It is a delight to be a new faculty member at Earlham School of Religion. The Quaker tradition of welcoming outsiders is comforting and heartening to me as I have been warmly welcomed by students, staff and faculty into the ESR teaching and learning community. The diverse range of students representing a diverse range of denominational and educational backgrounds, as well as gender, sexual, racial and ethnic backgrounds, make this learning community a fertile and promising place to theologically explore one’s beliefs and spiritually grow as individuals in community.

I immigrated to Canada from Korea when I was five years old, and since then I have always felt like a stranger in North America. I reflect on my personal experiences of being marginalized and discriminated against in my new book, *Embracing the Other* (Eerdmans, 2015). As a young girl, I found myself being taunted in the schoolyard during recess because I looked different than the rest of the white kids at school. Racial slurs, discriminatory songs and chants were sung out loud to ridicule my Asian features and country of origin. These discriminatory school experiences continued and also morphed into other forms of prejudice and marginality into my adulthood.

In my pain, I search biblical stories and explore how we are to embrace those who are different from us. I write, “The biblical story demands of us today that we consider how we will live in peace with those who have different cultural, religious, and social backgrounds and often speak a language we do not understand.”

In my pain, I search biblical stories and explore how we are to embrace those who are different from us. I write, “The biblical story demands of us today that we consider how we will live in peace with those who have different cultural, religious, and social backgrounds and often speak a language we do not understand. Because people immigrate, move, and are forced into exile, there...
**WHY DOROTHY AND TOTO CHOSE TO GO TO OZ**

*By Elizabeth and John Edminster*

We’ve been asked to tell our coming-to-ESR story, but just hearing the question “Why ESR?” makes us want to reframe it: we were caught in a whirlwind and it seemed all we had to do was say Yes!

First, two people from New York Yearly Meeting independently told us about a vacant pastorate in the Northeast and suggested we apply as co-pastors.

What, us? We’re unprogrammed Friends who sometimes attend pastoral meetings but hadn’t considered becoming pastors ourselves. But then we each thought, “I’m not sure about myself, but together we’d make one great pastor!”

We got a very encouraging rejection letter and started wondering about formal training. Everything we’d learned about ESR suggested great benefits whether we became pastors or not. Some of our best-respected Quaker friends are ESR alums, and John had considered it in the early 1990s. Two children to raise and educate deferred his dream; but now he was retired, his children were grown, and Elizabeth had no work in her fields of musicology and librarianship. We were free to leave if we wanted to. A long phone call with Matt “Silvertongue” Hisrich (ESR’s director of recruitment & admissions) persuaded us to attend the February Open House.

We did and were all but certain we wanted to attend. A talk at ESR the next day on discernment by Benedictine Sr. Meg Funk suggested “looking for a sign” that one was making the right decision. Little over an hour later, a local Friend offered to rent us her home, and here we are!

Grace Ji-Sun Kim leading a doctoral cohort at the Forum for Theological Exploration meeting (Chicago, Illinois).

Grace Ji-Sun Kim

are many strangers and foreigners in our midst. Will we find new ways of living in peace with those who are different from us? For perhaps it is in the differences that we find meaningful life and richness in our own lives” (*Embracing the Other*, p. 19). From my point of view, teaching theology involves embracing those who feel lost, disenfranchised and marginalized, and encouraging others to do the same.

ESR envisions and builds a community where all are welcome to join in the theological journey of how to live peacefully and coexist lovingly in a world that so often sows distrust, xenophobia and fear. ESR is committed to working towards peace and justice in the service of encouraging students to embody reconciliation, conflict resolution, moral development, nonviolent peaceableness, interfaith dialogue, liberative theology and much more. This makes ESR a unique place in which to study and live out what Christ has mandated all of us to do, “to love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:31).

I explore the important pressing question of how we are to live peacefully and justly in *Embracing the Other*. I reflect, “Prophetic Christianity today must critically engage the problem of Euro-American racism and sexism. As Martin Luther King Jr. said at the Riverside Church of New York City on April 4, 1967: ‘A time comes when silence is betrayal.’ The church needs to wake up from its slumber and prophetically confront the sins of racism and sexism in our society today. If we do not do anything about racism and sexism — even creating awareness in one’s church is something proactive — then we are contributing to the problem. If we sit around and do nothing, we are permitting racism and sexism to exist and grow, because we do not insist that oppressing others because of their race or gender is contrary to Christian beliefs” (*Embracing the Other*, p. 4).

