

Renaissance Module: Philosophy of Religious Education

A Guide to the Reader

Welcome to the Religious Education Philosophy Renaissance Module. Ideally, you have this guide and the *Essex Conversations* book well in advance of the module. Between now and the module, we encourage you to read as much of this book as you can, but the **essential ten essays are identified with bold print to prioritize your reading**. There will be opportunities in the various activities and discussions throughout the module to draw on your reading and reflection.

The suggestions below will help you make the most of whatever amount of reading you are able to do.

1. First read the Introduction to *Essex Conversations* to orient yourself and provide a context for the essays. On page xi you will find the three questions that *Essex Conversations* contributors were asked to address. You might want to think about these questions and jot down your ideas before reading the essays.
2. The Philosophy of Religious Education Renaissance module is organized around a different set of questions: What, Who, Where, When, Why, and How? Below, we have grouped the essays according to these foundational questions. You could begin by reading one essay from each group, then read others as you have time. As you read, you might make brief notes about ideas that address these questions.
3. If you find passages in any of the essays that are particularly striking or inspiring, by all means mark them so that you can find them again easily, or copy them into your journal. You may have opportunities during the module to share these readings with the group.
4. Each session includes a 30-minute period called Focused Conversations devoted to a discussion of specific *Essex Conversations* papers facilitated by small groups of participants. To fulfill the requirements of this module, participants are asked to join a small group and provide collective leadership for one of these conversations. Module co-leaders will facilitate the first Focused Conversations. The following list indicates how the *Essex Conversations* essays are organized for this module.

***Essex Conversations* Essays Organized by Foundational Questions**

WHAT is religious education?

Barry Andrews, "Educating for Faith" Susan Brown, "For the Generations to Come"

Patricia Hoerl, "Religion as Relationship"

Elizabeth Strong, "To Teach an Abiding Faith"

WHEN does religious education take place?

Susan Archer, "Outside the Box" Logan Harris, "What Youth Want"

Jen Harrison (Devine), "Youth Groups as a Model for Transformative Ministry" Frances Manly, "The Principle Behind the Principles"

Kathy Silver, "Doing the Work of Becoming Unitarian Universalists" Laura Spencer, "Our Seven Principles"

WHO influences religious education?

Pat Ellenwood, "Changing Lenses"

Susan Harlow, "Spreading the Good News"

Jacqui James, "Building Strong and Radical Religious Communities"

Elizabeth Jones, "Building a Strong Community"

Roberta Nelson, "The Teacher as Spiritual Guide"

Jeannellen Ryan, "Looking Back"

WHERE does religious education occur?

Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley, "Toward Wholeness and Liberation"

Ginger Luke, "The Children's Fire is the Community Fire"

Rebecca Parker, "Education As Liberation"

Meg Riley, "The Core of Our Evolving Unitarian Universalist Faith"

Tracey Robinson-Harris, "Margin and Center"

HOW do we go about it?

Richard Gilbert, "Usable Truth"

Daniel Harper, "Learning Types and Their Needs"

John March, "Practicing the Scales of Rejoicing"

Makanah Morriss, "Doorway to the Sacred"

Greg Stewart, "Sunday School is Dead—Long Live Sunday School"

John Tolley, "Child's Play"

WHY do we do what we do?

Judith Frediani, "Making Sure There is a There There"

Tom Owen-Towle, "Seven Reminders"

Gary Smith, "Taking Our Children Seriously"

Tom Yondorf, "Outcome-based Religious Education"