



REACH

REACH

Spring 2006

Annual Meeting to be Held Nov. 3-5, Atlanta, Georgia

Reconsidering the Power of Story in Religious Education

Someone once said that the four most magical words in the English language are "Once upon a time...." When we gather in Atlanta, Georgia, November 3-5, 2006, you are invited to consider the power of STORY. This theme seems especially appropriate in this southern U S location where the literary tradition is so rich in story.

Story, of course, is not such a new idea for religious educators. Thomas Groome, Ann Wimberly, and others convinced us long ago of the efficacy of story for teaching and learning. But, in 2006 the Religious Education Association is invited to reconsider stories--

Stories of God's encounter with ancient people such as Sarai and Abram

Stories of God's presence among us now

Stories that tell us who we are

Stories that reveal what we must do

Stories that carry cultural memory

Many of us have been challenged and inspired by books like *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals* by Anderson and Foley. David Hogue has brought his pastoral care and counseling expertise into conversation with the fascinating research on how our brains work. His book, *Remembering the Future, Imagining the Past* taught me that stories/memories are not stored whole in some file drawer in one's head. Rather they are pulled as fleeting images, sensory impressions, emotions, and connections from various sections of our brain to be re-assembled or remembered or "imagined" as Hogue learns from the workings of the brain. Religious educators are challenged to reconsider the nature of story and how it informs pedagogy in light

of this new information.

Some questions that come to mind are:

1. How does brain research inform the practices of religious education?
2. How can we religious educators help communities of faith to imagine the stories of the faith as stories that proclaim jubilee and promote peace?
3. What is the dark side of story? How is story different from "spin"? What ethical questions must we raise?
4. How can story help us to cross boundaries of culture, class, time, doctrine, faith in order to seek connection and reconciliation?
5. How do stories change as people change?
6. How is story/narrative shaping research methodologies?
7. How can story convey religious values in the public arena?

How can opportunities to share our stories become central practices of communities of faith—stories that bring healing, stories that reveal injustice, stories that promote peace?

Once upon a time the Religious Education Association met in Atlanta and shared stories of their work that inspired, enlightened, and transformed the world into a place of justice, peace and love.....

Questions and comments about the theme and offers to assist in the design of the meeting may be directed to President-Elect, Margaret Ann Crain. Email: margaretann.crain@garrett.edu

Suggested Reading: David A. Hogue, *Remembering the Future, Imagining the Past; Story, ritual, and the Human Brain*. Pilgrim Press, 2003.

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Religious Education Association:
An Association of Professors, Practitioners, and Researchers in Religious Education
Renaissance Hotel,
Atlanta, Georgia, USA
November 3-5, 2006

Call for Proposals

ELIGIBILITY: In order to be eligible to submit a proposal, persons must have their membership fees up to date. Renewal can accompany one's proposal. If selected, presenters must renew for upcoming membership year as well and register for the meeting.

PROPOSAL RELATION TO THEME AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION: Because the annual theme serves as a focus for conversations during a meeting, proposals are encouraged to address the theme.

Theme Description (From President Elect Margaret Ann Crain)

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- Stories that carry cultural memory

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Approaches to the Theme

Approaches to the theme might address the following topics (among others).

1. How does brain research inform the practices of religious education?
2. How can we religious educators help communities of faith to imagine the stories of the faith as stories that proclaim jubilee and promote peace?
3. What is the dark side

of story? How is story different from "spin"? What ethical questions must we raise?

4. How can story help us to cross boundaries of culture, class, time, doctrine, faith in order to seek connection and reconciliation?

5. How do stories change as people change?

6. How is story/narrative shaping research methodologies?

7. How can story convey religious values in the public arena?

How can opportunities to share our stories become central practices of communities of faith—stories that bring healing, stories that reveal injustice, stories that promote peace?

However, authors should not force their research to fit the mold of the theme. Papers may be proposed on any theme contributing to religious education. Papers related to the theme of the annual meeting, and those that are directly and deliberately linked to religious education, will receive preferential consideration for publication in the conference issue of *Religious Education*. All proposals and presentations must make clear connection between their topic and the theory or practice of religious education. They must also move beyond the telling of stories to the researching or inquiring into stories; you are encouraged to move from narrative (telling stories) to narrative inquiry (exploring or researching the relevance of them for our field).

CALL FOR PROPOSALS: REA members in good standing are invited to submit a proposal for a presentation in a Research Interest Group, a Colloquium, or a Resourcing Workshop. See directions below. One presentation per person, please.

Collaborative/interfaith/interdisciplinary proposals may receive preferential consideration for single or extended time slots. A chair will be appointed to all presentations to help organize the discussion around issues raised by the presenter(s) and participants. You are encouraged to work with your co-presenters and assigned chair to decide the format and the organization of your session.

