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REA 2025 Annual Meeting

7-11 July, Online

Navigating Humanity

In an era defined by rapid technological advancement, the landscape of education, including religious education, is undergoing a profound transformation. Digital technology has not only revolutionized how we learn but has also sparked critical inquiries into the nature of humanity itself. As educators grapple with the integration of AI, virtual and augmented reality, and ubiquitous connectivity into pedagogical practices, fundamental questions arise: What distinguishes human intelligence from artificial intelligence? What defines the essence of human existence amidst the rise of robotics and automation?

Mark your calendars! More details will be provided soon.

REA 2025 Call for Candidates

The Religious Education Association would like to issue an open call for candidates. We have several open positions within our organization and would like to extend an invitation for interested members to apply. The open positions available are:

1. [Vice- President](#) for a 2 year term from Sept.1, 2025- Aug. 31, 2027
2. [Recording Secretary](#) for a 2 year term from Sept.1, 2025- Aug. 31, 2027
3. [Student Representative](#) for a 2 year term from Sept.1, 2025- Aug. 31, 2027
4. [Historian](#) for a 4 year term from Sept.1, 2025- Aug. 31, 2029
5. Chair for [Advancement Committee](#) for a 2 year term from Sept.1, 2025- Aug. 31, 2027
6. Chair for [Faith Communities Committee](#) for a 2 year term from Sept.1, 2025- Aug. 31, 2027
7. 1 [Public Life and the Global Community Committee](#) member for a 2 year term from Sept.1, 2025- Aug. 31, 2027

8. 1 [Proposal Selection Committee](#) member for a 2 year term from Sept.1, 2025- Aug. 31, 2027
9. 2 [Harper/Wornom Committee](#) members 4 year term from Sept.1, 2025- Aug. 31, 2029

If you are interested in being considered for one or more of these positions, please click [HERE](#) and provide us with your information. For best consideration please submit by February 1, 2025. Thank you in advance for considering being a part of the leadership for this organization.

For more questions, please contact REA nominating committee chair, Karen-Marie Yust ([kmyust \[at\] upsem \[dot\] edu](mailto:kmyust@upsem.edu))

REA Regional

In 2024, three REA regional gatherings were held.

1. REA Doctoral Student Spring Regional Gathering

By Mark Chung Hearn

On Friday, April 26, 2024, a regional planning team, hosted an online, one-day gathering to support current REA PhD students and Graduate Theological Union (GTU) doctoral students with religious educational interests. There were three foci for this regional grant-awarded gathering: (1) graduate student support and mentoring with senior scholars, (2) recruitment and networking, and (3) research sharing.

In speaking with current, and past, REA PhD student representatives to the REA Board, there is a clear need to connect graduate students with senior scholars which has become more evident since the REA annual meeting has met online the last few years. The necessity to move to online meetings, coupled with sponsored annual memberships that provide free access to the annual meeting, has globally widened REA's reach to graduate students. We celebrate this. We also acknowledge that water-cooler conversations and networking during coffee breaks and meals are less available than they once were. This gathering was an attempt to combine these two factors into a creative response.

Twelve participating students heard from four scholars throughout the day. Dr. Mai-Anh Le Tran reflected on how one's personhood is intimately tied to religious education and practical theology. Dr. Mary Hess offered thoughts on professional development and employment in light of her understanding of the trajectory of religious education. Dr. John Falcone and I offered insights into publishing, academic presenting, fellowships and grants, and preparing for the job market. Graduate students had time to connect with one another in their research interests and professional development during breaks and small group time. Overall, this experimental gathering was an invaluable experience for those gathered and offered glimpses of further possibilities for the guild.

Future Considerations

There are three primary considerations stemming from this experience the REA membership can consider in its future. First, a "regional" gathering can be creative. While the original design of this gathering was to offer an in-person meeting with GTU doctoral students, the limited availability of students who mostly live away from the Bay Area to gather in person caused planning to move to a fully online experience. This shift consequently opened up the possibility to imagine a gathering for PhD students throughout the REA. Geographical location gave way to identity affiliation which allowed the planning team to address a shared desire more broadly for connection and mentoring with senior scholars. Though a need for in-person connection remains, this connection around professional identity and affiliation was a productive solution that reached a more extensive audience than a geographically-limited gathering would have.

