



IN THIS ISSUE

From the Dean's Desk 1

Lonnie Valentine reflects on 2
his upcoming retirement

Michael Birkel share his 4
hopes for ESR's future

Alumni Focus: Travis Etling '17. 5

From Nairobi, Kenya to Richmond, . . 6
Indiana: The Story of Sussie Ndanyi

Faculty Updates 7

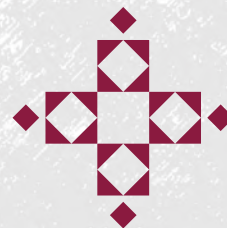
Retirements 7



NEWSLETTER OF THE
Earlham School of Religion

Summer 2022

VOL. I, NO. 1



FROM THE DEAN'S DESK
Greetings Kindred Spirits!

Greetings, my kindred spirits, and alumni. I hope this finds you well!

It is a pleasure to rekindle our greetings to you and welcome alum Brown Mujete to the ESR administrative faculty. He will continue to find ways to connect with you and to connect you to events and activities of ESR.

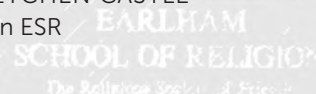
As Dean, I am delighted to say we have had a fantastic year, celebrating our ESR graduates, the longevity of Michael and Lonnie, and welcoming two new teaching faculty members. Looking back and looking ahead . . . and feeling grateful in the moment.

I am grateful to know the strength of this institution and its capacity to shape how we see our world through the lens of profoundly thoughtful theology. We are very fortunate and privileged to be associated with ESR. I come to ESR with the vision of strengthening the connections across the Quaker community and communities of faith. Having

worked ecumenically at the global level on Friends' behalf, there is space to celebrate the world's diversity . . . and learn how our diversity contributes to a fascinating and eclectic landscape. Having traveled extensively among Friends, I have known the preciousness of spiritual hospitality and the depth of commitment to God's promise for us. And I can say I have seen this at ESR this year.

Today I celebrate each of you who is connected to ESR. I applaud your support as I navigated my first academic year. I celebrate the village that makes up this sweet corner of Earlham College, discovering the many ways we contribute to the Quaker ethos and appreciating the support from being embedded in a larger institution. I celebrate the place of ESR in Quaker ministry and leadership, and I appreciate your part in this. And I celebrate the turning of yet another season in God's beautiful world.

GRETCHEN CASTLE
Dean ESR



Greetings and welcome
to the inaugural edition of *Kindred Spirits!*

Edited by Brown Mujete, M.Div.
Director of Communication
& Alumni Engagement

PHONE 765-983-1516
EMAIL mujetbr@earlham.edu

This is a biannual ESR Newsletter to our alumni, friends, partners, prospective students, donors, and Quaker yearly meetings. The goal is to update you on the things happening on campus, inform you about the events or conferences our faculty are participating in, share updates from our alumni, and bring stories from current students.

Email us at mujetbr@earlham.edu to share a story, ask questions, change the mode of delivery, and stay in touch.

Enjoy!

"Good theology does not indulge our self-absorption, but through its wondering and wandering, it leads us to the cross, and it inspires us to give ourselves in service to the world that God so loves."

— David Johns

ESR Class of '89
Former ESR Associate
Professor of Theology 2001-13



Lonnie Valentine reflects on his upcoming retirement after 30 years at ESR

An interview with Lonnie Valentine, Ph.D., professor of peace and justice studies

*H*i Lonnie, thank you for agreeing to sit down with me and talk about your time at ESR. I must, however, acknowledge that we cannot fully capture the entirety of your time here at ESR. So, we have come up with ten questions that we hope will help our readers glimpse into the 30 years of your service at ESR.

1. *30 years at ESR!! That's not easy!! How are you feeling? I mean, you are going to stop doing what you have done for the last 30 years! Talk to us about that feeling.*

Well, first, it will be 33 years and it was not easy, but it has been good with moments of truth and beauty. I feel mixed: bittersweet. I recall great conversations with students and faculty, but I also wonder how I and ESR could have done better.

2. *Tell us about your first encounter with ESR . . . how was that?*

I first encountered information about ESR in a guide to graduate programs in peace studies. I was a Quaker by that time but heard nothing of the school in my Meeting or Yearly Meetings on the West coast. I believe I was the first student to attend ESR from Pacific Yearly Meeting. Recently a gracious donor has provided ESR with a special scholarship for Quakers from California to attend ESR. May more from my California home come to ESR!

Wondering what ESR would be like, I visited to see what the ethos was. I remember the lively conversation in a class I attended and felt welcomed by faculty and students. Also, it was clear to me the school was invested in student learning and so challenged students to grow.

3. *What are your three most memorable periods/events/people during your time at ESR.*

Though I felt very good about coming to ESR when I got here there were a couple of things that gave me pause. When I drove up in my van to unload my stuff into my room I was greeted by a friendly ESR student who said he would help me. Very nice! However, he then asked me about my interests and when I said "process theology" he blurted out "Uh oh." But he still helped me unload and get to my room.

When I entered the room, my new roommate had already moved in and was not there. I looked at what books he had brought, including a very large Bible open on a stand, and I blurted out "Uh, oh." After I left, my roommate returned, looked at my books, and had the same reaction to my books. However, those two students became friends with me.

