

# REACH

Religious Education Association Clearing House

Winter 2004

## REA-APRRE Joint Reorganization Approved

Copies of the "Design for a Joint Reorganization of APRRE and REA," dated May 23, 2003, and ballots were mailed in late September 2003 to people who were members during the 2002-03 membership year and new members in 2003-04. Ballots were returned to Randy Litchfield, Executive Secretary of APRRE for tallying. The results are:

<u>REA Members</u>		<u>APRRE Members</u>	
Ballots mailed:	475	Ballots mailed:	337
Ballots returned:	138	Ballots returned:	108
Percent return:	29%	Percent return:	32%
Yes:	135 (98%)	Yes:	105 (97%)
No:	2 ( 1%)	No:	2 ( 2%)
Abstain:	1 ( 1%)	Abstain:	1 ( 1%)

143 people received ballots as members of both REA and APRRE

The "Design for Joint Reorganization of REA and APRRE" remains available on both organization's websites.

As a result of this action, several initiatives will begin during 2004 that will culminate in a single organization functioning in January of 2005:

- A committee will begin work on revising the REA bylaws to reflect the "Design"
- A committee will begin nominating people for the new organizational structure
- A new Executive Secretary will take responsibility for REA and APRRE
- A plan to move to a single membership will be developed
- The APRRE and REA websites will be merged
- The APRRE and REA newsletters will be merged

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## A Message from the President--Lorna Bowman

A special thank you to everyone who made our annual meeting in Chicago last November such a success. We celebrated the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Religious Education Association in great style and were glad to do so with our APRRE colleagues at our joint meeting. Together we found ourselves truly *Embracing the Past and Envisioning the Future*.

On the Saturday evening, both REA and APRRE held their respective annual meetings. The decision to go ahead with the reorganization upon which we had voted by mail was affirmed at both. Many REA members present were also APRRE members. At the annual meetings we discussed how we will move into the future in January 2005 with our new joint association. In the social hour that followed one could sense the excitement

and good energy about the decisions we have made and the directions in which we are moving.

We were very pleased to have Lawanda Smith present in Chicago. As of January 2004, REA and APRRE share an Executive Secretary in the person of Lawanda. (See the insert later in the newsletter.) She was chosen by a committee with both REA and APRRE representation. During the past year the work of the Executive Administrator of REA was done by President Anne Wimberly and Treasurer Barbara Anne Keely. I thank them both for their generosity in this very busy year! Barbara Anne continues through 2004 as both treasurer and vice-president.

For this time of transition, both the REA Board and the APRRE Executive Committee realized that it will be necessary to strike a joint nominations committee for the election of officers in anticipation of our November 2004 meeting in Denver. As President of both REA and APRRE, I was empowered, with other officers, to strike such a committee. This will enable us to elect new officers for the joint association at that time.

In the past, APRRE has chosen a Vice-President two years before an annual meeting to become President-Elect the year prior to the meeting. They did not do so this year. Rather, the joint nominations committee, consisting of representative officers of both REA and APRRE, will consult and then put a name or names before both the REA Board and the APRRE general membership for the President-Elect as of November 2004 of the reorganized association.

Additionally we will also strike a committee to write the bylaws for the new association. Thanks to the work of the REA-APRRE reorganization committee, much of the work for this task has been completed in the carefully crafted implementation plan. The bylaws, too, will be completed by a committee with representatives of both associations.

I would be amiss if I did not thank our archivist, Barny Kathan and our memory-keeper Jim Lee for their generous service to the REA. Our celebration in Chicago provided a wonderful occasion upon which to build as we move into the future with the *Religious Education Association: An Association of Professors and Practitioners in Religious Education*.

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## **Executive Secretary Search Report**

The following report was presented at the APRRE Executive Committee, REA Board, APRRE business meeting, and REA business meeting. All groups accepted and affirmed the Search Committee's recommendation that Lawanda Smith become our new Executive Secretary. Lawanda will be the Executive Secretary for the reorganized association. Beginning in January 2004, Lawanda has taken responsibility for REA administration while Randy Litchfield continues his responsibilities for APRRE until June 30, 2004. As of July 1, 2004 Lawanda will assume responsibility for both APRRE and REA and the combined organization in January 2005.

The Recommendation of the Search Committee for APRRE's Executive Secretary:

In July 2003 the President of APRRE, Anne Wimberly, established a search committee to fill the position of Executive Secretary of APRRE being vacated by Randy Litchfield

after three years of service. Members the committee were: Larry Huiras, Rebecca Davis, Chuck Melchert, Lucinda Huffaker and chair, Bob O’Gorman The committee organized and met by conference calls and, with the initial aid of Randy Litchfield, articulated the needs of the job and published a job description which was made available on the APRRE and REA websites. Additionally the committee, with Randy’s aid, compiled a list of 30 names to whom we sent a special letter of invitation to apply. We entered into discussion with six people and two applied. We held one hour interviews by conference calls with both candidates, using a set of questions we had prepared covering 5 areas: Understanding of APRRE/REA, Understanding of the role of the Executive Secretary, View of the Future of the Relationships of REA & APRRE, Personal/Professional Qualities for the Job, Response to several specific issues, such as hotel negotiation experience. Additionally, the committee members contacted references that the candidates provided.

