The Reemergence of Service

The word “service” works its way into many faith-oriented conversations these days, including conversations at ESR. On one hand, the topic appears trendy or even cutting edge as the newest move to reform the Gospel. On the other hand, it is hardly a new idea. What is often forgotten is that both ministry and service are each good translations of the Greek word diakonía.

 Churches and seminaries frequently speak of ministry, but perhaps less often of service. If what is recognized, valued, and emphasized as ministry lacks any visible connection with service, that may be an indictment of how far removed faith communities have drifted from a credible vision of ministry. With that said, I want to help fan this reignited flame so that an embrace of service is seen as an integrated component of theological education and a commitment to ministry.

Personally I think “ministry” and “service” are interchangeable in most contexts.

One does not have to be an avid reader of Scripture to find service equated with leadership. Largely thanks to the work of Robert Greenleaf, who acknowledged that his Quaker background influenced his thinking.

...I want to help fan this reignited flame so that an embrace of service is seen as an integrated component of theological education and a commitment to ministry.”
the seemingly paradoxical idea of a servant leader has been popularized. It is one of the easiest doorways by which Friends manage to enter leadership discussions. At a minimum, the concept of servanthood as applied to leadership offers guidance for character and conduct to those entrusted with the responsibility to guide and nurture a group.

Perhaps the greatest catalyst behind the resurging interest in service is a sense that a commitment to peace and justice demands that we reclaim this focus. It seems to me that the most fervent advocates for reclamation are those who fall into the Millennial demographic group. As they try to find their place in the world, perhaps more than others, they sense the inequities and injustices to which many of the rest of us have been anesthetized and which seem to hinder their own efforts to mature and succeed. All too often, established faith communities and orthodox answers fail to understand their questions. As they see the world they are inheriting and work to find meaning within it, many of them turn to service as a way of seeking answers and pursuing their own spiritual inclinations. Their motivations and sense of call vary, but the nature of this work can be congruous with ministry.

Each of these three — a rootedness in the Christian tradition, the particularity of a Quaker perspective, and the contextual reality in which we find ourselves — exerts influence on the continued evolution of ESR’s theological education. It is a moment of rich fermentation.

Last year, ESR was one of eighteen schools named as a “Seminary that Changes the World.” This designation was awarded to schools who demonstrated a commitment to service and social justice issues. The service component of our Cooper Scholar program, the creative ministries supported in our Supervised Ministry program, the peace and justice components of our curriculum, and transformational ministry we witness among our alumni/ae all helped make the case that ESR meets the criteria of this elite group of schools.

To further encourage Millennials to consider an ESR experience, the school is launching a “Leadership and Service” program. Starting next year, ESR will offer up to four, 3-year, full-tuition scholarships each year to graduates of a Quaker College leadership program or a Christian voluntary service program. At current tuition levels, that amounts to nearly $35,000 investment per student. One feature of the award is a requirement for community service. This has a two-fold purpose of giving to the community, but also developing a commitment to a life of service.

Finally, the theme for the 5th Annual ESR Leadership Conference in August 2014 is “Leading as Servants in the Manner of Friends.” This promises to be a fertile moment in which participants can wrestle together with the question of how to be faithful to God and to one another as we live and serve together. The servant model may have much to offer Friends, but in a system that is prone to devalue gifts of leadership, there is work to be done to establish good boundaries so that “servant” does not become synonymous with “doormat.”

Really, we should hope this attraction to service thrives. Friends have never been comfortable with the conventional model of ministry that unduly limits ministry to a select few or confines itself to comfortable pulpits. At our best, our lives have borne witness to the power we have experienced and the truth we have come to know. When that is the case, whether we are “speaking truth to power” in the public sphere or providing childcare for the friend of a friend in need, such gifts of service contribute to God’s transforming work of love that cannot help but be triumphant as it enriches the soil where our lives grow.
Prayer, Study, Action:
A RECIPE FOR FAITH-INSTRUCTED ACTIVISM

Christie Walkuski

I’ve been thinking a lot lately about the intersections of theology, faith, and action in the world. A number of things have converged for me to stir these thoughts: a class I’m taking called Expository Writing and Public Theology is a big piece, along with getting to hear our Spirituality Gathering keynote speaker, Cynthia Bourgeault, who talks a lot about contemplative action. Also, I recently read Eugene Peterson’s, The Contemplative Pastor, which advocates prayer and self-reflection as key practices in being awake and attentive to God in pastoral work. This spiritual work, Peterson says, ensures that we are acting more as prophetic witness rather than as “chaplain to the culture.”

