



REACH

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Winter 2007

A Message from President Margaret Ann Crain

One year ago my predecessor, Dr. Ronnie Prevost, wrote that he was honored to serve as your president. I must echo that sentiment. This organization has a rich history of advocating for and advancing religious education. So many fine scholars and practitioners have taught us so much. I am honored to hold this position.

At the same time, I am daunted by the task. As we merged the former Association of Professors and Researchers in Religious Education with the former Religious Education Association, we attempted to bring two organizations with different agendas into one. We have succeeded on some fronts and have failed on others. On the one hand, we had wonderful papers at our conference in Atlanta. We had participation in the conference from a variety of faith traditions. We had a good attendance and the mood was optimistic. On the

other hand, we did not succeed in enlarging the participation of practitioners and our membership is decreasing.

So what do you need to do? First, if you are a person whose work is primarily in the practices of religious education, please stay with us as an organization. Help us to find ways to serve your needs and interests with our conferences and publications. If you are a scholar or researcher, then please invite at least one practitioner you know to come to our next conference in Boston with you. We need to make personal invitations of people we know. **I challenge you: bring a friend to REA in Boston!**

Second, be sure your membership is renewed. Check for the pdf version of the file on our Web site. Print it out, fill it out, and send your check to Taylor and

Francis. It is easy to forget these things, but REA needs you.

Your Board will hold a working retreat in early March. We have a number of items for the agenda, but if you have suggestions, please email them to me at margaretann.

crain@garrett.edu . I'm developing the agenda now and I'm open to suggestions.

Finally, I want to express my excitement about our new staff, Dr. W. Alan Smith as Executive Secretary and Ms. Sybrina Atwater as Newtorking Coordinator. They bring expertise, energy, and creativity to their work. You will begin to see the fruits of this right away. Welcome aboard, Alan and Sybrina!

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2007 Membership Dues

2007 Memberships are now due! An online form is posted at www.religiouseducation.net

Special points of interest:

- Membership forms are available at www.religiouseducation.net
- Send member updates (promotions, tenure, new positions, retirements, publications, projects) to reaappr@msn.com
- Send special event notices to reaappr@msn.com
- 2006 Proceedings available at www.religiouseducation.net

Religious Education Association:
An Association of Professors, Practitioners, and Researchers in Religious Education
Boston Hyatt Harborside Hotel
Boston, MA USA
November 2-4, 2007

2007 Program Theme

Culture That Matters: Intercultural Explorations in Religious Education

We live in an interconnected world where human groups are discovering each other in new ways. And once again, culture matters! Through culture each human group mediates the world and forges an identity within that world. Religions are crucial in facilitating this process. There is no religious tradition that reflects, explains, justifies, and perpetuates the cultural patterns of those who participate in that tradition. These patterns include the cultures represented in the sacred texts but also the cultural identities of its interpreters. Within those traditions

religious educators function as cultural workers—through the language and forms of religious faith and practices a culture is transmitted.

Race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, class, age, and other indicators of human diversity are not foreign to religious knowledge and practices but they provide the cultural loci from which we explain the desired universality of our religious beliefs. If religious belief and faith experience are intrinsically connected to the cultural forms that shape our religious identity it is important to ask: *In what ways is faith transmission mediated by what I find valuable in my culture? How does my cultural identity influence*

my thinking about religion and education? Can I reflect on the distinction between the “content” of faith or tradition and my own cultural identity? In what ways is what I teach, and the ways I teach, a reflection of cultural influences and interests? Are the ways in which your teaching excludes or alienates learners because of the cultural values upon which it is based?

By taking consciousness of our cultural approaches to religious education we open ourselves to religious knowledge from other people’s culture. Thus we may ask: *What have we encountered worth incorporating into our evolving religious identity?*

(cont’d on p. 4)

2007 Board of Directors

Officers (Steering Committee)

- **President** Margaret Ann Crain, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, Evanston, IL 2007

- **President-Elect/2007 Program Chair** Jose R. Irizarry, McCormick Theological Seminary, Chicago, IL 2008

- **Vice President/2008 Program Chair-Elect** Carol Lakey Hess, Candler School of Theology, Atlanta, GA 2009

- **Treasurer** Diane Hymans, Trinity Lutheran Seminary Columbus, Ohio, 2007

Recording Secretary
Kathy Winings, Unification Theological Seminary Barrytown, New York, 2007

Members of the Board

- **Religious Education in Faith Communities Forum Team Chair** Nelson Strobert, Gettysburg Theological Seminary, Gettysburg, PA, 2007

