#) (please make sure you have permission from the child to do so), and we will include it in a rotating gallery of images.

We are also seeking REA members who have recently received funding from Lilly Endowment Inc for new projects related to children's faith formation or parenting and

faith formation and would like to share details about their projects with guild members. We are planning a session during the annual meeting that features these projects and hope to showcase the many efforts underway. Please contact Karen-Marie Yust if you would like to be included.

Plenary sessions are organized in collaborative and experiential ways, with four main plenaries that draw on wisdom from scholars across the globe, and from many differing faith traditions. You can find a robust set of biographies and other information at the conference website (click on plenary titles below), but here are just a few of the many speakers who will be joining in this learning space:

**Tuesday, July 11 plenary: “Irresponsible answers”**

Henry Zonio  
Christine Diindiisi McCleave  
Ramona Grad  
Theresa O’Keefe (moderator)

**Wednesday, July 12 plenary: “Responses of early childhood educators”**

Japjit Kaur Pnaiser  
Rabbi Michael Shire  
Jennifer Mata McMahon  
Rode Molla (moderator)

**Thursday, July 13 plenary 1: “The role of parents and caregivers”**

Duaa Haggag  
Rabbi Aaron Weininger  
Brad Wigger  
Elaine Champagne  
Karen-Marie Yust (moderator)

**Thursday, July 13 plenary 2: “Responses to adolescence”**

Annie Lockhart-Gilroy  
Carmichael Crutchfield  
Elsa Lau  
Mubina Kirmani  
Sarah Farmer (moderator)

As has been our custom in the past, if you would like to participate in a standing committee, the advisory council, a work group, a community of practice, or indeed just “hang out” with other members, there will be multiple ways to engage during the meeting, even given the ongoing challenge of multiple time zones.

## Language translation offered for the first time this year

In recent years, REA's online annual gatherings have emphasized its global membership and the global impact of our guild. Part of how we continue to lean into making global perspectives the place from which we operate, is to explore and implement language accessibility when we gather. Many of our members speak more than one language, yet we still (like many other peer organizations) operate primarily by writing, reading, and presenting in English. I've often wondered, what is lost when members work to translate their work and research outside of their primary language and context?

Our varied languages have embedded within them the different ways we understand and transmit religious education in and across our different contexts and cultures. Our different languages are culturally bound and reflect specific cultural values. For instance, when I am working in the Korean language, I am struck by how often we use communal words like *woori* to speak about our daily lives and activities. When I switch to working in English, the individual perspective is much more pronounced. Even the way we text in shorthand using acronyms like IMHO (In my humble opinion), showcases this perspective. Both linguistic approaches reveal much about the different values upheld among different people. What if we could bring the multiplicity of lingual diversity together to our gatherings beyond performative practice?

Working together towards our shared commitment to global participation means making room for multiple languages, the cultures embedded within them, and the people who claim those languages and cultures. Such efforts invite us to recognize and experience the nuance and cultural specificity each language brings. As we prepare for our 2023 annual conference, we are working to see how best we might experiment with translation through subtitling and live translation in the most used languages across our guild. There three languages that have been most asked for are English, Korean, and Spanish, so we will likely begin there.

*by Christine Hong, REA JEDI officer*

## Join an in-person gathering along with our online meeting

The REA Board has made available funds for members to plan regional gatherings that support in-person engagement in addition to our annual meeting. Two have already been held, one in Boston and one in Virginia/Maryland, and more are planned. The Tulsa, OK regional gathering will be held at the same time as the annual meeting and is quite robust: discussions, field trips, and other opportunities to expand the discussions, and to engage the annual meeting sessions with other people in person. They invite members to join them in Tulsa — you can come from all over the world (hotel information is available on the website). Additional gatherings will be posted on the regional gathering website as details become available.

## REA working on a code of conduct

The REA Board and Advisory Council are working on developing a “code of conduct” that will help to support participation and engagement with our learning together, across the many contexts in which we live. What follows is the current working draft, and we urge members to communicate with our JEDI Officer, Christine Hong, and members of the Board and Advisory Council with feedback and further suggestions for improvement.

### What is the REA Code of Conduct?

The Religious Education Association Code of Conduct is a standard agreement towards just and equitable practices. All REA members and the guests of members are to abide by the code of conduct upon attending and participating in any REA-sponsored event or gathering. REA events or gatherings include annual meetings and conferences, regional groups, board meetings, steering committee meetings, webinars, and online communities like Discord. The REA code of conduct encompasses in-person and online gatherings and covers all human interactions at REA events and conferences.