I’m convinced. I believe that study, prayer and action in the world are all essential ingredients in the faith-filled life, and to seminary education as well. I’m reminded of a conversation I and a few other students had with our dean, Jay Marshall last fall, when we talked about the ideal of a wholistic kind of seminary experience — that the ESR curriculum depends upon and values not only rigorous intellectual study, but also spiritual formation, worship, and community life. These activities do not happen in a vacuum, though, disconnected from the urgent issues facing our Richmond community and beyond: poverty, hunger, violence, injustice. We must not be asleep to what is happening in the world during our time here in seminary.

At a conference last fall called SERV — Seminarians Empowering Revolutionary Vision, which brought together hundreds of seminary students from across the country to talk about building a culture of service into seminary curricula, there was lots of excitement and energy present, that, honestly, I hadn’t experienced at ESR.

Perhaps it was the mass of young people gathered that contrasted with our small residential community. But there is something powerful in this SERV movement. I believe it is partly because there is something different about being motivated by faith, by that call to be a prophetic witness for justice in the world.

I think that there is some of this energy converging at ESR right now. I look forward to being a part of helping it grow. Our Community Life Committee is planning ways to build a culture of service into seminary life through community service projects. Our administration is committed to service and justice-oriented activities in our curriculum, and to bringing things like anti-racism training to ESR. Our Writing as Ministry program challenges students to connect creativity to spirituality and justice work. I’m excited about the work before us to continue to live into being named one of the “seminaries that change the world.” Let’s continue to study hard, pray hard, and work for justice.
Bringing Them Home:
WARRIORS BECOMING CITIZENS, CITIZENS BECOMING COMPANIONS

ESR student, Thomas Swann, shares his thoughts on Earlham School of Religion’s 2014 Willson Lectures featuring Rita Nakashima Brock:

A person can be hard pressed to pigeon hole Rita Nakashima Brock into a single label: feminist, theologian, reverend, protestor; she moves with intention but also with the grace of an adventurer that knows the road often brings us to the unexpected, which is a gift of grace. Her arrival to her current work as the co-creator of the Soul Repair Center at Brite Divinity School brings her journey to an issue exploding on our country’s fabric of moral wholeness. This year alone some 140,000 soldiers are expected to return from Afghanistan and start the journey back towards becoming the individuals they once were. “Without a new social, emotional, spiritual system that can help veterans of war move from a military system to civilian life, we sentence many of them to military cocoons or lonely states of limbo from which transition is nigh impossible.”

Bringing the warrior back home to their family starts at the end of the gateway at a local airport each and every day as deployments come to a close. Familiar scenes of joy, tears and relief are just the start however. Brock believes that bringing them to a place of wholeness is a journey demanding the cultivation of long-term friendships, which are as intentional as the course that molded them into the effective soldier that they became during 8 weeks of warrior formation known as boot camp. As the soldier is trained to act upon a moral code of conduct essential to successful war campaigns with automatic response to orders of destruction, “moral reconditioning creates new moral systems” that does not eliminate the warrior code but lays upon it a new set of understandings that can bring healing and repair to the moral injuries of war.

For the 2014 Willson Lectures, Rita developed layers of understanding as to what is necessary to accompany returning soldiers in the often foreign journey of reentering a peacetime culture. The tools to accompany this traverse come from a diverse palette ranging from the latest neuroscience to the ancient rhythms of ritual as displayed in the Navajo “way” blessings that draw a community into a 9-day healing focus of singularity and commitment. At the heart of moral injury is a brokenness that goes well beyond the body of the individual and leaves families and cultural institutions in a shambles. However it is the soldier with the broken soul who often reaches a place of lifeless existence and in alarming rates takes his or her life to end the pain.

