had hesitated to take a bible with me because I was not sure whether it would cause problems at customs. Yet there we stood in the Amity Foundation’s publishing plant in Nanjing, surrounded by thousands of bibles. They were being printed and bound, in 56 languages and in Braille. Amity, founded in 1985, is the third largest publisher of bibles in the world and expected to print its 100 millionth bible last year.

We were a diverse group of ESR, Bethany, and Wesley students led by faculty who had lived in China. Michael Koppel of Wesley Theological Seminary and Jim Higginbotham of ESR were joined by regional liaisons as translators and guides. During the last two weeks of May, 2012, we visited four cities in China: Beijing, Hangzhou, Nanjing, and Shanghai. Each city had its own personality. Hangzhou was the most picturesque. Shanghai was the largest, with 23 million people, and it was also the most westernized. Shanghai is cosmopolitan like Manhattan but the government in Beijing resembles Washington D.C.

I was surprised by much of what I saw. The best way to understand another culture is to experience it. We visited seminaries, churches, and a Buddhist academy, and talked with professors, students, monks, and ministers. We saw museums, street markets and tea and wheat fields, as well as a silk factory, cloisonné factory, Buddhist temple, and acrobat performance. The Nanjing Massacre Memorial taught me much about the atrocities of World War II and historical Chinese-Japanese relations. The weather was quite dry but the public gardens were all manicured and watered. There was a job for everyone.

Everything was larger than I had envisioned. For example, Tiananmen Square in Beijing is huge and can easily hold tens of thousands of people. The Forbidden City is so enormous it would have isolated whoever lived there from the rest of the country like birds in a gilded cage. We visited a section of the Great Wall in the mountains and saw the impressive views from the guard towers. It took about seven hours to go from Beijing to Hangzhou, even though the trains sped at up to 190 miles an hour.

One focus of the trip was how Protestant Christianity continued on page 2
One focus of the trip was how Protestant Christianity has redeveloped as a post-denominational faith. The Cultural Revolution during the years 1966 to 1976 had a major impact on Christianity. Bibles and religious texts were destroyed and seminaries closed. Faith became private. The churches were finally reopened in 1979 and the Three Self Patriot Movement (TSPM) was formed to support the Protestant churches by creating a new Chinese organization. They realized that they would be stronger if they united as Protestants rather than trying to maintain individual denominational identities. The TSPM is in charge of external relations with the government. The strategy was self-governance, self-support, and self-propagation to remove foreign influences from the churches. The China Christian Council (CCC) was formed in 1980. The CCC is the ecclesial counterpart and more focused on internal relations with the churches and theological training. Most of the churches that are registered with the government are affiliated with the CCC. These churches total about 25 million members. There are also many churches that either choose to remain unregistered or have not yet met the criteria for registering. These may be house churches or more theologically conservative and suspicious of government intentions.

We visited several ministers and officials from the CCC and TSPM. I was surprised to find out that there is a maximum age limit of 30 for acceptance at the seminaries in China. They need pastors so badly, they want them to serve as long as possible when they graduate. Much of the work is done by lay leaders. The professors emphasized the importance of knowing Chinese culture to be able to teach faith to the Chinese. They want to develop their own distinctive Chinese Christianity.

We worshipped at two different churches while we were there. Both provided English translators. The first was with 4,000 people at a megachurch in Hangzhou. It was a high energy service oriented for young adults. The service began with singing and then prayer and then an hour sermon. Because it was Pentecost, the woman pastor preached about service and learning to rely on God.

In contrast, our last Sunday was at a community church in the expatriate area of Shanghai. There were only about 500 people there and approximately three fourths were women. Communion is given the first Sunday of every month in all churches. The pastor told the people that if they were not right with God or other people that they should not take communion until their hearts were clean.

I developed much admiration for the Christians in China during the course of the trip. They survived the persecution and repression of the Cultural Revolution. They are very pragmatic, realizing the benefits of unity over the specifics of individual denominations. They went underground when they had to and accommodated to the government when they needed to. They strive for unity and a consistent theology yet resist a common liturgy.

In Chinese culture, guānxi or relationship is everything.
One has to get to know other people in order to work effectively with them in the future. The community and family are extremely important in China and support and locate a person in society. In the United States, the individual is generally regarded as more important than the extended family. Individual competence, desires, and personal virtues are the defining characteristics of Americans. China is more of a collective society.