Second, mentoring and accompaniment of emerging scholars continues to exist, increasingly so, as online connections remain. The last four years have provided emerging scholars different opportunities to meet established scholars in bite-sized portions at various online gatherings. While grateful for these opportunities, emerging scholars also desire to deepen these initial introductions and glean from the wisdom of advanced scholars.

During the planning team's debriefing meeting, there was discussion on how to shift a one-day gathering to shorter, more regularly-planned gatherings, where one-to-one mentoring meetings between emerging and established scholars might be implemented. This implementation would take more coordination than any one PhD student representative could offer and

realistically, would need to be taken up, in conjunction with the PhD student representative, by senior scholars with established professional relationship who have more time available to offer their social and experiential capital on behalf of emerging scholars. One key to remember is that while this planning effort for this specific event took time, the mentoring-accompaniment that emerging scholars seek out can be low-barrier with regard to planning. Nothing flashy or comprehensive is expected, only good conversation that invests in the lives of an emerging scholar through wisdom-sharing, thoughtful listening, and steady presence.

Third, the scope of mentoring and accompaniment was implicitly raised during the planning phase when considering the invitation list for both registrants and presenters. What is the distinction, if any, between “emerging” and “junior” scholar, and comparatively, between “senior” and “established” or “advanced” scholar? While there was desire from new-career faculty or new PhDs to attend this gathering, the planning team, due to budget sensitivity, needed to limit registration to doctoral students with religious education interests at the GTU or REA doctoral students across the guild. One could argue for an informal delineation between “emerging” scholar (graduate student) and “junior” faculty (new career-faculty or new PhDs) here. On the other end, what constitutes “senior” scholar? Though there is not enough space to explore this conversation, I began to use “senior” “advanced” and “established” interchangeably in the planning process to cast a flexible net that would result in a wider possibility for wisdom-sharing and presence for emerging scholars. This conversation raises the question of how, who, and with whom, mentoring and accompaniment occurs within the guild.

I would like to thank Dr. Hess and Dr. Tran who both enthusiastically offered their presence to the gathered group. I would also like to thank and name the planning team for their service. They are current REA Board student representative, Eunjin Jeon, from Denver University/Illiff School of Theology, REA member, John Falcone, Visiting Professor at San Francisco Theological Seminary, Marcie Gibson and Mamisoa Rakotomalala, both doctoral students at the GTU, and Melissa Posada, support staff from Church Divinity School of the Pacific. In full transparency, Eunjin Jeon and I both served on the REA Board at the time of the consideration of this regional proposal. However, when the Board considered the proposal, Eunjin and I were recused from voting on this proposal.

If you have any questions about this regional gathering or any future considerations stemming from it, please contact me at mhearn@cdsp.edu.

2. Boston Regional Gathering

By Wanda Stahl

On Tuesday, July 9, nine professors, students, and practitioners gathered for a watch party during the REA annual meeting. Our setting at Rolling Ridge Retreat and Conference Center in North Andover, MA offered gracious hospitality, delicious food, and a beautiful natural setting which complemented well our theme of "Dear Earth." Our day offered time for personal connection, shared viewing and discussion of plenary and breakout sessions, and free time for communing with nature on the outdoor labyrinths or one of the several lakeside walking paths. The group appreciated the opportunity to experience the best of both our online conference format and the opportunity to connect with one another in-person. We were very grateful for the REA Regional Gathering Grant that helped make this day possible.

3. LGBTQ+

By Alfred Pang

Since its inception in 2021, the LGBTQ+ & Allies Working Group has been holding an online gathering in Fall. This meeting serves as a platform for scholars and practitioners to share their work on LGBTQ+ issues, as well as to converse with one another its implications for religious education. Last November, we had Dr. Ish Ruiz share about his recently published book *LGBTQ+ Educators in Catholic Schools: Embracing Synodality Inclusivity, and Justice* (2024). Dr. Ruiz is an assistant professor of Latinx and Queer Decolonial Theology at the Pacific School of Religion (PSR). He is also the Coordinator of the Latinx Roundtable of the Center for LGBTQ+ and Gender Studies in Religion at PSR.