Participants are reminded that we have three forums that serve as a guide for our organization. These are (A) Religious Education in Faith Communities, (B) Religious Education in Public Life & Global Community, and (C) Religious Education in Academic Disciplines & Institutions. The varied formats for presentation of research and reflection at our annual meeting attempt to reflect these formats. They are:

RESEARCH INTEREST

GROUPS (RIG) discuss publishable papers among a group of up to 25 members. All research papers will be posted in a protected area of the REA website prior to the meeting, and included in the REA Annual Meeting Proceedings, distributed at registration.

COLLOQUIA are less formal than Research Interest Groups but provide a very important arena for sharing emerging research, research-in-progress, or practices and programs that do not readily lend themselves to formal papers. An outline of ideas or sharing of practices is appropriate in this format.

RESOURCING WORKSHOPS are presentations of scholarly and practical resources or

approaches supporting the multiple practices of religious education. These sessions may seek to increase awareness or enhance performance of specific religious education practices. The context for these practices may be settings such as faith communities, higher education, wider public settings, schools, etc.

INFORMATION ON SUBMITTING PROPOSALS

Applicants must send an abstract of approximately one page (it may be single-spaced) to the Executive Secretary and the members of the Call for Proposals Committee. Abstracts must be received by **May 1, 2006**. Submission by e-mail preferred. Include the following:

- a. Title of paper, colloquium, or resourcing workshop
- b. Name of author/presenter(s), position and institution
- c. The category for which the proposal is submitted (RIG, Colloquia, Workshop)
- d. The specific or intended audience, such as grade school teachers, adult educators, congregational directors of religious education, or seminary faculty
- e. **Statement regarding the significance of the presentation for religious education**
- f. Indication of whether this presentation addresses the theme *Reconsidering the Power of Story in Religious Education*. (Other proposals will be accepted).
- g. Names of persons who might chair your session. Please check with them first to see if they will be attending the meeting.
- h. Three to four line (maximum) description for use in the meeting program
- i. Abstract

For papers, include main points, methodology (e.g. literature-based paper, qualitative or quantitative research, historical, or insights from our com-

munity of practice), generally the sources grounding the paper, and the status of the research at the time of the proposal.

For colloquia, include main concepts/issues, methodology for addressing the topic, generally the sources grounding the presentation, and the status of the research at the time of the proposal.

For resourcing workshops, include context, main concepts/issues, practice(s) being addressed, context of those practices (e.g. faith community, higher education, wider community, schools), outline of the workshop (sequence of topics and methods), resources presented and used.

Each proposal will be reviewed by the Call for Proposals Committee. Presenters selected will be notified on or by June 1, 2006. Proposals may be paired according to interest and topic relation.

E-mail one copy of proposal to the following five people: Leona English, Burton Everist, Nelson Strobert, Lawanda Smith and Yolanda Smith

1. Dr. Leona English
lenglish@stfx.ca [preferred]
Adult Education Dept.,
St. Francis Xavier University
Antigonish, NS, Canada
B2G 2W5
Fax 902/867-3765

2. Burton Everist
beverist@mchsi.com (preferred)
Northeast Iowa Community College
Peosta Campus
10250 Sundown Road
Peosta, Iowa, 52068

3. Rev. Yolanda Smith
yolanda.smith@yale.edu
(preferred)

Yale Divinity School
409 Prospect Street
New Haven, CT 06511
Fax 203-432-5356

4. Dr. Nelson Strobert
nstrobert@lts.edu (preferred)
Lutheran Theological Seminary
at Gettysburg
61 Seminary Ridge
Gettysburg, PA 17325
Fax 717 334-3469

5. Dr. Lawanda Smith
Rea-apprrre@cox.net [preferred]
REA Executive Secretary
P.O. Box 12576
Alexandria, LA 71315
Fax 318.442.4327

Please follow these procedures and deadlines! Your submission of an abstract is your agreement that you will complete the paper, will abide by these deadlines, and will personally present it for discussion at the 2006 Annual Meeting. Failing to follow through with a presentation significantly detracts from the overall program!

Important Additional Information Regarding Research Interest Group Papers

Research Interest Group presenters will receive a copy of the Guidelines for Contributors for the journal *Religious Education*. Your Proceedings must be no longer than 3000 words (plus references), single spaced, 12 point, Times New Roman Font, 1" margins all around. (Presenters of Colloquia and Resourcing Workshops are not required to contribute a paper although they may wish to submit material for posting on the website for participants in their group.)

Completed Research Interest Group papers for the program must be received in both hard copy and in electronic format ("rtf" or "pdf") by the Executive Secretary no later than September 1, 2006. **Papers not received by that date will not be included in the Proceedings and will be canceled from the Annual Meeting program.** Unless otherwise requested, all papers will be posted on the website prior to the meeting. Proceedings will be distributed to participants as they register at the meeting.