In order to understand Chinese culture, one simply has to experience it firsthand. We met some of the senior ministers who had been through the changes. I could see reflected in their faces the struggles and difficulties they have been through. But I also gained a deeper understanding of the commitment and joy in the progress they have made and their hopes for the future.

Jean Olson is finishing her second year as an ACCESS student in the MDiv program at ESR. She is a Unitarian Universalist who lives in Shoreview, Minnesota. Ministry will be her second vocation after a long career in environmental hydrogeology. She hopes to serve as a chaplain after graduation in 2014.

Former Episcopal Church in Shanghai.

If I want to challenge people in my novels or poems to see the full humanity and Spark of the Divine in other people, I must first cultivate my own empathy and witness that Spark for myself. One activity which we did in Cuernavaca was to split into two groups and visit both the city market and the supermarket. We were given 60 pesos, which is the minimum daily wage in Mexico, and we were asked to purchase six basic food items. We learned that we could not afford the food at the supermarket, which mirrored the stores where we buy our food in the United States, so we made our way across the city to the market, which was more lively and communal. Our group bargained, using poor Spanish, for the goods we needed, and we managed to secure onions, bananas, tomatoes, eggs, and tortillas-but it took our last peso to do it.

This allowed us to live into the conditions of another culture rather than reading about it in a textbook and quickly forgetting it. We were more able to put ourselves into the context of people making the minimum wage and to begin

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to imagine the struggles that their economic situation caused.

We also visited a part of Cuernavaca called La Estación, which was an impoverished area established on the grounds of an abandoned train station. We were able to take part in a community center where school children were fed breakfast for a moderate price. We worked with the women there to keep the plates moving and we were impressed by how much work went into their efforts and by the kindness with which they treated their guests in the midst of the fast pace.

We then visited some homes in La Estación to speak with the people who live there. Their homes were made of concrete and we were told that when it rained heavily, water would flow through their walls. However, these homes were set deeply enough in the ground that they remained fairly cool, and that would protect them from the hot summers.

A woman named Tomasá told us how her husband had gone to the United States in order to secure work and send money back. He had fallen ill during this time and was unable to work and unable to return to Mexico. She missed him greatly and longed for him to be back home. This was a man who had gone through the process we had learned about and we were able to see the impact this journey had on his family.

Tomasá also spoke to us about her faith. She told us how she prayed to the Virgin of Guadalupe and was answered through a dream she had. What she had been told was later validated by a phone call she received. Though there are many elements of Mexican Catholicism that remain strange to me, I was able to identify with her here because what mattered to her was her own personal experiences, without which her faith would not be as meaningful.

Throughout the trip we learned much about the culture and history of the country. We climbed the pyramids of Teotihuacan, which gave us
Jay Marshall was Scholar-in-Residence at St. Mark’s Episcopal Church in Grand Rapids, MI, leading a conversation that considered gratitude and greed in light of Quaker spirituality. He also provided leadership for a workshop titled “Seeking God’s Will Together” at Friends Memorial Meeting in Muncie, IN. He traveled to Whittier, CA with students Michael Sherman and Jessica Easter, who offered ministry to First Friends Meeting. Jay also recently preached at West Elkton Meeting (OH) and Cambridge City United Methodist Church (IN).

Nancy Bowen and Jim Higginbotham spent March 1-4, 2013 at Ghost Ranch, New Mexico. Ghost Ranch is famous as the place where artist Georgia O’Keeffe lived and painted. Nancy and Jim were there as participants in a grant from the Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Religion, which focused on partner/team teaching Bible and Pastoral Care. They attended with four other Old Testament and Pastoral Care teams, from Wesley Theological Seminary (the grant writers), Moravian Theological Seminary, Methodist Theological School in Ohio, and Christian Theological Seminary (in Indianapolis). One part of the event focused on best practices of team or partner teaching. Jim and Nancy said, “We thought that overall we had done well on being team teachers, though there is still room for improvement.” A second part of the event invited each team to share a syllabus for a class they had already taught or were planning on teaching. Nancy and Jim said they “got a lot of good ideas from our colleagues and are looking forward to implementing some of them the next time we teach Bible and Pastoral Care at ESR.”