Dr. Ruiz powerfully shared his personal experiences as a Catholic high-school religion teacher and how they had led him to write his book, which celebrates the gifts of LGBTQ+ Catholic school educators and advocates against their unjust firing in the US. The book constructs a theology of synodality that works toward the fuller inclusion of LGBTQ+ Catholics not only as a matter of

social justice, but as an imperative in advancing the Catholic mission of educating for justice in schools. Dr. Ruiz's sharing left us energized with queer joy, inspiring us with hope to continue the hard work of LGBTQ+ inclusion as RE scholars and practitioners.

Apply for REA Regional Gatherings

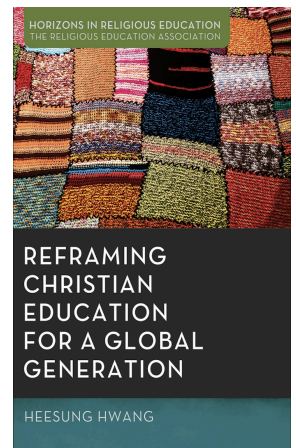
Post-COVID, the advantages of fully embracing online interactions are becoming increasingly clear, especially in an era of rapid technological advancements. The shift to hosting our annual meeting online has more than doubled international participation, fostering learning and collaboration across vast geographic distances. This aligns seamlessly with this year's annual conference theme: *Navigating Humanity*.

At the same time, the REA Board acknowledges the irreplaceable value of in-person gatherings for creativity and learning. We encourage members to organize regional or local meetings to complement our online interactions. These gatherings can coincide with the annual meeting, align with online sessions, or occur independently before or after the main event. To assist in these initiatives, the Board has designated funds and encourages interested parties to submit applications detailing their plans and the support needed.

You can find [full details and a form for applying for a regional meeting grant](#) on our website. **The deadline is February 1st, 2025.**

Horizons New Book!

The *HORIZONS for Religious Education* book series is pleased to introduce the latest book by REA member, Dr. Heesung Hwang, titled *Reframing Christian Education for a Global Generation* (September 2024). As commended by Dr. Boyung Lee, Horizons' Co-Editorial Team member, "In this pivotal work, Heesung Hwang reimagines religious education for today's diverse, global generation. By confronting both explicit and implicit white normative assumptions embedded in religious



education, Hwang introduces the Korean concept of *madang* to foster inclusive spaces where cultural diversity and spiritual growth can flourish together. This book is indispensable for educators and ministers committed to engaging a global generation, offering innovative strategies to cultivate a deep, contextually relevant Christian faith in an interconnected world.”

Dr. Hwang is incoming Associate Professor of United Methodist Studies, Religious Education, and Leadership at Pacific School of Religion.

The *HORIZONS in Religious Education* series publishes manuscripts defining key directions in the field of religious education. The REA’s commitments to interfaith, intercultural, and international conversations about the field guide manuscript selection.

Please visit the REA’s website for other HORIZONS titles:

<https://religiouseducation.net/horizons/>

Engaging the Horizons in Religious Education series in a Doctoral Seminar

by Hosffman Ospino

During the academic year 2023-2024, I taught a yearlong Doctoral Seminar in Religious Education at Boston College. The seminar is part of my regular teaching in our doctoral program. One of the goals of the course is to acquaint our doctoral students with foundational and emerging scholarship in the field of Religious Education. It is my practice when I teach this doctoral seminar to focus it on particular topic. This time around the focus was “Emerging Scholarship in Religious and Theological Education.” I chose the topic with the Horizons in Religious Education series in mind.