### Why does REA have a Code of Conduct?

The Religious Education Association adopted a Code of Conduct to live into its JEDI (Justice Equity Diversity and Inclusion) priorities. JEDI priorities include co-creating spaces (both in person and online) that recognize and maintain the human dignity and human differences of each member and participant. REA seeks to co-create spaces where everyone can enter, engage, and exit with their full humanity intact. In this spirit, we invite all members and participants in the life of the Religious Education Association to build a co-created and co-led space where lasting relationships are nurtured through mutuality and respect.

### Who is the REA Code of Conduct for?

The Religious Education Association Code of Conduct is for its members and those who attend REA-hosted spaces as guests and participants. The REA adopted its Code of Conduct in acknowledgment that the strength of our organization is the many ways our members and their lived experiences represent human differences.

REA membership is global, multilingual, and multireligious and includes people of different gender identities, gender expressions, sexual identities, sexual orientations, racializations, and ethnicities. REA members are neurodivergent, disabled, and non-disabled people, including people with neurodivergence and disabilities invisibilized through harmful systems and structures. Our membership includes scholars, practitioners, and those who hold multiple professions across different disciplines. Members are students and professionals of all ages, including those who are emerging in

the field of religious education and those who are established leaders in local and global communities.

Recognizing that members are also more than their profession is a humanizing and compassionate commitment. Among our members are people who live into various responsibilities and roles in their families and communities as part of their commitment to religious education beyond academe and religious institutions. REA desires to recognize and welcome our membership's participation in the organization in the fullness of who they are.

### **General Guide for Conduct:**

The co-creation of a welcoming space that honors human dignity requires commitments to the following:

- As you engage in an REA space, be aware of and work on examining and dismantling negative biases. Negative biases that can harm others include distorted perspectives, assumptions, and judgments around different human identities and embodiments, including race, religion, gender expression and identity, sexual identity, sexual orientation, disabilities, religion, language, and socio-economic location.
- Ask for people's names and pronouns and use them. Avoid assumptions about gender expression and gender identity.
- Use expansive language with the understanding that different cultural and religious expressions are part of how we engage diversity in the REA. Do not discount the diverse and varied cultural and religious expressions that co-exist.
- Utilize explicit consent. Use consent when sharing personal information, including names, contact information, images, stories, or experiences that are not personal.
- Consent is required in all physical conduct. As a multicultural and multireligious organization, we recognize that different cultural, religious, and personal understandings around physical boundaries between people should not be crossed without explicit consent.
- Embody anti-violence in all interactions, including anti-racist postures. Understand that violence occurs in many historical, physical, and verbal forms. For example, verbally racialized violence can seem innocuous to the perpetrator but feel intensely violent to the survivor due to histories and compounded experiences of racism. What is micro to someone is macro to another.
- Listen to one another's experiences and perspectives with respect but understand that respect does not mean concepts or ideas will go unchallenged if they harm and deny the human dignity of others.
- Remain open to an exchange of dialogue, including opinions and expressions of belief systems that stem from different life experiences, cultures, global locations, and religious traditions.
- Operate in collaboration with other REA members whenever possible.
- Imagination and creativity are pillars of the REA and are actively a part of the lives of religious educators everywhere. We celebrate how our guild, and its members imagine and activate new teaching and learning modalities, creating and sustaining communities globally and locally and courageously moving into spaces of disruption,



renewal, and collective futures. We encourage members and participants to engage in meetings in-person and online in ways that harness and emphasize imagination and creativity in a multicultural, multilingual, and interreligious guild.

- Resist passive bystanding when witnessing harm in both in-person and online spaces.
- Silence and inaction are choices people make in moments of crisis. Understand that silence and inaction can also exacerbate the injury initially catalyzed by explicit violence. Mutuality means accountability. Instead of passive bystanding, disrupt violent and harmful discourse individually and collectively when it occurs.