By January 13, 2007, Research Interest Group papers that were presented at the meeting may be revised and submitted to the Call for Papers Committee who will act as a peer review jury for the conference issue of *Religious Education*. Selected papers are recommended for possible publication and sent to the editor of the journal, who then makes the final selection.

Announcement to Members

In preparation for the 2006 Annual meeting the REA in Academic Disciplines And Institutions Forum would like to highlight publications (books, curriculum resources, media, etc.) that embody, enlighten or expand the theme "Reconsidering the Power of Story in Religious Education." In lieu of a Plenary session, the forum will host 6 circles of dialogue that will feature various authors (3 academic and 3 practitioners) whose work is making a significant contribution to the field of religious education (especially as related to our conference theme) and would stimulate energetic conversation during the circles of dialogue. The circles of dialogue would be held during one of the Saturday program time slots. Program participants would be invited to join a circle to dialogue about the publication with the author and others within the circle. We also hope to make the publications available for purchase at the conference. To select the most dynamic books for the circles of dialogue, the committee would like to invite the membership to nominate authors whose publications have been published within the past 2-3 years. Please submit nominations by e-mail to yolanda.smith@yale.edu by May 1, 2006 and include author's name, title of the publication, publisher, publication date, whether the publication should be considered as an academic recommendation or one for practitioners, and a brief paragraph indicating why this publication should be considered for one of the circles of dialogue. Final

selections from nominations will be made by the forum team. To make this event successful, we are inviting participation from the full membership, so please consider submitting a nomination by May 1. If you have any questions or need additional information, please feel free to contact Yolanda Smith at yolanda.smith@yale.edu. Thank you,

Yolanda Y. Smith
for the REA in Academic
Disciplines and Institutions
Forum Team.

2006 Program Chair

Dr. Margaret Ann Crain is Associate Professor of Christian Education and Director of the Deacon Program at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary. She has pursued research for 15 years focused on the theology of laity. Her primary questions are: What prompts us to ask questions about God? What role can the church play in resourcing and nurturing the growth of faith? Her latest book, [Yearning For God: Reflections of Faithful Lives](#), was co-authored with Jack L. Seymour and published by Upper Room Books in 2003. [A Deacon's Heart: The New United Methodist Diaconate](#) came out in 2001 and has helped many to find their calling in the church. Crain and Seymour co-authored (with Joseph V. Crockett) [Educating Christians: The Intersection of Meaning, Learning and Vocation](#), published by Abingdon Press in 1993.

Crain writes, "I acknowledged my calling to the ministry of Christian education knowing it would enable me to walk alongside the faithful people in churches who are trying daily to make sense of their lives and to live as disciples of Jesus Christ. As I joined their walk, I provided resources and helped them explore the wisdom of the church. I provided contexts where it would be as safe to share doubts as to share certainty. I listened and honored their lives as sacred places where God is revealed.

After 20 years of ministry in local churches, I was pleased to join the faculty in the field of Christian education here at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary in 1998. As students and faculty we learn how to lead the search for meaning and for authentic ways of acting out faith in a complex world.

I teach courses in Christian education, human and faith development, congregational studies and ethnography, Vocation and Ministry, and the theology and organization of the United Methodist Church. All of these are about the central question: how do we who are the spiritual leaders invite and empower the people of God to be faithful to the vision of Christ?

As an ordained deacon, I am also committed to help the church incarnate the promise of this new order of ministry with its dual focus on worship and the world."

BA San Jose State University 1965
MA University of Iowa 1967
EdD Vanderbilt University 1991

Message from President Ronnie Prevost

REA's Board met in Chicago the weekend of February 10-12 to plan and prepare for the coming year. It was a wonderful time of community-building and dream-sharing. Perhaps of more immediate importance for REA is that, out of our meeting, some concrete plans have emerged.

Your board is concerned that REA live up to its "billing" as an international and ecumenical professional organization for scholars and practitioners in religious education. The truth be told, the profiles REA's membership and those who attend REA's annual meetings do not reflect that ideal. We are determined to work on this disconnect.

You can be a part of improving REA's diversity. Our meeting will be in Atlanta, Georgia, this coming November 3-5. Please email me (at rprevost@hsutx.edu) the names and addresses (email and postal) of several people you know from Atlanta and the surrounding area that are not current members of REA, but could benefit from REA membership and from attending the annual meeting. Think of practitioners and scholars and from a wide-range of faith communities and types of work. (In other words, imagine how we want REA to look and what we want it to be.) The information you send will be compiled into an invitation list. Those on the list will be sent special invitations to attend the meeting and, perhaps, join REA.