Brock sees the church as a place where communities can step into a common energy of decompression and healing. “The church is the only institution that commits to an individual from life to death” and thus has the potential to walk as a companion in this uncharted territory. At a time when the church seems to be seeking redefinition as its relevance is questioned by declining participation, the opportunity of forming new alliances and ways of bringing comfort to anguished souls cannot be missed. A warrior nation that does not return its warriors to full societal participation does not sustain itself. Hopefully, the sharing and acknowledging of the deep spiritual injury to our humanity may also shift the paradigm of aggression that dominates our current measures of choice in conflict resolution.

For a video of the lectures, go to http://esr.earlham.edu/esr-video
even if a conflicted we, drove them into a place that has horrors that must be released and relived towards a place of return to something new and full of the marrow of life. The journey, as for Brock, has interesting turns for each of us and moves across boundaries of comfort.

Rita Nakashima Brock is an accomplished woman of substance who finds a certain irony that her life has led her into conversations of partnership with people that once were on the other side of protest lines and now she sits with them at tables looking into the same pool of neglect and carnage. Generals and poets, scholars and citizens all can help to bring these injured souls back into the presence that they left behind not all that long ago. As we learn to serve these wounded warriors with our deep listening to their stories we may actually be taught by their companionship that good work can lead to new creation, bringing old and new into a flow of formation, which heals beyond our imagination.

“As we learn to serve these wounded warriors with our deep listening to their stories we may actually be taught by their companionship that good work can lead to new creation, bringing old and new into a flow of formation, which heals beyond our imagination.”

“our body,” not to treat, but to walk, heart to heart, one single step at a time until they truly are home. Until our morality shifts and becomes inclusive to the wounds of moral injury their lives are bleeding a slow death.

Rita calls out in many directions, firmly and with penetration. One of her convictions is “that congregations are one place that should be welcoming veterans home, but few have committed to this work. It should not be undertaken with just simple good intentions, though good intentions matter a great deal. To welcome veterans into a community’s life, we need to understand how to assist the transition from the values of military life to religious life. We must advocate for better services for treating PTSD, and we must support veterans’ families and all they go through to welcome veterans home.” If we can spend endless resources to make them warriors, what is the fair equivalent upon their return?

After sitting through a day of captivating and thought-provoking presentations, the truth is that it is estimated that another 24 victims of moral injury have taken their lives to ease the pain. Yes, one an hour, day after day. I am left wondering if I can say this is important enough to my sense of morality, important enough to move out of comfort and join in the discomfort. It only matters if my yes is followed by a step towards this new walk in a way different than we have chosen to this point in this war and all the others that have occupied our history.

“As we learn to serve these wounded warriors with our deep listening to their stories we may actually be taught by their companionship that good work can lead to new creation, bringing old and new into a flow of formation, which heals beyond our imagination.”

Thomas Swann
In January, Jay Marshall led a cross-cultural, interfaith immersion class in New York City; it included lunch with former Earlham President Richard Wood and his wife, Judy. In February, he and students Simon Thiongo and Simon Khayala contributed to Sunday activities at Whittier Friends Meeting in California.

From Sept. 28 through October 2, 2013 Carole Spencer was at Guilford College in Greensborough, N.C. meeting with Max Carter and students in the Quaker Leadership program, visiting the Quaker Social Testimonies Class and the Quaker Classics Class, sharing with new faculty & staff Quaker understandings of “Holy Obedience” and delivering the J. M. Ward Lecture at New Garden Friends Meeting, entitled, “Hannah Whitall Smith’s Highway of Holiness: Mysticism, Heresy and Feminism in a Quaker Free Lance.” On October 25-26, 2013 Carole led a weekend workshop on “Living Prayer” at Quaker Hill Conference Center in Richmond. November 22-25 Carole attended the American Academy of Religion Annual Conference in Baltimore, MD. She presented a review of Paul Anderson’s new book Following Jesus: The Heart of Faith and Practice at the Quaker Theological Discussion Group. She was also presider for a panel of the Quaker Studies Group, which reviewed the new Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies, edited by Stephen Angell and Ben Pink Dandelion. May 25-June 5 Carol will lead a cross-cultural course to Assisi, Italy, “Theology in context: The Soul’s Journey into God: A Pilgrimage with the Franciscan Mystics to Assisi, Italy and environs.”