We avidly read and discussed Tanya Marie Eustace Campen’s *Holy Work with Children: Making Meaning Together* (2021), Courtney T. Goto’s *The Grace of Playing: Pedagogies for Leaning into God’s New Creation* (2016), Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook’s *God Beyond Borders: Interreligious Learning Among Faith Communities* (2014), Patrick R. Manning’s *Converting the Imagination: Teaching to Recover Jesus’ Vision for Fullness of Life* (2020), James Michael Nagle’s *Out on Waters: The Religious Life and Learning of Young Catholics Beyond the Church*

(2020), Emily A. Peck-McClain's *Arm in Arm with Adolescent Girls: Educating into the New Creation* (2018), Elena Soto's *An Undivided Life: Parker J. Palmer on a Practical Theological Approach to Teaching and Being* (2024), and Heesung Hwang's dissertation, "Come Play in My Madang: An Application of Redemptive Community for Emerging New Second-Generation Korean American Children in a Globalizing Society," recently revised as a forthcoming book with a different title for the Horizons series. I wish we had had time to read all books in the series!

For several years I have been closely involved with Horizons, first as a member of the Editorial Board, then as a member of the Co-Editorial team since 2018, serving as Chair from 2021-2023, and currently finishing my last year of service. During this time, I have witnessed the emergence and development of very interesting scholarship in the field of Religious Education, now enshrined in the Horizons series. We have a treasure in our hands that I hope all members of the Religious Education Association, and anyone else teaching Religious Education, will incorporate in our courses, teaching and presentations.

As the students in the Doctoral Seminar in Religious Education and I read each work, we found ourselves in intimate conversation with colleagues whom we know and with whom we dream of creative ways to share the richness of our various faith traditions. I was particularly taken by the reflections several of the students in the seminar made as they envisioned themselves being part of the Horizons series one day. That's exactly what I hoped engaging these works would inspire. Fresh scholarship engenders the desire to engage proactively in fruitful scholarly work.

Of course, there were critiques. It would not be a doctoral seminar if students did not apply their critical eye to what they are reading! Yet, as we read these books we all realized that they are not perfect and they don't need to be! They are glimpses into questions and concerns that inhabit the minds and hearts of many religious educators. The authors in the Horizons series are brave early career scholars who dare to share their wisdom and insights with others, testing ideas, building upon the work of predecessors, lifting up new voices and stories, and breaking ground as they use different methods of reflection and analysis, often with unsuspected conversation partners. I am glad that the Horizons series is a home for their work.

I definitely look forward to continuing to engage the works in the Horizons series in my future teaching and scholarship. May this be an invitation to everyone reading this note to do likewise. By the same token, the Horizons series will only be as strong as the quality and diversity of scholars who add their works to it. We need many more books in the series! If you finished a doctoral program in Religious Education in recent years and would like to explore whether your work may have the potential to become a book or if you have a scholarly project that needs to get off the ground as an early career scholar and publish it with Horizons, contact the series' Co-Editorial team for a consultation. My students and I could be discussing and learning from your work in the next iterations of our Doctoral Seminar in Religious Education!

Hosffman Ospino, PhD, Professor, Theology and Religious Education, Boston College, Clough School of Theology and Ministry. Member of Horizons in Religious Education Co-Editorial Team; Chair of REA's Publications Committee. Email: ospinoho@bc.edu

Introducing REA's Executive Secretary, JEDI Officer, and President

We are excited to share new staff members.

September 2024 has been a time of transition for REA, with a new President as of September 1, a new Executive Secretary as of September 15, and the affirmation of a new JEDI officer, who began October 15. Please welcome all three as they introduce themselves and begin their work in these roles.

Jennifer Moe, Executive Secretary

Jennifer is Associate Director of the Young Adult Initiative at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, with a PhD in Christian Education and Congregational Studies from Garrett. She also serves as affiliate faculty at North Park University and North Park Seminary in Chicago, Illinois. Jennifer's research interests include religion and spirituality in the lives of youth and young



adults, women and girls in evangelical Christian culture, and “Exvangelicalism”/faith deconstruction in former evangelical Christians. Dr. Moe has been a member of REA for over a decade and is excited about the opportunity to serve as Executive Secretary and to encourage PhD students and young scholars to become involved in the organization. She is grateful for all of the ways that members of REA have encouraged her over the years and looks forward to supporting REA and its membership in this capacity.