### **Additional Guides for Online Conduct:**

- Share your name and pronouns on your Zoom (or alternate video conferencing platform) screen.
- Remain mindful of non-verbal communication and what it might convey to others in the shared online space. Facial expressions and visible gestures on a screen can emote agreement, disagreement, respect, and disrespect.
- Use emojis, reaction buttons, and other interactive modalities to enhance positive engagement with others in shared spaces.
- Respect each participant's choice of turning their screen on or off to acknowledge different realities and needs. Not all participants have access to a private or quiet space and may find it easier to keep their screens off, and mic muted. Not all participants wish to share their backgrounds or locations visibly and may find it easier to blur their backgrounds or keep their cameras off. Screens on or off do not necessarily correlate to the level of active engagement.
- Keep your mic muted when not speaking (unless invited to keep it on) so that others can hear those speaking.
- As in any in-person space, remain mindful of how much speaking space you take up in a meeting.
- Decide on the length of the online meeting and stick to it to honor everyone's time commitments.
- Engage chat space with mutual respect and understand that the chat log is also automatically saved when a meeting is recorded.
- Sharing files in the chat space should be used with the permission of others in the online space. For instance, ask, "May I share this file with you in the chat?" before sharing a document or image.
- Ask for consent to record and/or share and store any recording.
- Ask for consent to take photos and share photos.
- Use headphones whenever possible to ensure the online space is confidential to those in the online room.
- Encourage breaks as needed. Whenever possible, take breaks every 90 minutes.
- Attend to personal and relational needs and responsibilities as part of your participation. REA is committed to members who care for infants, children, partners, and/or elders while participating in meetings and gatherings. Members are welcome to meet those needs and responsibilities as part of their participation.
- Understand the difference between intent and impact of actions, statements, and silence. While the intent of an action, comment, or silence may feel harmless to one person or group, the impact of that same action, statement, or silence may cause harm

to another person or group. Emphasizing intent over impact diminishes any harm caused. It requires the impacted person or group to explain and prove the harm incurred in ways that further presumes their labor in violent ways. Impact matters most at the end of the day.

### **The Circle Process as a Response to Breach of the Code of Conduct:**

#### *The Circle Process as Pedagogy*

The Religious Education Association operates through mutuality and accountability to co-create spaces of justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion (JEDI). Mutuality and accountability mean that when grief or harm occurs within our membership, we will strive to collectively address this through our commitment to learn, transform, repair, and restore. Therefore, when harm occurs through a violation of the Code of Conduct, we encourage initiating and participating in the Circle Process as pedagogy to learn from, restore, and repair our relationships with one another through storytelling and close listening.

#### *What is the Circle Process?*

The Circle Process is built on the concept that we need one another to build peace and understanding in grief and conflict. We enter the circle with mutual values of respect, inclusion, empathy, care, and honesty. Indigenous traditions of the Talking Circle anchor and inform the Circle Process. Community members gather to discuss and process essential issues and histories through stories and careful listening. Indigenous people worldwide still practice different forms of the circle to practice and maintain life together (Pranis, 7). More information on the Circle Process can be found in *The Little Book of Circle Processes* by Kay Pranis and in many free online resources.

#### *How does the Circle Process work?*

1. A Circle includes a facilitator and participants. The facilitator is not the leader but rather the person who ensures the agreed-upon processes are followed and shared. The facilitator guides the circle through different questions and mirrors back to participants what is shared. If shared values are disrespected, the facilitator may intervene as part of the process.
2. If in person, the participants and facilitator of the Circle Process sit together in a circle with minimal distractions. If in an online space, participants gather in one online room. We commit to connecting through shared leadership, storytelling, and listening by gathering in a circle.
3. Before a Circle opens, shared values are named and decided upon through consensus.
4. Circles are opened and closed using ritual or activity to gather people and set a shared intention for the time and space.
5. A talking piece ensures everyone is heard and can speak if they wish to talk or hold silence if they want to maintain silence. Only one person can hold the talking piece at a time, and that person may choose to speak or keep silent as they wish. Both speaking and silence are ways we engage in circles together. In an online circle process, the

talking piece might be a raised hand or a mutually agreed upon emoji or symbol accessible to everyone on the screen.

6. A circle may or may not result in a decision or action. The circle operates by consensus when participants want to move forward with a decision or action.

### *How to Initiate the Circle Process at REA*

Any member of REA can initiate a Circle Process as part of our shared commitment to co-created JEDI. A Circle Process can be initiated with a few or all REA members. The facilitator of the Circle Process is the REA JEDI officer. Don't hesitate to contact the JEDI officer to request the initiation of a Circle Process.