Steve Angell will speak at the Conference of Quaker Historians and Archivists on June 17, on the process of editing the Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies. This conference will be at Westtown School in Westtown, PA. He will deliver the George Richardson Lecture at Woodbrooke Quaker Studies Center in Birmingham, England, on October 13. His topic will be “Samuel Fisher and the Development of Quaker Views of the Authority of Scripture.” Steve will deliver a paper at the national meeting of the American Academy of Religion in San Diego in November. The title will be “Howard Thurman: Universalist Approaches to Buddhism and Quakerism.” It will be part of a panel entitled “Silent Dialogue? Quaker Mystics in Conversation with Other Religious Traditions.” ESR alumnus and current Earlham College professor Michael Birkel will also be a part of the panel, delivering a paper on Robert Barclay and Kabbalah.

Lonnie Valentine accompanied four ESR international students from East Africa to the “Spring Lobby Day” hosted by the Friends Committee on National Legislation. This lobby day was focused on the effort to repeal the “Authorization for the Use of Military Force” (AUMF) that was passed three days after 9-11. This is the legislation that opened the way for the endless war on terror, secret renditions, torture, drones, and spying by the NSA. There were about 200 students there, mostly from the Quaker Colleges. In addition to seeing something of how the US government works, the four students and Lonnie met with the Defense Fellow in Indiana senator Joe Donnelly’s office so that they could tell him what is happening on the ground in East Africa with the increased militarization and the decrease in non-military aid and peacemaking efforts. The four students were Justimore Musombi, Simon Thiongo, Simon Khayala (Kenya), and Theoneste Sentabire (Rwanda). They were also able to make some visits to places in DC such as the Library of congress, the Vietnam memorial, the Lincoln Memorial and the ML King memorial. They liked King the best.
Nowadays
ALUMNI/AE NEWS

Beth Code ’11 – I was ordained in the United Church of Christ in April 2013. Stephanie Crumley-Effinger and fellow alums David Zier ’10 and Linnea Stiffer ’12 participated in the ordination service. I am currently serving as night staff chaplain at Bronson Methodist Hospital, a Level I Trauma Center and Magnet Hospital in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

Suzanne Levesconte ’09 – I was ordained to the Episcopal priesthood in June 2012, and am now priest in charge at Trinity Episcopal Church in Hamilton, OH.

Scot Miller ’08 – I have been accepted into the Doctor of Ministry program at Western Theological Seminary in Holland, MI, and am following a leading that holds Christ-centered ethics and community praxis to be the nexus of corporate worship. I will also be working on a book that prioritizes prayer and kenotic practice as the central component of preparing for a sermon and I reject interaction out of disappointment. I’m on disability moving toward Social Security disability. One blessing is the arrival of a seasoned chaplain to take my place. Assuming the mantle of Christ he showers everyone with love. My babies are being cared for. My odds are 35% to live five years. Two and a half so far the odds are improving. Like Rabbi Harold Kushner I know God did not do this; yet I’m left with the complaints, “How could you?” and “what were you thinking.” I didn’t ask for this, I don’t want this, I don’t deserve this. Our classmate Steve Ackley wrote us during his dying. He said, “My choice isn’t whether I live or die; my choice in each moment is whether I react with fear or respond with love to my experience.” I’m not there yet. I miss my ministry, but cherish memories of four years at ESR.

David Ashcraft, Class of 2004 – Surgery for Stage IV throat cancer, excising my epiglottis, thirty two lymph nodes (5 filled with cancer) and most of the inside of my right neck, leaves me dependent on a Gtube liquid diet, partially deaf from chemotherapy, and a survivor of thirty doses of radiation whose total quantity could kill six people. My head was strapped down with a mesh mask, every morning for thirty days, filling me with terror. My feeling: 2 Cor 12: 7b-8: “...I was given a thorn in my flesh... 8 Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. 9 But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” My reaction is embodied in: Genesis 32:24-25 So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. 25 When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob’s hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. Genesis 32:24-25 I’m so angry with God I can’t write a sermon and I reject interaction out of disappointment. I’m on disability moving toward Social Security disability. One blessing is the arrival of a seasoned chaplain to take my place. Assuming the mantle of Christ he showers everyone with love. My babies are being cared for. My odds are 35% to live five years. Two and a half so far so the odds are improving. Like Rabbi Harold Kushner I know God did not do this; yet I’m left with the complaints, “How could you?” and “what were you thinking.” I didn’t ask for this, I don’t want this, I don’t deserve this. Our classmate Steve Ackley wrote us during his dying. He said, “My choice isn’t whether I live or die; my choice in each moment is whether I react with fear or respond with love to my experience.” I’m not there yet. I miss my ministry, but cherish memories of four years at ESR.