The Program Committee, headed by President-elect/Program Chair Margaret Ann Crain, is already at work planning around the theme "Reconsidering the Power of Story in Religious Education." They are working to make it a program that will be creative, challenging and diverse. The call for papers will go out soon. Please consider how you will contribute.

Thank you for the privilege of serving as your president. I look forward to hearing from you as we work together to grow REA and to seeing you in Atlanta.

Task force Notes

The **History Task Force** in 2006 will focus its efforts on Genealogies of Religious Education. Dr. Patty Meyers, Pfeiffer University, is the convener. All members of REA are invited to trace their RE genealogies via the scholars with whom they've studied, going back as many generations as they can. Questions? Contact Patty Meyers pmeyers@pfeiffer.edu

The convener for the **Ethnography Task Force** 2006 is Sue Singer: singersb@bc.edu

Open Source Religious Education Web

Imagine a website where any community of faith could publish the things they'd created to support religious learning and religious practice. This website would be free and open to the public, so that anyone could post resources – curriculum materials, bible studies, worship notes, and so on – and anyone could download them. The key would be that anyone posting through this site would have to agree – in the posting – that their resources would be there under a “creative commons” license. Such a license preserves existing copyright for the author, but allows for an easy and immediate license for people who want to use the materials in non-commercial ways. Authors and composers remain able to work out separate agreements with commercial publishers under this license structure, but it makes it much easier for free sharing to be promoted.

So, begin by imagining a web space in which people from all over the world could publish the resources they've developed locally, and others could download and use these resources – perhaps modifying and reposting them back to the website, further contextualized for use in specific settings. Now, imagine that this website has two additional features – a very powerful search engine, that

allows people to search in multiple ways amongst the materials, and a very powerful and flexible ratings system, that allows anyone who chooses to, to add their own evaluation of the materials. Finally, imagine groups of people all over the world – religious education professors at seminaries, for instance, and local groups of religious educators in a specific denomination – who regularly go to this site and engage in evaluation of published materials there. Individual readers of the site could develop their own ratings of the critics, and begin to use both keyword search criteria, as well as their critics' favorites, to quickly and easily find materials that they can use in their own context. Can you see it?

A group of people from around the world has begun to gather to develop just such a resource. For the moment it has the lengthy, but descriptive name of the "Open Source Religious Resources" website, and we are developing the technical architecture and policies to make it happen. REA has signed on to endorse the project, so if you're interested in helping out -- visit the website: <http://wiki.religioused.org/Osrr/HomePage> or contact REA member Mary Hess (mhess@luthersem.edu)

REA Response to Open Source RE Web

Regarding "Open Source Religious Resources Website," the REA: APPRRE Board has decided the following:

1. To enthusiastically endorse the project idea and concept;
2. To disseminate to the REA membership (through REACH, the REA: APPRRE website, and the journal) information about the project and encourage the membership to look at the website, consider how it might be used and useful
3. To encourage the REA member to consider if/how they may (or may not) wish to endorse the project during the annual meeting in Atlanta in November (after a possible presentation about the project somewhere in the schedule of the meeting);
4. To look for a potential REA advocate/spokesperson/liaison for the project during conversations during the ensuing year and during discussions that take place in the annual meeting.

Position Posting

Full-Time Position in Religious Education—**Unification Theological Seminary**

The Unification Theological Seminary seeks a full-time faculty member in the field of Religious Education at the rank of either associate or assistant professor. As a key faculty position in the Master of Religious Education degree program, this position also provides the ecumenically-minded faculty member the opportunity to teach a wide range of related courses in ministry and/or counseling. Responsibilities include teaching the core Religious Education courses and some ministry courses, directing the R.E. Program, overseeing students as they complete the capstone R.E. Project, advisement of its international and interracial student body, and faculty committee duties. The faculty member should expect to be at the Barrytown campus in the mid-Hudson valley at least 3 days a week and in Manhattan at the New York City extension center one day a week.

Qualifications include an earned doctorate in Religious Education or related field. Applicants from all denominations, women and minorities are welcomed.

The position starts on July 1, 2006. Applications received prior to May 1 are assured full consideration; however, applications will be considered until the position is filled. Applicants

should submit a letter of application containing a statement of teaching and Religious Education philosophy, a curriculum vita, transcripts of graduate work, and two letters of support to: Dr. Andrew Wilson, Academic Dean, Unification Theological Seminary, 30 Seminary Drive, Barrytown, NY 12571. Inquiries: (845) 752-3000 x228, wilson@uts.edu

. **Special points of interest:**

- Membership forms are available at www.religiouseducation.net
- Send member updates (promotions, tenure, new positions, retirements, publications, projects) to rea-apprr@cox.net
- Send special event invitations and notices to rea-apprr@cox.net
- 2006 Proceedings available at www.religiouseducation.net