## Interim networking coordinator named



Mary Hess will be stepping down from the role of REA networking coordinator following our annual meeting this July. We are pleased to announce that Eser Kim has agreed to step into that role on an interim basis, giving the REA Board time and space to consider how best to reconfigure our staffing.

The Rev. Dr. Kim has a PhD in theological studies from Knox College in the University of Toronto, a THM in Christian Education from Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, GA; a THM in Education and Formation from Princeton Theological Seminary; and an MDIV from the Presbyterian University and Theological Seminary in Seoul, South Korea. She currently serves as the international relations coordinator at Myungsung Presbyterian Church, Seoul, South Korea. She is also an adjunct professor at Presbyterian University and Theological Seminary.

## Member news

**Rev. Dr. Leah Gunning Francis** has joined Indiana University Health as senior vice president and chief mission and values officer. She will provide direction to ensure engagement in ethical practice, quality spiritual and pastoral care, and effective philanthropy within the organization and the communities where IU Health is active. The chief mission and values officer oversees the departments of chaplaincy, spiritual care and congregational partnerships, clinical and organizational ethics and system archives, along with the IU Health Foundation, the Dan F. Evans Center for Spiritual and Religious Values in Healthcare and the Fairbanks Center for Medical Ethics. She also will lead the IU Health board committee on values, ethics and social responsibility.



**Darryl Stephens** has edited *Bivocational and Beyond: Educating for Thriving Multivocational Ministry*, which is part of the Teaching Religion and Theology series. Chicago: Books @Atla Open Press, Scholarly Editions, 2022. The book is open access and it is also available for review on Reading Religion.

Pickwick Publications, an imprint of Wipf and Stock Publishers, has recently released a book by **Jos de Kock** and **Bård Norheim**: *The Five Questions: An Academic Handbook in Youth Ministry Research*.

## Resources

The **use of land acknowledgements** has continued to grow in the North American context following the work of the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission. There is disagreement about how best to honor the land and those who have lived justly in relationship with the earth, and recently the discussion has moved to engage concrete steps of reconciliation that move beyond simple acknowledgement. If you are living in a context in which even the simple acknowledgement is new, you might find these resources put out by USDAC to be useful. Additionally, there is ongoing discussion across a number of academic guilds about how best to honor the lands upon which we meet — or in online spaces, how to re-member them.

It is worth noting that several congregations and institutions have already begun reparative action. Holy Trinity Lutheran church in Minneapolis, MN just contributed \$250,000 to the Indian Land Tenure foundation, and the PCUSA is building an organization to help congregations engage in restorative financial action.

As you may have picked up, in the section above about REA's new code of conduct, we are leaning into the work of restorative justice as a part of our efforts towards accountability. In that vein, we have found the University of San Diego's Center for Restorative Justice useful, as well as Living Justice press (a publishing house solely focused on restorative justice).

There is also very compelling work being done at the intersection of gender violence and restorative justice, as well as engaging restorative justice circles with people who have been harmed (or caused harm) around child sexual abuse. Hidden Water, for example, is a restorative justice approach that interrupts the cycle of childhood sexual abuse and the resulting harm to families, communities and society as a whole.

**Taylor&Francis**, the publisher of our scholarly journal, invites member to participate in their Publishing Partnership Program, which grants an automatic 30% discount on any fully priced CRC Press or Routledge Press book. The code for the discount is available at our journal access page, once you are logged in.

As always, **the REA continues** to make available past plenary presentations and other resources through our website. We now have a significant collection of videos up at

YouTube, and you can also access past proceedings from our annual meetings — without needing to be a member — which are published using a Creative Commons license.

## Please remember to choose sessions for the meeting!

All the details you need for registering for our annual meeting in July can be found on the meeting website: <https://religiouseducation.net/rea2023/>. Note that there are no additional fees (beyond membership) for coming to this meeting, but we do urge you to register your choices for sessions on the website. You will need to log in to keep track of what you've chosen.

## Please consider supporting our organization financially

We continue to work on creating and maintaining effective resources and staffing for our work together as an association. Our staff all donate significant amounts of their time and effort far beyond what we can pay them to do, and we are also continually seeking ways to support people new to the scholarly parts of our association, as well as to the practices of religious education more generally. We are grateful for any support you can offer us. Please donate to our work together!



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

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