

## Editors' Introduction to Inaugural Issue

Welcome to the first issue of the *Bulletin* of our newly formed Network for public health, religion, and spirituality (PHRS). The *Bulletin* aims to be a place to highlight research, teaching, and practice, past and present; share ideas, resources, and opportunities; house candid discussions with people engaged – either empirically and/or in practice – at the intersections of religion and public health; and encourage a sense of connectedness to this growing field... all with a bit of levity, where possible!

With these aspirations in mind, our inaugural bulletin begins with an interview with Professor Len Syme, who studied the relationship between religion/spirituality and public health as early as the 1950s, and was a key founder of the field of social epidemiology. This interview is followed by an expanded introduction to the PHRS Network, its scope, and its purpose, articulating our intent to balance interdisciplinarity with sustained focus on public health. Next, Ellen Idler writes a short essay about the scholarly projects and future directions of Emory University's 2019 cohort of graduates who received training in both religion and public health. This piece is followed by an article from Jordan Burns, a recent Emory graduate, describing her academic and professional journey in religion/spirituality and public health, and how she applies her training in her work with the President's Malaria Initiative. In an article relevant to students and teachers of public health, Doug Oman and Katelyn Long alert us to this year's Fall 2019 National Student Essay Contest on spirituality/religion and public health, sketching the contest's goals and four-year history. Finally, our inaugural issue closes by highlighting new research and articles, and upcoming and recent events, such as the March 2020 Conference on Religion and Medicine, the March 2020 meeting of the Society for the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality, and the

November 2019 Faith Community Caucus sessions at the annual meeting of the American Public Health Association. For making this issue and this bulletin possible, we are very grateful to all of our excellent authors, photographers, our interviewee, and our Board, and to those already preparing other articles for inclusion in our second issue scheduled for release in Spring 2020.

This *Bulletin* is a new endeavor. We welcome your ideas and feedback – both for the *PHRS Bulletin* and for the website - and we ask for your patience as these platforms develop and mature. Whether you are a public health academic or practitioner, an advocate or skeptic, a person engaged in faith-based public health partnerships, a student with interests in PHRS, or (please fill in the blank), we welcome you and thank you for reading!

If you are wondering who we are – the editors of this new bulletin – well, out of a dozen people seated around a table six months ago in Durham, we're two who volunteered!<sup>[1]</sup> One co-editor is Doug Oman, a professor at UC Berkeley School of Public Health, a member of a cohort of seasoned scholars who have dedicated a significant part of their public health careers to exploring religious and spiritual (R/S) factors and public health. The other co-editor is Kate Long, a post-doctoral fellow at the Human Flourishing Program and T.H. Chan School of Public Health at Harvard University, representing a new group of public health students and early career professionals who want to contribute in meaningful ways to the growing PHRS field. We hope our blended influence as co-editors of the *PHRS Bulletin* yields a publication that has substance for those long interested in the intersections of public health, religion, and spirituality, and simultaneously offers a good “starting point” for those who are new to work and practice at these intersections. We also hope it is something you *want* to read!

Sincerely,  
Kate and Doug

Katelyn Long, DrPH  
[knlong@hsph.harvard.edu](mailto:knlong@hsph.harvard.edu)  
Coeditor

Doug Oman, PhD  
[dougoman@berkeley.edu](mailto:dougoman@berkeley.edu)  
Coeditor

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[1]^For more background on the formation of the Network, see our other article in this issue, “Welcome to the Public Health, Religion and Spirituality Network” ([link](#)).