Paul Buckley ’01 – I have a new book out titled The Essential Elias Hicks.

Ingrid Fabianson ’01 – I am enjoying retirement on this beautiful island. While I know many of you have suffered through a harsh and endless winter, ours has been wet but mild. I spend my days enjoying my friends, swimming, reading, gardening, and writing. My father-in-law is now living nearby in an adult family home. I have cared for him for three years and am relieved that he is being cared for by others. He is 102 years old and still going strong! He is quite a famous person here in the northwest. His name is Wolf Bauer. I am also clerk of our small worship group. Hello to all my Earlham friends.

Gary Cummings ’83 and Faith Cummings (attended ’79 - ’82) – Gary is now Clinical Director of Nursefinders of Charlottesville, VA. I live or die; my choice in each moment is whether I react with fear or respond with love to my experience.” I’m not there yet. I miss my ministry, but cherish memories of four years at ESR.

Barry Cramer (’99) – I was ordained to the Diaconate of the Episcopal Church in October 2013. Since December 1 I have been serving the shared ministry of St. Paul’s, Richmond, and St. James, New Castle. As Deacon, I work along side the Rector (Pastor) to engage all members in ministry, especially in the areas of social concerns and evangelism. As paid employment, I have been working with the developmentally disabled in Richmond through AWS Services (formerly Achieva) since September 2012. My new email address is bcr3203@gmail.com.

ESR was awarded a grant of $248,948 to fund its Empowering and Equipping Ministers Initiative, submitted in response to the Lilly Endowment’s request for proposals on Theological School Initiative to Address Economic Challenges Facing Future Ministers. Lilly Endowment is encouraging seminaries to address the challenges of mounting student debt and low earning potential that accompanies many ministry positions.

Drawing upon values deeply rooted in its Quaker heritage, ESR prepares leaders for lives of ministry and service within the Church and beyond. It undertakes this mission within a broader network of religious organizations with a wide variety of needs, and in the context of changing approaches to faith. ESR seeks to take these factors into consideration and proactively prepare its students, itself, and broader constituencies it serves, for effective ministry in the future.

With these grant funds, ESR will do the following: a) We will address the current financial realities that face our students, developing financial literacy with a goal of empowering them to make informed financial decisions and build healthy financial habits. b) We will create faculty/student/constituent teams

continued on page 9

Grant Awarded
TO ESR

Jay Marshall
**When God Talks Back: Understanding the American Evangelical Relationship with God** by T. M. Luhrmann is an engaging anthropological and psychological investigation into the practice of prayer as taught in many of America's churches. Particularly fascinating was the author's description of how prayer became such a conversational and personal interaction with God in the 20th century. While I think her portrayal ignores some very personalized forms of prayer among early Christians, her connection between the religion of the “Jesus freaks” associated with the hippie movement and the transformation of prayer and worship in certain religious circles that gave birth to the Vineyard Movement is fascinating. She documents how it is that congregations teach congregants to pray, and how essential it is that certain precepts and worldviews are embraced in the process in order for prayer to be both personal and credible. Beyond that, the author probes many of the persistent issues that are often not discussed except by those who wish to dismiss prayer. Those issues include such things as carrying on a conversation with someone that can neither be seen nor empirically verified as real, or coping with disconnects between what is said to be true and what is experienced. As an example of the latter, if one's religion teaches that God answers all prayers or that one may ask for anything and it will be given, how does the one praying react when God seems to be silent or the answer is no? The author maintains that certain interpretive moves allow the pray-er to shift the focus away from God not providing toward a focus on what it is that God wants them to learn from the process. Though Luhrmann does not, to my knowledge, ever identify as a Christian, she provides an empathic and gentle handling of the topic. There are moments when her own participation in the prayer groups seems to bring occasions of illumination, if not transformation, to her. I found the book to be a valuable read, both as an investigation into religious practice in America and as a moment of pause to think through the assumptions about prayer that I have adopted, often without realizing it.