Jason Griffith is a second-year ESR student from Indianapolis, IN. He is in the Writing As Ministry emphasis.

What I brought back from Mexico was a richer understanding of what it means to be a good neighbor. I feel challenged to work toward the high standard of hospitality I was shown there and for the first time feel its absence in our own culture. I have also brought back a curiosity which compels me to learn more about our neighbors in Mexico so that I can more fully understand and engage with them.

Ministry, for me, means an attempt to try to understand and empathize in order to seek healing and reconciliation. I understand Ministry of Writing to be less about persuasion than it is about cultivating understanding and empathy. Writing enables us to work through our experiences of the world and the beliefs we develop. It breaks down the mental blocks we place upon “the other” and establish them as “neighbor.” We can then begin to see the Light within them and to illuminate the Light within ourselves.
If you are going to be a pastor in Cuba Yearly Meeting,” says Ramon Longoria, former clerk of the Yearly Meeting and now director of the Cuban Quaker Institute for Peace, “you have to study.”

It was apparent that Ramon speaks for many, if not most, Friends in Cuba, when he places such importance on ministerial education. Most Quaker pastors take courses in Church History, Biblical Studies, and Theology from the ecumenical Protestant seminary in Matanzas, Cuba, but that seminary does not offer courses in Quaker Studies or Peace Studies. Cuban Quakers see those last two subjects as crucial for the development of pastors and other ministers, and they also aspire to offer courses in those subject areas to any Cubans or Latin Americans desiring that learning. From an “integrated stance” uniting evangelism and education, Cuban Friends aim to be “more obedient to what God requires of his church: to teach the people,” as Jorge Luis Peña observed in his address at the Institute’s inaugural ceremony.

When Earlham School of Religion professors were asked whether we were willing to offer courses in Quaker and Peace Studies in Cuba, we embraced the opportunity. I traveled to Gibara, Cuba for the inaugural session of the Cuban Quaker Institute for Peace in January 2013, and in two weeks, taught courses on Quaker History and Literature, and Quaker Business Process. Most of the Quaker pastors, and many other interested persons in Cuba Yearly Meeting, showed up in Gibara for this inaugural session of the Institute. A visiting FUM work team audited the Quaker Process class. Even we professors often modeled delight in learning by attending each other’s classes. The dedicated participants thus attended multiple classes all day and into the evening, read assigned materials later in the night, and wrote papers, as would any other seminary students. Students included the head of the United Society of Friends Women, a recently retired Cuban military officer, and an economics professor who had joined the Society of Friends only months before.

The warmth, joy, thoughtfulness, and eagerness to learn of these students were palpable. They were attentive listeners, even to my presentations, inevitably more choppy than normal because, although my Spanish is improving, I still needed the assistance of a translator. (I am grateful to Richard, a staff person and head cook at the Gibara Friends Retreat Center, for providing me with invaluable assistance in this regard.) The students posed excellent questions, and they were enthusiastic participants in discussion. There was also the delight that comes from encountering fresh material. Benigno Sanchez-Eppler, one of my fellow professors, engaged Cuban Friends with the new Spanish translation of John Woolman’s Journal, a translation that he and many others lovingly fashioned. Cuban Friends worked tirelessly to translate my written lectures on Quakerism into Spanish, and the last ones were translated and duplicated after my course had already begun. They thoughtfully engaged scholarly debates about Quakerism. In its origins, was Quakerism mostly Puritan, or mostly Spiritualist? What are the strengths and weaknesses of theories of Quaker origins by Rufus Jones, Lewis
Benson, Hugh Barbour, Doug Gwyn, or Michele Tärter? What contributions, either positive or negative or both, have Quietism and revivalism offered Quaker meetings and churches?

They engaged the material not only academically but also with a passion that penetrated to the core of their being. For many years, Cuban Friends have debated with one another about the nature of their Quaker identity. They recognize the crucial nature of this discussion. As Peña, Director of the Institute’s Executive Council, has observed, without a proper understanding of one’s identity, “we would be talking puppets in a dark corner of a theatre.”