To witness and be part of a school engaging in such prophetic ministry is a great joy and honor.
A TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCE

By Simon Thiongo, MDiv. Class of 2015

A paper and pen – or a computer – is not enough to capture my entire experience at ESR. There was so much exploration, so many relationships, so many discoveries, so many challenges, and so much growth. Much of it is deeply qualitative, and words just cannot do it justice. But pushed to sum up my years at ESR, I would say that is was a transformative learning experience. By this I mean each and everything I learned had a great impact on my personal life, my ministry and in regards to the people I interacted with on a daily basis. When I first started ESR, I was not sure what to expect since I knew that this seminary included people from different denominations, beliefs and backgrounds. Would they accept me? My views? Or would they try to persuade me that they had the answers, thus disregarding my own experience and understanding? To my surprise, nobody tried to push their views on me. Rather, they were open to hear more about other denominations and faith traditions, as well as to graciously and humbly share their own experiences. This made the learning process so much more meaningful to me. Moreover, ESR professors encouraged open and balanced discussions in a friendly atmosphere and encouraged us to share what we believe and why we thought so. This created an atmosphere of meaningful dialogue between teachers and students, and student and students.

"Among all the seminaries I explored, there was none that seemed to understand my vision as much as ESR. At ESR, a church doesn’t need to be in a building or involve some kind of traditional ministry; instead, it is any gathering that will impact people’s lives in a positive way that connects them with creation, each other, and the divine."

The small class size and the ratio of students to the professors at ESR was the best. The small number enabled me to have enough time not only to ask questions in class but also to confer with professors outside the classroom, who were always accessible. Professors would stop what they were doing to attend to my questions, which meant the world to me. The interaction gave me better understanding of the material covered in class, which enhanced my understanding, performance, and growth in seminary.

Because of my passion to start a Garden Church in Kenya, I needed a very special and specific kind of seminary. ESR was that seminary. The Supervised Ministry Program, under the guidance of Stephanie Crumley-Effinger, provided structure and direction, and allowed me to expand in this program beyond my expectations. I was able not only to practice what I was learning in class, but more importantly to learn from local farmers on how to interconnect and integrate farming and spirituality. I am grateful that I was able to meet with prominent people who see farming as ministry, since that is exactly what I want to do once I get back in Kenya.

Among all the seminaries I explored, there was none that seemed to understand my vision as much as ESR. At ESR, a church doesn’t need to be in a building or involve some kind of traditional ministry; instead, it is any gathering that will impact people’s lives in a positive way that connects them with creation, each other, and the divine.

I have all of these reasons to thank God and the ESR administration for giving me a golden opportunity to study in this wonderful community. I feel well-equipped to impact the world for Christ. I am proud and privileged to be a graduate of ESR. May God bless ESR as they prepare men and women to build and serve the Kingdom of God here on earth.
Julie-Ann Silberman-Bunn ’91
I recently ended my service to the Main Line Unitarian Church and am looking for a new position. I am open to suggestions and welcome leads especially for positions as a hospice chaplain or at some kind of retreat center.

P.V. (’73) and Mary Chandy (’74)
I graduated from ESR in 1973 and ever since I have been in the pastoral ministry. After returning from four years of pastoral work in Jamaica, I pastored Friends Meetings in Ohio and Chicago. In 1995 I became a hospital chaplain at Advocate Christ Hospital in Oak Lawn. In the middle of August I retired from the hospital. Mary graduated from ESR in 1974, taught in public school, and is now retired. Our children, Sunu and Santosh are settled in Washington, D.C and Chicago. As I am writing this, we are vacationing in Kerala, India. We are visiting friends and family and would be back in Chicago. We are looking forward to the next chapter of our life and ministry.

Josh Seligman (’14)
I’m proofreading academic papers for an online company and I’m thankful for the job, and most of the time, I enjoy it — it’s a lot of fun reading about various topics and trying to perfect them on grammatical/textual levels. Because I can work from anywhere, it gives me a lot of flexibility. For example, this past spring, from March through May, I returned to the Iona Abbey as a volunteer musician. I was able to keep proofreading part-time while I was there. It was very good to grow as a musician and to see certain friends again. I’ve been applying for work in writing/music/ministry, such as worship pastor jobs. I’ve also been volunteering in various ways at my home church. I co-lead a worship band once a month, lead bible studies occasionally, play songs for special music, and last week I taught songs to children at the church’s first annual Skills Camp. Apart from church, I’ve been working on various creative writing projects.