Jay Marshall, Dean, ESR


As the title suggests, Hedges pushes us all to think about what psychological benefits we may gain from war when we blind ourselves to its reality. “The enduring attraction of war is this: Even with its destruction and carnage it can give us what we long for in life. It can give us purpose, meaning, a reason for living” (3). This is especially true in the age of declining religious participation. As Hedges observes, “because we in modern society have walked away from institutions that stand outside the state to find moral guidance and spiritual direction, we turn to the state in times of war. The state and the institutions of the state become, for many, the center of worship in wartime” (146-147).

The seductive lure of violence is one he frankly acknowledges out of his own experience, but he presents it as more a product of human nature than individual failing. Sadly, like a drug that can never offer true satisfaction, “War never creates the security or the harmony we desire, especially the harmony we briefly attain during wartime” (22).

Hedges’s observations here resonate with those of 2014 ESR Willson Lecturer Rita Nakashima Brock, who addressed the topic of moral injury in war, and indicts the state in the process:

The military histories – which tell little of war’s reality – crowd out the wrenching tales by the emotionally maimed. Each generation again responds to war as innocents. Each generation discovers its own disillusionment – often after a terrible price. The myth of war and the drug of war
wait to be tasted. The mythical heroes of the past loom over us. Those who can tell us the truth are silenced or prefer to forget. The state needs the myth, as much as it needs its soldiers and its machines of war, to survive" (173).

Despite his stark depiction of the corrosive effects of war, however, Hedges refuses to embrace pacifism as a viable option. “There are times,” he says, “when the force wielded by one immoral faction must be countered by a faction that, while never moral, is perhaps less immoral.” Hedges is right that “the poison of war does not free us from the ethics of responsibility,” but nonviolence need not mean inaction (16).

Deep pacifism, the active pacifism repeatedly revealed among friends engaged in living out the Peace Testimony, does not offer an easy escape from moral quandaries - the opposite is true. Rather, it can take seriously and fully account for the negative impact of war on all involved. This pacifism may call those who answer it to a profound weight and cost to its implications and consequences.

Perhaps Hedges states this best himself:

"Love may not always triumph, but it keeps us human. It offers the only chance to escape from the contagion of war. Perhaps it is the only antidote. And there are times when remaining human is the only victory possible" (168).

Matt Hisrich, Director of Admissions

Lonnie Valentine

By now we are all aware of the great and increasing gap between the very rich and the rest of us in the United States. The six heirs to the Wal-Mart fortune have as much wealth as the bottom 40% of the population; the richest 1% have as much wealth as the bottom 80%. We are also aware that some very immoral and illegal activity took place that set the stage for the “Great Recession.” Matt Taibbi, in the Divide: American Injustice in the Age of the Wealth Gap, now provides some detailed case studies on just what some of those schemes were that took down the economy and how the US government allowed many of the perpetrators to walk away from their crimes. In addition, Taibbi split screens what happens in the board rooms and court rooms with what happens to poor people caught up in the criminal justice system. So, you may have your company fined some millions for billions of dollars of theft which destroyed people’s lives while you get out of jail free...and walk away with a bonus. However, if you light up what a cop thinks might be a marijuana cigarette, you can end up in jail and, in many cases, beaten by the police. However, even with the great power of money and politicians, Taibbi concludes that what the public does makes a difference: “Just trying to do the right thing” can call corporations and government to account.

To research new faith community formats that compete with the church and determine how this data could enhance the vitality of congregational life, ultimately reducing financial stress.

c) We will research the realities of small church and bi-vocational ministry to determine how to better equip leaders to succeed in those settings, particularly with regard to creating a well-balanced life and new models for ministry.

d) We will develop programs in entrepreneurial ministry that match the gifts of future leaders with new models for outreach and service as a means of proclaiming the gospel.