My classes were a safe place where Cuban Friends could explore their often-varying perspectives on questions of their Quaker identity. During the day classes, they could debate scholarly theories on origins and development; during the night classes, we tried out Quaker practices that had previously been unfamiliar to Cuban Friends, such as Quaker advices or queries, or the use of clearness committees. We even sang hymns. One of our favorites was “We are walking in the Light of God,” in Spanish, English, and Swahili!

In my course evaluation, I summarized my experience of the Institute as follows: “Overall, it was one of the more rewarding teaching experiences I have ever had. The students were wonderful, very welcoming, ready to engage, excited by the material we were to cover. I really felt that there was a lot of good learning going on, and that they would be able to carry it back into their Friends’ churches.”

This was only the first session of the Institute, and I am certain that there will be many more. Other ESR professors will likely travel to Cuba and share from their expertise at the Institute, along with other Friendly instructors from Cuba and abroad. One of Ramon’s dreams is that the Institute will receive accreditation. The possibility does not seem at all far-fetched.

It is rare, in my experience, that significant numbers of Friends in a yearly meeting have such an intense and sustained bonding experience over something this substantive and intellectually demanding. But it would be very much worthwhile, in my view, for Friends elsewhere in the world to examine the Cuban experience in this regard and to see what we can learn from it. If Friends possess the mutual trust and the ready camaraderie of Cuban Friends, even in the midst of their (and our) diversity, two-week intensives on Quaker and peace studies could be quite useful virtually anywhere in the world.

Steve Angell has been the Leathcock Professor of Quaker Studies at ESR since 2001. He first went to Cuba in 2011 to deliver lectures at Cuba Yearly Meeting. He is author or editor of five books; most recently, with Ben Pink Dandelion, he has edited The Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies (to be published by Oxford University Press in 2013).
When Frank Mullen chose to endow the Ministry of Writing program in honor of his brother, Tom, ESR began to anticipate the day when that gift would support a full-time faculty position. Nearly a decade has passed between the date of the initial gift and the time of the first full-time hire. In that interim period, a platoon of adjuncts staffed the program. Later a permanent half-time position was established, which was soon increased to two-thirds time. During the current year, Ellen Michaud, Katherine Murray, and Amy Lyles Wilson have provided superb instruction and stabilizing presence for our hearty group of developing writers. These various teachers faithfully nurtured what had been entrusted to them, each leaving the program stronger than they found it. ESR is grateful for the contributions of each of those instructors.

The Ministry of Writing program is one of several distinctive features of seminary education at ESR. It may be the single feature that can be claimed as unique among ESR’s peers. Writing programs situated in Masters of Fine Arts programs abound, as do graduate writing centers designed to help students learn the basics of good composition; however, writing as ministry is a different undertaking. Such a concept fits easily within ESR’s broad understanding of that word, connecting the craft of writing with one’s giftedness, inspired by the Spirit to minister via the written word.

This important area of the curriculum is about to receive a new injection of enthusiasm and imagination with the arrival of Ben Brazil as the new full-time Assistant Professor and Director of the Ministry of Writing Program, effective July 1, 2013. Ben comes to ESR from Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, where he is currently serving as both Assistant Director and the full-time position was increased to two-thirds time. Later a permanent half-time position was established, which was soon increased to two-thirds time. During the current year, Ellen Michaud, Katherine Murray, and Amy Lyles Wilson have

“\textbf{I love the flavor of words, the rhythm of sentences, and the architecture of books. I enjoy the challenge of slipping good stories and telling details into academic work, and, conversely, the challenge of fitting top-notch scholarship into good narrative writing.}”

– Ben Brazil

Ben Brazil
Anna Shirey ’02

Anna writes, “I just released my first CD. It’s called Arise My Love: Songs Which Call Me Home and it’s available on several digital venues, including iTunes. It will also be available in hard copy on Amazon on Demand. All the music is written and sung by me, and one of the songs, entitled Make of Me, I wrote during my last semester at ESR. People are welcome to visit my webpage where they can listen to that song or any other song from the album, on the online music player. That address is http://annashosannas.net/Original-Music.php.”

Adam Webber ’11

Adam accepted a new position as pastor and teacher at the Clare Congregational United Church of Christ in 2013. His second CD, As a Deer Longs, was released this past Christmas. Webber blogs at adambrookswebber.com where there are examples of his songs, sermons, and other writings.