Amy Gaffney (Theological Reflection Year ’98-’99)
I completed a Masters in Theological Studies with coursework in spiritual direction at San Francisco Theological Seminary in 2003. For a while I published essays in various Quaker journals but more recently had a poem (“Silent Worship”) and a drawing (“House of Light”) in Presence magazine — the international journal for spiritual directors. I currently clerk the Worship and Music team at Faith Lutheran Church in Chico, where I’ve also served as an assisting minister, helped to lead “Ember Days” (mini contemplative retreats), and hope to help lead a small group in discernment this Fall. I’ve had a couple of local shows of my drawings this summer and am looking for a publisher of The Spirit of Life is in My Soul — a series of letters written to me by an inmate on San Quentin’s death row, with whom I corresponded and visited for eight years.
The upcoming event season at ESR looks a bit different than in past years, both on the calendar and in design. Our Ministry of Writing Colloquium will feature a changed schedule and additional speakers, and is scheduled for November 6-7. The theme this year is “Words Made Flesh: Creative Writing, Creative Ministry” and will focus on writers that place the adventure of poiesis – of making – at the center of their faith, work, and ministry. Our keynote speaker, Bethany Seminary professor Scott Holland, will speak Friday evening, and Saturday will include two panels focused on the themes of “(Theo) Poetic Faith” and “Poetics of Ministry.” All six panel members will present a short talk followed by Q&A with the audience, as well as a workshop. We are excited for this new schedule with added presentations and hope our attendees will enjoy it as well.

Looking ahead to Spring 2016, our Spirituality Gathering will be February 27 with theologian and philosopher Phillip Clayton as our keynote speaker. Clayton will speak on the topic “Justice Lives in Relationship: The Poetry and Practice of Eco-Spirituality.” Moved from our typical fall date, our Pastors Conference will take place March 21 with a theme of “Bivocational Ministry.” Dennis Bickers, bivocational pastor and author of several books on the topic, will be the keynote speaker. Rounding up our spring events will be the Willson Lectures on April 2 with peace activist, author and teacher George Lakey as our guest lecturer. We hope you can join us either in person or through our webcasts for these events!
Jay Marshall spent most Sundays during the summer months visiting Friends meetings within driving distance to Richmond. He also attended Western Yearly Meeting and Northwest Yearly Meeting sessions. At the latter, he offered a workshop that focused on how one’s preferred image for God influences styles and preferences of leadership. He contributed a lecture on transformational leadership and the prophetic witness at this year’s leadership conference. In August Jay hosted a gathering of alumni/ae and Friends in Wichita, KS at the home of Jim Perkins. In September he traveled to Chicago to participate in a peer discussion on new models for financing theological education. In October, he participated in the World Parliament of Religions held in Salt Lake City.

Lonnie Valentine was a participant in the large conference on the environmental threat, “Seizing an Alternative: Toward an Ecological Civilization.” Lonnie participated in one working group that addressed the “Just Peacemaking” criteria (here is a link to a summary of the ten criteria: http://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/unitedchurchofchrist/legacy_url/6534/Just-Peacemaking-practices.pdf?1418431403. Lonnie presented the criteria of nonviolent direct action in the working group, one of many such groups in the conference seeking practical ways to respond to the ecological crisis. The conference was large and the plenary speakers were great, including Bill McKibben founder of 350.org, Vandana Shiva, Indian physicist, who is developing sustainable agricultural practices for India, and Wes Jackson of the Land Institute in Kansas, who works on genetics of wild grasses, seeking to increase their productivity and avoid the problems of social erosion and need for massive chemical fertilizers and insecticides. Bill McKibben presented, as he said, the “bad news” while the conference then sought ways of responding. Papers are posted and there are videos of most of the plenary presentations at the conference web site, Pando Populus (pandopopulus.com).

Carole Spencer was the Scholar-in-Residence at Reedwood Friends, Portland Oregon, from April 8, 2015 to May 17, 2015, teaching a weekly Wednesday evening class on “Images of God” and a Sunday morning class on “Loyal Radicals: Quaker women as agents of transformation in nineteenth century North America.” June 19-20 she attended the Friends Association of Higher Education at George Fox University in Newberg, Oregon and presented a workshop on Hannah Whitall Smith called “Crossing theological boundaries in the search for truth: A case study of a nineteenth century Orthodox Quaker.” She presented a workshop at Northwest Yearly Meeting on July 22, 2015 called “The Dark Side of Quakerism: Exploring our shadow side in order to practice the best of our tradition.” November 6-7 she will be a guest teacher for two sessions at the School of the Spirit in Philadelphia on the “Desert Father and Mothers” and “Ministry and Mysticism.” On November 20 she will moderate a session of the Quaker Theological Discussion Group and also moderate a joint session of the Quaker Studies Group and Women in Religion Section of the American Academy of Religion/Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting in Atlanta on November 23.

Phil Baisley spent the summer working on two major projects. He is writing a book on the unique qualities of the Friends pastor. This is based on his D.Min. research and coupled with stories from his own and other pastors’ experiences. Phil also traveled throughout the USA conducting interviews of bivocational pastors and their congregations. His research will culminate in a presentation at ESR’s Pastors Conference on March 21, 2016.