Sheryl Metzger, JEDI Officer

It is my pleasure to be assuming the position of REA JEDI Officer starting Oct 15, 2024. I am a Canadian, who was raised in Toronto, and studied science, psychology, psychotherapy, and theology in universities across our country prior to my formation as a public constructive Queer theologian at the University of Birmingham, England.

Today, I conceive of “justice” as the Divine’s movement that is the essence of

wholeness, integrity, and righteousness. “Diversity” is another, expressed in Creator’s multiplicity, and conceived of in trinitarian qualities and in ecumenism. A signifier of fairness and balance, “equity”, too, reflects Godself, and by embracing “inclusion”, persons emanate the Spirit’s embrace, welcome, and openness, creating possibilities for growth and regeneration. So, I look forward to our listening, working, learning, and challenging one another, to become divine image bearers in our guild’s research, teaching, publication, and advocacy. Do reach out, and introduce yourself!



Karen-Marie Yust, President

Karen-Marie is the Josiah P. and Anne Wilson Rowe Professor of Christian Education at Union Presbyterian Seminary, where she also directs the Children’s Spirituality Research and Innovation Hub. She previously served on the editorial board of *Religious Education* and most recently was chair of the Committee on Academic Disciplines and Institutions. She has strong ties to the American Academy of



Religion and the International Association for Children's Spirituality and is interested in strengthening REA's relationships with other organizations for mutual benefit. She appreciates that multiple formats (in-person, hybrid, online, regional, international) can be beneficial for supporting REA's members in diverse contexts. She hopes to create spaces where all who call REA a professional 'home' feel included, seen, and heard as we figure out what our post-pandemic future looks like in 2025 and beyond.

REA at AAR

More than 20 people gathered during the American Academy of Religion (AAR) Annual Meeting to discuss 'Navigating Differences When Teaching Religion.' A mix of REA members and other religious studies scholars, participants shared about the kinds of diversity they commonly encounter in their classrooms and strategies they have tried to foster respect and intellectual curiosity among students. Several told stories about ways they have encouraged students to acknowledge and appreciate differences. Some discussion also arose about the concept of 'safe space' and the reality that asking women and persons of color to assume safety fails to recognize the deeply engrained racism and sexism of societies.

The gathering at AAR was organized by the Religious Education in Academic Disciplines & Institutions Committee. For the last two years, the Committee has planned a lunchtime conversation event open to anyone attending AAR. Imelda Lam represented the Committee at this year's event. In 2023, the focus was on 'Religious Education in Higher Education' and drew approximately 25 participants.

Member News

New Book

John Littleton, *Learners-Disciples-Together: within and beyond Church Communities*

(Unley, Adelaide, South Australia: MediaCom Education Inc., 2023). Pages 102. Cost \$21.95 + Postage and Handling.

The *Foreword* is by Archbishop Geoff Smith, Anglican Archbishop of Adelaide and Primate or Senior Bishop in The Anglican Church of Australia.

John focuses on the vocation, learning and discipleship ministry of ninety-nine percent of Church members, everyday disciples, and local leader disciples. These disciples have a positive vocation and ministry in their own right within the People of God community of faith, uniquely part of God's mission in and through Jesus Christ.

The ministers of the Church are everyday disciples, parish and diocesan leader disciples, deacon disciples, priest/minister disciples, and bishop disciples; all the baptised. The church is to be understood as a community of equals through baptism with a diversity of ministries of service, recognising co-responsibility and servant leadership by all.

The Rev'd Dr John Littleton is a retired Anglican minister in The Diocese of Adelaide, an experienced parish priest and Christian educator who has an ecumenical outlook. He lives in Adelaide and no longer uses the word 'lay' (laywoman, layman). The word 'disciple' is preferred. The book raises the 'Lay Issue' for discussion. www.tjhlittleton.com

Order on Website

<https://www.mediacomeducation.org.au/shop/learners-disciples-together/>

We are excited to hear from our members and share your updates with the entire association. If you have any recent news, achievements, publications, awards, retirements, or other noteworthy events, we would love to include them in the next issue of our newsletter.

Please send your news to nc@religiouseducation.net. Your news helps us stay connected and celebrate our vibrant community.

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!](#)



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