Brent Bill ’80

Brent has been hired by FGC as the coordinator of the New Meetings Project, which began this past fall. Brent is coordinating FGC’s new project of intentionally nurturing new Quaker worship groups and meetings where there is a need or opportunity, and helping them to get rooted and grounded in the practices of Friends. “I am grateful to FGC for inviting me to this important work,” Brent stated. “The New Meetings Project is something I deeply care about and am excited about helping facilitate.” Check out the new project at www.fgcquaker.org/services/new-meetings-project.

Jeff Crim ’04

Jeff P. Crim married Danielle King in December, 2012. Jeff has recently accepted a call to become pastor of Ascension Lutheran Church in Chattanooga, TN. Jeff has previously served Ascension on an interim basis. Jeff will soon be received on the Ordained Roster of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America by Bishop Julian Gordy of the Southeastern Synod of the ELCA. Jeff has also recently accepted a position as a part-time chaplain at Memorial Hospital in Chattanooga.

Victoria Burke ’00

Victoria shares, “Glad to report that I am still working as the St. Agnes Outreach Minister here in Dayton. It is so good for me to work with Catholics. Happy now to be a «quatichic.»

Katherine Murray ’08

Katherine continues writing, teaching, gardening (soon!), and playing with her grandkids. She’s also recently become the publications coordinator for Quaker Earthcare Witness (www.quakerearthcare.org), where she happily edits and produces content for the organization’s journal, email newsletters, and website. She says, “I’ll be at FGC Gathering this year, helping in the Quaker Earth Center, so if you’re there, come say hi!”

David Ashcraft ’04

David writes, “I’ve been chaplain at Richmond State Hospital since June 6, 2005. It is the place God has been calling me to all my life. October, 2011 I had surgery for throat cancer. Just recently we found that no cancer is present at this time. God and I are still having a conversation about taking the voice of a pastor who likes to preach. My congregation is loving and forgiving. They just sit patiently when I can’t talk and listen intently when I start again, even though I sound like Selma Diamond.”

Summer Cushman ’10

Summer says, “My husband, Jeremy Cushman, got a tenure track position in the English Department at Western Washington University in Bellingham, WA. He’ll finish his Ph.D. in June and we will be moving back to our home state in August. We’re quite excited to be moving closer to family! I just graduated from the American Viniyoga Institute (in February) and am now a certified Viniyoga teacher and will begin a Masters in Yoga Therapy in January (also at AVI). With our move home, I’m in the process of transferring ownership of Community Yoga here in Indiana and am planning to open some sort of Spirituality Retreat Center in WA that blends the training I have as a Quaker Minister and a Viniyoga Teacher.”
“Since the details of [Christ’s] life are comparatively thin,” explains David Jensen in his book, *In the Company of Others,* “the task of each generation of Christians is to ask Christological questions anew, to reconstruct this figure in faithfulness to the memories and traditions of those who gathered in his name before us.”

This faithful reconstruction is, if we are honest, an act of imagination. In his book *Imaginary Christs: The Challenge of Christological Pluralism* (SUNY Press, 2000), though, Richard Grigg encourages us to erode the stigma associated with this process. “Imagination is the creative, constructive element in thought,” he argues. “All of our thinking about the world involves some degree of imaginative construction.”

What would it look like to truly embrace the image we develop for what it is—the best effort on our part to approach, to understand, to live in relationship with and to be guided by the Jesus that exists beyond our imagination? “The cognitive tools we use to grasp the ordinary world must be imaginatively stretched,” says Grigg, “in order to approach the notion of the infinite God manifesting Godself in the form of the Christ.”

It is along these lines that Grigg therefore develops his concept of “imaginary Christs.” Far from being a dismissive label, the term instead serves as an acknowledgement of the role we play within our minds in attempting to reach out toward the divine. He illustrates the point by explaining how the phrase “imaginary unicorn” does not make sense. According to Grigg, “This phrase strikes us as misguided not in that it is simply redundant, but inasmuch as it suggests that there must exist at least one real unicorn, if we are to pick out others as imaginary.” In contrast, the phrase “imaginary Christs” implies the existence of a real Christ, while still granting space for imaginative work. “Imaginary Christs’ are not unreal Christs, then,” explains Grigg, “but the constructions through which faith imaginatively approaches the reality of Jesus as the Christ.”