- **Forum Coordination Team Chair Religious Education in Public Life and the Global Community Chair**

- **Religious Education in Academic Disciplines & Institutions Forum Team Chair** Maureen O'Brien, Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 2006

- **Members at Large** Janet Parachin, Philips Theological Seminary, Tulsa, Oklahoma, 2008

- Lucinda Nolan, The Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C., 2007

- **Dean Blevins**, Trevecca Nazarene, Nashville, TN, 2009
- **Doctoral Student Representative**, Claire Bischoff, Candler School of Theology, Atlanta, GA, 2007
- **Publications** Joyce Mercer, Virginia Theological Seminary, Alexandria, VA 2007

Ex officio Members

- **Executive Secretary** W. Alan Smith, Florida Southern College, Lakeland, FL 2007
- **Networking Coordinator** Sybrina Atwater, Candler School of Theology, Atlanta, GA 2007
- **Editor of Religious Education** Jack Seymour, Garrett Evangelical Seminary, Evanston, Illinois,

2007 Forum Coordination Teams

Religious Education in Faith Communities:

- Nelson Strobert, Gettysburg Lutheran Seminary, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, 2007
- Vacancy, 2008
- Boyung Lee, 2009

Religious Education in Public Life and the Global community:

- Thomas Groome, Boston College, Boston, Massachusetts, 2008
- Burton Everist, Duquesne Community College, Dubuque, IA 2008
- Bert Roebben, 2009

Religious Education in Academic Disciplines and Institutions:

- Maureen O'Brien, Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 2007
- Cate Siejk, Gonzaga University, Spokane, Washington, 2008
- Karen Marie Yust, Union Theological Seminary/PSCE, Richmond, VA, 2009

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(cont'd from p. 2)

What can I find in other cultural expressions that not only make us more sensitive and tolerant but help us revisit our own understanding of the life-long process of faith-formation?

I invite religious educators to explore these questions and by doing so to promote intercultural dialogues that will further enhance our faith knowledge (beyond ethnocentric theologies) and improve our efforts to educate people in faith (beyond ethnocentric pedagogies). I invite religious educators to do so by “making the familiar strange and the strange familiar.” More than ever, culture matters and religious educators are challenged to make explicit the culture (s) that matter to

Their efforts of faith formation and transformation.

Jose Irizarry, President-Elect and Program Chair

COMING SOON

NEW REA WEB PORTAL!

We have exciting new networking opportunities emerging via our website. Soon you will be able to preview conference papers, exchange intellectual resources, email members, and review REA forum updates at the new and secure MEMBERS ONLY CORNER! In the very near future several other features and services

will be available such as: conference registration, membership renewal, podcast downloads, and much more.

Let's make REA-APPRRE webportal the gathering place for professors, practitioners, and researchers in religious education.

Submit your comments and suggestions to Sybrina Atwaters at <http://www.religiouseducation.net/feedback.htm>.

**SHALOM
FROM W.
ALAN SMITH,
EXECUTIVE
SECRETARY**

It seems only appropriate that the first issue of REACH for 2007 should begin and end with words of greeting from the new persons at the helm of this organization we all know and love so well. As I begin my term of office as Executive Secretary, I echo the appreciations— and the challenges— with which Margaret Ann began the newsletter. We enter a year of great promise as we seek to engage persons of faith from a number of religious traditions in reflective action toward Jose Iri-zarry's call for a culture that matters. In this age of war and rumors of wars, the historic stance of the Religious Education Association as a

courageous, prophetic voice calling the peoples of the world to God's *shalom* could not be more timely.

I am humbled by the trust you have placed in me by my election to this position. I pledge to you my committed attention to the business of the Association. I solicit your input as we seek to increase both the active membership of REA and, more importantly, the enthusiastic participation of this membership in the ongoing work of REA. Go to your calendar **RIGHT NOW** and write down the dates of November 2-4, 2007 as the time you will join us in Boston for the 2007 Annual Meeting of REA!!!!!!

I wish to offer my thanks and appre-

ciation to Lwanda Smith for her three-year term in this office. It is a daunting task which she fulfilled ably. I also wish to echo Margaret Ann's words of anticipation. The officers listed in this issue of REACH represent a dynamic team of leaders with years of experience in religious education. I anticipate great things to come from this rich collaboration. As the Hebrew word *shalom* and its parallel *salaam* envision God's world working the way God intended, with peace, wholeness, and completeness at its core, so I envision the REA working toward a witness for *shalom* in the public conversation as well as in our religious communities. Thank you, once again for your trust!