ESR anticipates multiple outcomes:

a) We will create a superb set of standing resources and educational experiences for students, area pastors and alumni/ae with regard to a theology of money, an approach to debt, and a financial planning strategy. Our staff will be better prepared to guide our students, and our students will have the knowledge to avoid resource-draining financial decisions.

b) We will create communities of dialog as a consequence of the research we do into new models of faith communities and into the realities of bi-vocational ministry. This dialog is valuable on at least two fronts. First, it creates quality extra-curricular learning opportunities within the seminary community as a whole as ideas are exchanged and critique emerges. Second, it provides a forum for meaningful engagement with constituents, and especially area congregations, as research is gathered and data is shared. These processes are valuable for improving the relational connections of these groups, but also as agents of institutional transformation.

c) We will design new programming within the M. Div. degree and also a certificate educational model - one that will encourage leadership development that is entrepreneurial in its vision of ministry within the church and in the wider world.

In summary, this proposal will empower ministers to exercise more control over their financial futures so that debt does not unduly determine their paths in, or out of, ministry. Equally exciting is its potential to invigorate congregational life by employing strategies that attract today’s seeker population and create a Church more focused upon its potential to invigorate congregational life by employing strategies that attract today’s seeker population and create a Church more focused upon ministry than upon self-preservation. ESR believes this ambitious proposal is worth the risk of labor and capital.
Hidden Meaning in an Ancient Doctrine?
ESR’s 2014 Spirituality Gathering

Carole Spencer, Associate Professor of Christian Spirituality

On March 1, 2014 ESR held its annual Spirituality Gathering with Cynthia Bourgeault delivering the keynote on “The Power of Three: The Trinity as Skilful Means.” Bourgeault was a provocative and inspiring speaker who brought a wealth of wisdom, not only from her deep Christian roots, but also from her journey through other spiritual traditions (including Quakerism). She is an Episcopal priest and founding director of the Contemplative Society. She identifies herself as a hermit priest, but travels widely teaching and leading retreats around the globe.

Her talk at ESR was based on the newest of her eight books The Holy Trinity and the Law of Three. She first had to convince many in the audience that the idea of the Trinity was worth reconsidering at all, since, she quipped, if it disappeared from Christian theology most of us would hardly notice its absence. She challenged her audience with a new expansive and radical way of seeing the Trinity, not as a dogmatic triad of “persons,” but as energy for transformation.

Bourgeault claims that embedded within this ancient theological formula lies a powerful principle that could change our understanding of Christianity and give us the tools we sorely need to rekindle our visionary imagination, and cooperate consciously with the reign of God here on earth. She calls this principle “the Law of Three,” Christianity’s hidden drive-shaft, the key to which theory and practice hang together.

The Law of Three is an ancient metaphysical principle she first found articulated in the esoteric teaching of G. I. Guirdjiff, with whom she studied for many years, but he never applied it to the Trinity, and, as far as she can discover, no one to date has. But she has found hints of it in Christianity’s mystical streams, such as the writings of Jacob Boehme and Teilhard de Chardin.

The law of three, as she explained it, is about the interweaving of three separate forces, an affirming force, a denying force, and a reconciling force. The third, reconciling force then creates a fourth, a new arising in a new dimension. Thus, the Trinity as Bourgeault describes it, is not simply one triad of “persons” but a continually unfolding ternary, in which God moves and flows and changes from one form into another within the domain of manifestation. The Trinity is primarily about process not persons, and encapsulates a paradigm of change and transformation.

For many of us at the Gathering this was an exciting, revolutionary and evolutionary way to bring new life to an old and often empty doctrinal construction.

In her workshop “Déjà vu: Centering Prayer and the Great Quaker Tradition,” she included some personal reflections on her journey through Quakerism. Bourgeault was first introduced to silent worship as a child attending a Quaker school and has had a special place in her heart for Quaker tradition ever since. While she deeply values her journey through the liberal, unprogrammed Quaker tradition, the missing element for her was teaching on how to practice silent meditation. It seemed to her that everyone, even her classmates in her Quaker school, was simply expected to know what to do in the silence. But in her far-reaching exploration and practice of contemplation she has identified a beautiful flow of kenotic practice from the Christian mystical tradition into the Quaker practice of group silence. To illustrate this she invited Paulette Meier, who was also at the Spirituality Gathering, leading a workshop on “The Spiritual Wisdom of Early Friends in Plainsong,” to sing one of her Quaker chants at the end of her keynote.