Imagination, far from being a barrier to attaining the factual or historical Jesus, actually serves as a bridge. It allows us to avoid becoming mired down in the morass of a historical certainty that threatens to bring our journey to a halt. Beyond this, if it is true that we cannot help but imagine, then embracing that imagination as something useful instead of as a distraction means coming to terms with our humanity as a whole.


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**ESR Awards Trueblood Chair to Lonnie Valentine**

ESR Professor of Peace and Justice Studies Lonnie Valentine has been awarded the Elton Trueblood Chair of Christian Thought. The Chair was established in 1967 and rotates every five years between Earlham College and the School of Religion.

The Trueblood Chair allows the awarded faculty member time to work on research and writing in their area of study and interest. This research typically leads to publication and a symposium at the conclusion of the five-year term, in which the chair holder’s research is featured.

During his time as the Trueblood Chair, Valentine will be working on two research and writing projects. The first of these will be furthering his research on Quaker war tax resistance, which will result in a full-length book manuscript, as well as articles for journal submission. “Because Quakers are still involved in this action, including creation of the Peace Tax Fund campaign as a legislation remedy for war tax resisters, I think further research in this area would contribute to Friends’ thinking on the war tax issue,” stated Valentine.

His second project during this five-year timeframe will be further research and writing on process theology. Theology is the primary focus in three of Valentine’s courses at ESR. Valentine shared in his proposal, “Because the focus of my Ph.D. dissertation was in process theology as related to nonviolent resistance and because I have continued to read and teach in the area of process theology, developing a book-length manuscript on this topic engaging recent developments in process thought is worthwhile.” As with his war tax resistance research, this area will also produce published writing.

“I see both of these efforts as contributing not only to Quaker scholarship and to my work at ESR, but also to the current religious and social situation we are now in,” stated Valentine. “Given the changes going on in American religious, cultural, and political life, both of these endeavors can contribute to thinking about these changes.”

Congratulations to Lonnie and we look forward to sharing in the results of his work over the next five years.
Looking forward, we are anticipating another enriching experience this August, as we host our now annual **Leadership Conference**. This year’s conference will center on the theme “Friendly Marketing: Message, Motive & Means,” and will feature plenary speakers Ian Joyce of August Communication Consultants, and Thom Jeavons, who is currently the Scholar-in-Residence at ESR. We hope you can join us the weekend of August 16-18 as we explore this timely and exciting area of our work.
A retired Baptist missionary began the first class of his preaching course with an emphasis on the dynamics of communication instead of an exhortation to preach with conviction. It underscored a point that has worked its way into the fabric of my being. Communication always involves a sender and a receiver; to be effective, that which is encoded and sent must be understandable to the one who decodes and receives. This is true whether we share the good news with words or with actions. Interpretation matters!

It only took a few Sundays of sermons to realize that what people heard in my messages was sometimes different than what I had intended. Stories shared with a purpose unlocked new ideas that had never occurred to me. Questions I raised to encourage contemplation of one issue prompted unexpected responses on topics that never crossed my mind. If the encoding/decoding process was that complicated among my own tribe of white, southern, middle class Quakers, imagine the challenges of communication with those who didn’t share many characteristics with me!

Fast-forward 30 years. Today I realize that those early lessons about communication were only the tip of the proverbial iceberg. Gestures of welcome in one culture communicate something quite different in another. A raised hand that signifies “stop” in one culture and sends a familial insult in another is no more effective than words in that context. Though many of us may embrace the adage that actions speak more loudly than words, I believe that actions are not necessarily more reliable than words.

Awareness of one’s own culture and one’s place within culture is a vital skill for effective communication and vital ministry. The term “cross cultural” has become commonplace in ESR’s description of important learning objectives within our M. Div. program. At its most basic level, this too, is about the dynamics of communication. In short, we desire that students understand the challenges, issues, and opportunities of communicating and interpreting, of observing and listening—of offering ministry in a diverse world. We think it is important that those in ministry first see themselves as part of the diversity rather than necessarily being the norm toward which all others should be drawn. That objective is hastened by immersions

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