The committee found that the two persons who applied were exceptional candidates and worthy of recommendation. Both had excellent recommendations from outside sources. On the basis of the following characteristics, the committee recommended Lawanda Smith:

- 1) A depth of proven experience working with committees, organizing multiple activities, communicating with several publics, and serving church and academy.
- 2) Institutional context that will support administrative tasks and provide important consulting networks and resources, when needed.
- 3) A demonstrated capacity for the combination of organizational matters, concern with people, and academic acumen.
- 4) The special circumstance of participating in three worlds: a) academic involvement in religious education, b) work as a professional practitioner in the church in teaching and curriculum writing, and c) teaching religion in a public institution.

The committee judged that these strengths would serve APRRE and REA well as the Executive Secretary moves the organizations into one operation.

Bob O’Gorman,  
Chair of the Executive Secretary Search Committee

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## **Meet Lawanda Smith, New Executive Secretary**

Since my years as a doctoral student at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, participation in the Association of Professors and Researchers in Religious Education has been enriching and challenging. Every year I have grown by participating in research interest groups and task forces at the annual meeting, and I value the friendship and support of colleagues in APRRE. Thus, it is a great honor to be offered the position of Executive Secretary of APRRE and REA, particularly at this exciting junction in the history of the two organizations.

For the past eight years, I have called Alexandria, Louisiana home. In 1995, I earned an Ed.D. from Southern Seminary, where I also earned a Master of Divinity in Christian Education. In addition, I hold a Master of Arts in English from Louisiana Tech University and a Bachelor of Arts in English Education from Louisiana College. Presently, I am

Assistant Professor of Religion and English at Louisiana State University Alexandria, a campus of 3000 undergraduate students.

Congregational life is also a significant part of my profession. An ordained minister, I am an active member of Emmanuel Baptist Church in Alexandria, Louisiana, and I have spoken frequently in congregations of different faith traditions. In addition, I have written adult religious education curriculum material for *Formations*, published by Smyth and Helwys.

My dream for the Religious Education Association—professors, researchers, and practitioners in religious education—is that together the members of APRRE and REA will continue to encourage and challenge each other as we embrace diversity and build bridges to expand our support of religious education in all its dimensions.

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### **APRRE-REA Membership**

The joint reorganization will be implemented by REA revising its bylaws to reflect the joint reorganization design and APRRE members becoming REA members. During the first part of 2004, Ted Brelsford, Barbara Anne Keely, Lawanda Smith and Randy Litchfield will be working with Taylor and Francis to develop a plan that transitions APRRE members into being REA members. Taylor and Francis is the publisher of the journal Religious Education and handles memberships for the REA. REA membership includes a subscription to the journal. This plan will be in place prior to when the current APRRE membership cycle ends on June 30, 2004. The plan will address dues levels and making the membership cycle run from January to December. Having the membership cycle on a calendar basis matches the volume period of the journal and the financial budget calendar. One transition option under consideration is offering a one-time 18 month membership running from July 1, 2004 through December 31, 2005.

**Again... please remember that membership changes will not be implemented until July 1 AT THE EARLIEST. If you have not already done so, members need to renew for 2003-04!!!**

### **Combining APRRE and REA Websites and Newsletters**

A very important part of implementing the joint reorganization of REA and APRRE involves the way we communicate with members. Two channels for this communication are the website and the newsletter. As we address issues related to the website and newsletter, we are including people with responsibilities for the journal, *Religious Education*, as well so the three can be treated as a system. People involved thus far in this task include: Larry Huiras, Mary Hess, Leona English, Ted Brelsford, Lawanda Smith and Randy Litchfield. Questions and comments about this work can be sent to Randy Litchfield ([rlitchfield@mtso.edu](mailto:rlitchfield@mtso.edu)).

One of the first noticeable events in the joint reorganization will be a common website. We hope to have this up by February 2004. Initially the site will combine the existing static content of the REA and APRRE sites. By the summer of 2004 we plan to incorporate on-line membership, on-line meeting registration, collaboration tools, and expanded resource content. The working group is also discussing long-term issues such as features that would expand the site into an open source for religious education materials. When the new site is launched you will receive an email inviting you to visit!

Another early sign of the joint reorganization will be seen in the newsletter. We will be moving to a common newsletter by either the March or June 2004 editions. The REA newsletter is entitled "REACH" and we will likely keep that name. We will continue with the types of news and information typically in the APRRE newsletter. With the combined newsletter, REACH, members will also receive a wider range of content. Historically REACH has included short articles and more resourcing on religion and education than the APRRE newsletter. The newsletter will maintain its electronic format.

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