Bourgeault considers Meier’s work, using core early Quaker quotes in plainsong, as the encapsulation of the essence of the Quaker contemplative and ethical tradition in an accessible, memorable, and evocative form. Exploring centering prayer and its points of resonance with Quakerism seemed to be deeply illuminating for Quakers in the audience.

My take away from
Bourgeault’s workshop is that if centering prayer were a daily practice for Quakers, it would transform our weekly worship into a truly gathered meeting characterized by that “electric hush and solemnity and depth of power” that Thomas Kelly has so famously described.

### Spirituality Gathering Workshops Offer Creative Ways to Seek the Spiritual

*Mandy Ford, Director of External Relations*

Spirituality Gathering Workshops Offer Creative Ways to Seek the Spiritual – Mandy Ford

This year’s Spirituality Gathering provided opportunities to expand Cynthia Bourgeault’s message, including a workshop by Bourgeault on centering prayer and the Quaker tradition. A large group of participants gathered again with her to learn about this contemporary form of silent meditation, and how it resonates with the Quaker tradition of silence.

This theme of prayer was extended into a workshop with past ESR Mullen Writing Fellow Marcelle Martin. Marcelle led this experiential workshop focused on learning and practicing intimate ways to pray for one another and the world. John March, a member of Durham Friends Meeting, offered a session titled “The Contemplative Absorptions,” which drew on Teresa of Avila’s Interior Castle, the Buddhist jhanas, and apocalyptic Quaker thought to explore the contemplative absorptions in which the heart-mind is absorbed into the Light. The overall goal of the workshop was to feel into what Teresa meant when she said: “There is a self-forgetfulness which is so complete that it really seems as though the soul no longer existed.”

Moving into more creative forms of spirituality, the remaining workshops integrated music, yoga, journaling and art collage into spiritual practice. Singer and songwriter Paulette Meier shared The Spiritual Wisdom of Early Friends in Plainsong. Paulette brought forth the idea that music has a way of opening us up to deeper levels of understanding. Participants were taught many of her “song-chants,” and sang them as a group.

For those interested in combining their spirituality with a physical practice, ESR graduate Steve Cleaver offered a workshop on Yoga and Spirituality. Steve discussed the intersection between yoga and Christianity and how a simple practice can be utilized to develop and sustain one’s spiritual health.

I led the final workshop, which mixed journaling and art collage to give the participants a way to create a new story. This was the first time I led a workshop at ESR, and it was pleasantly strange to move from the side of event coordinator to workshop facilitator. Those who attended the workshop journaled on questions of how they define themselves and examined the words based on the story they want their life to tell. They then cut out magazine images and words to create a collage on canvas that reflected this story. I was inspired by the stories of the participants and the collages they created, some of which were a surprise to them, as they pieced together their chosen images and words. I was especially pleased with the variety of workshops we were able to offer this year to the Spirituality Gathering participants, and hope next year will provide the same diversity.
Ministry that Serves

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Living to Serve

"Learning to Do, Doing to Learn, Earning to Live, Living to Serve." Those twelve words are the motto of a high school student organization that was important to me at a critical developmental moment. They resurfaced from the deep recesses of my mind as I thought about this edition of ESR Reports. The motto still resonates with me, and to my thinking falls remarkably close to a Quaker orientation of faithful living.

Equally interesting in this moment of reflection is the recognition of the power of ritual to influence at deep levels in lasting ways. Scripture verses such as “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path” are permanently etched onto my heart. Unfortunately, so is “Hold the pickle, hold the lettuce, special orders don’t upset us. All we ask is that you let us serve it your way!” Whether for good or for lesser values, we are shaped and formed by the internalized messages delivered through these rituals.

I’ve long since given up trying to fathom why these memorable refrains burst forth, reintroducing themselves to my consciousness from time to time; but the fact that one can carry such an odd and varied collection of mottos and refrains without being aware of their presence or influence leads me to be both wary and desirous of ritual and practice. Wary, because the deeper effect and impact is not always evident; desirous, because I want certain commitments and convictions to be ingrained and integrated into the fabric of my being. Service as ministry, offered in response to the leading of the Spirit, is one of those that I desire for myself and for any who pass through the programs of ESR. This issue of ESR Reports shares a few ways this good work is happening.