In late June Stephanie Crumley-Effinger enjoyed bringing an ESR presence to Quaker Spring (quakerspring.org/quaker-spring-2015), which she experienced as centered, deep, and rich. It included several forms of worship out of stillness, such as Bible reading in the manner of Conservative Friends, waiting worship with deeply centered vocal ministry, and worship sharing on evocative questions such as “what does covenant community mean to you, and how have you experienced it?” “How are you moving through brokenness to greater wholeness?” And “how do you experience the Inward Christ?”
In representing the school at Philadelphia Yearly Meeting at the end of July, Stephanie appreciated having many valuable conversations, especially as Friends processed the theme of the sessions, “Open My Eyes That I May See” continuing their journey in Undoing Racism. A number of workshops, plenary gatherings, and worship sharing sessions spoke to that directly. Stephanie presented a workshop “Open my ears, mouth, and heart: singing to center and share truth and love.” She led them in singing and reflecting on a variety of songs which invite prayerful centering and the opening of hearts to share with others truth and love as we have come to know them. Addressing racism is never easy for a group to undertake, and she was moved and inspired by the meaningful connections made in worship sharing groups and the powerful and painful witnesses offered by Friends who spoke about difficult issues in plenary sessions, both in planned presentations and in responses to them.

In mid-September Stephanie led a renewal retreat for Community Friends Meeting, focusing on ways in which individuals can prepare themselves during daily life to contribute to deeper worship when the group gathers for Meeting on Sunday morning. The first of November will find her at Yellow Springs Meeting helping Friends there consider integrating body, mind, and spirit in this culture which tends to view these elements separately. They will also reflect on resources from Quaker faith/practice and accompanying one another throughout changing experiences and abilities.

Jim Higginbotham had an article published in the Journal of Pastoral Theology, “Toward a Pastoral Theology of Incarceration.” This is the first significant scholarly examination of this topic by a pastoral theologian. In October Jim facilitates the fall weekend retreat with Fort Wayne, Indiana Quakers on “Creating a Caring Meeting/Congregation.” He recently completed eight years on the Executive Committee of Disciples Peace Fellowship, the last two as Co-Moderator.

Jim has been invited to be on the editorial board of the Journal of Pastoral Theology and to be a member of the editorial program for Academia.edu, a prominent online resource for scholars around the world.

Steve Angell will chair a session of the Quaker Studies Group of the American Academy of Religion on Saturday, November 21. at the Hyatt-Edgewood Hotel in Atlanta. The theme of the session will be to review historian H. Larry Ingle’s new book, Nixon’s First Cover-up: the Religious Life of a Quaker President (University of Missouri Press, 2015). The panelists will be Emma Lapsansky-Werner of Haverford College; Randall Balmer of Dartmouth College; Lon Fendall of George Fox University; and Isaac May of the University of Virginia. Larry Ingle will respond.


Kim led a retreat for First Chinese Presbyterian Church in NYC and went to an advisory board meeting for the Duke Divinity School’s Reconciliation Center.

Kim will present a paper on Climate Change at the Social Ethics Network Annual Meeting, Louisville Presbyterian Seminary, October 15-18, 2015. She will also be a Cohort Leader for Postdoctoral Fellows at Louisville Institute in October. Kim will present a paper, Embracing the Other at the “Subverting the Norm” Conference at Drury University in November 2016. At the American Academy of Religion, Kim will be part of a book panel, “Embracing the Other”, co-present a paper, “Theological Reflections on Gangnam Style”, and review a book.

We are mindful of and grateful of the fact that our community of learning consists of multiple perspectives and diverse experiences brought together for the common purpose of preparation for ministry.

A favorite part of my work each year is hearing the stories that various individuals share about why they chose to come to this little Quaker seminary situated in a small Midwestern town: Quaker identity; Affordable cost; Program emphases. These are often woven into their personal narratives. Some have been encouraged by their monthly meeting to explore gifts for ministry that seem very evident to the group. Others are fresh from a volunteer experience and seek a next step on their path to an integrated life where faith and vocation mesh into wholeness in ways that provide meaning and make an impact in the world. Deepening their spirituality to better serve in the congregations they currently call home is the driving force for some. Some are in the early stages of discerning their life’s path, but others have been working toward this point for a while. One student acknowledged he first applied to ESR in 2002, but it took 13 years for “way to open,” as Friends are apt to say. Another feels he has been waiting most of his life for the moment when he could immerse himself in the preparation for ministry.

These new additions to the ESR community arrive with a deep sense of call and an adventurous spirit. It takes a good dose of courage to travel this road. It is not exactly uncharted territory, but one never knows exactly where it leads. For me, these conversations help keep me committed to the task. The dreams and ambitions, whether idealistic or extremely pragmatic, reinforce hope for the Church, for the world, and for the future as they are embraced by the next generation of ministers and leaders. This version of ESR Reports introduces a few stories of persons either just entering or recently exiting the seminary. We offer them in the hope that they purvey a sense of the personality and conviction of those who help shape the ESR community.