December 2018

Dear Friends,

I write this letter on Thanksgiving weekend grateful to work at a life-changing place like ESR. I am certainly appreciative of the opportunity to serve in a setting that matches my passions and gifts so well. Our focus on spiritual formation for social transformation warms my heart. It is a joy to collaborate with dedicated teachers and administrators to fulfill this mission. We are also excited about a new M.Div. curriculum, which we believe will better prepare students for ministry in these challenging times.

However, the greatest privilege is to see the impact of this community on our students. Let me tell you a few recent experiences that I am very thankful to have witnessed.

I was honored to attend the ordinations of two of our alumnae this year. Both women came to ESR with a strong sense of call, many talents, and an idea of how they thought God wanted them to serve: not in the parish. However, both of these women were changed by their Supervised Ministry (year-long field education experience) in a congregation, and now they are fulfilled and “at home” serving churches as congregational ministers.

Two other women who participated in our Innovation Award project are developing ministries to families who face abuse. Each has had a deep desire to help families in their respective contexts affected by domestic violence. This project has given their compassion resources for a tangible expression. They are investigating how to develop responsive ministries that will meet the needs of the families through surveys and other research. When they graduate, they will be able to create an effective outreach.

Finally, it was such a joy to see one of our Kenyan alumni presenting a paper at the American Academy of Religion this week. The journey to fulfill his dream of studying at ESR took more than a decade. How rewarding it was for his dedication and intellect to be recognized by speaking at a professional conference to leading Quaker scholars.

I haven’t given names, because these could be the stories of any of our students or alums. Your support is vital in helping them answer a call to service as a transforming presence in our world. I hope you will consider giving a gift to the ESR annual fund today!

With a thankful heart,

Jim Higginbotham
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