This spoke to the theological diversity ESR has sought in its admissions. I learned from the evangelical Friends who were here and the international students, too. ESR has continued seeking such diversity in religious perspectives and has become a welcoming place for having these conversations. I hope we can find students across the differences in Quakerism and across the differences is spiritual perspectives. To have a range from evangelical to non-theist and other faith traditions altogether enhances the work of ESR and the breadth of our students.

4. *How would you describe ESR's growth for the last 33 years you've been here?*

ESR has sought to respond to the changes in religious life in the US, drawing on ESR faculty and student experiences, research, and help from our alums and the Board of Advisors. Our foundation is rooted in spirituality and the Quaker testimonies but how we engage the world in educating from this foundation has changed.

We were early among seminaries in lifting up spiritual formation as key to what we do. Given that Quakers understand that all are called to ministry and those forms of ministry are individual, we offered courses in the core theological disciplines that would support forms of ministry-beyond the church or meeting. So, we were early in establishing emphases within the Master of Ministry/Divinity degree program. Our Master of Arts in Religion program provides students with the opportunity to focus on Peace and Justice Studies as well as Quaker Studies in addition to Bible and Theology. As forms of religious expression multiplied we recently developed distinct Master of Arts programs in Theopoetics and Writing and in Peace and Social Transformation.

5. *Talk to us about the range and caliber of students you have taught and supervised over the last 30 years. Any special thing you love about ESR students?*

I have appreciated that ESR has sought to admit students from a range of backgrounds and education. From US and international students who have had great undergraduate work in religious studies to those who do not have an undergraduate degree or a degree outside the humanities, ESR has sought to find those who would be a good fit: curiosity about things spiritual, willingness to study, and respect for others.

6. *Peace studies! Why peace studies? What was the motivation?*

Interesting question since my initial reaction was "Why wouldn't it be so!" My own work in peacemaking began from my

time doing two years of alternative service in a maximum-security mental institution as a conscientious objector during the Vietnam War. There I saw the systemic face of injustice and lack of peace. I sought to do work to help build peace such as draft counseling, anti-nuclear power organizing as an "intervenor" in the licensing hearings of the Diablo Nuclear power station on the California coast, organizing an event on the campus of Cal Poly San Luis Obispo on the impact of low-level radiation, resisting the payment of federal income taxes used for war and giving away the refused taxes to peace organizations. Doing this work led me to Quakers.

I was on some protest march talking with another participant, and Quakers came up since I had heard of them in relation to the witness against war. My protest colleague then said that I could find a Quaker Meeting not far from where we were. So, I started attending that Meeting and joined Friends the year I came to ESR to start my studies.

7. *I know that the peace program is so close to your heart. The new MAPST program you designed and implemented has turned out to be one of our best programs. Tell us about the motivation behind the MAPST program and how you would like to see it moving forward.*

Recently, ESR has sought to work out ways to more deeply connect reflection and action. We have done that by initiating travel seminars and then practicums located in each of the ministry emphases. The MAPST program does this in a distinct degree program intended to

link theological reflection with action for social transformation. Rooted in the Quaker concern for spirituality that leads to action, the program has practicum work throughout the entire program. So, this program was the next step the faculty saw in combining action and reflection. We act according to our best insight at the time, then reflect on our action. We then modify our actions in accord with our reflections and try again. It is a cycle of embodied learning for a better world.

8. *Do you plan to continue scholarly activities post-retirement? Tell us about these activities, and why or why not? Any other plans you have?*

Before launching on any plans, Genevieve and I want to step back from many of the things we are doing and seek to discern what is next for each of us and both of us together. Also, just not doing anything at all for a time would be fine!

I do have things on hold that I have worked on over the years here that I think I will try to complete (after some R & R). One is a book on how process theology can provide support for the work of nonviolent social change and the other is on the theology and history of Quakers and war tax resistance.

9. *Any encouragement to the two brand new professors at ESR? And a parting shot to your soon-to-be former colleagues and staff?*

The Earlham School of Religion seeks to be a community of learners, grounded in spirituality. We want to go deep. Let's be in touch.

EARLHAM
SCHOOL OF RELIGION
The Religious Society of Friends

"This Presence was so powerful that it miraculously made the pain of the people bearable without diminishing the reality of that pain."

— Nancy Maeder

Former Associate Director
Newlin Center for
Quaker Thought and Practice



Michael Birkel shares his hopes for ESR's future

Michael Birkel, Ph.D., professor of Christian spirituality

Because ESR is always evolving to meet the needs of a changing society, perhaps any given moment is a time of transition. That said, my time on the faculty during the past six years seems particularly a season of change—in curriculum, in programs, in leadership, in structure, and in faculty composition. The pandemic has been among us for a good portion of my service on the faculty, and it has disrupted all of our lives in many ways. Some things have been consistent: splendid colleagues on the faculty, and wonderful students who come with a passion for learning.

Reflecting the trends in our wider world, theological diversity, which has been an element of ESR's distinctiveness for decades, seems to have increased in recent years, and ESR is actively seeking to find ways to address this presence and to be of support and assistance to students as they prepare for a wide range of ministries, in a world that we can only begin to imagine. As a teacher of spirituality, I feel especially called to offer a genuine welcome to students of many religious and spiritual identities, to invite them into a consideration of the wisdom of many traditions, as they explore spiritual practices and theological reflection. When I joined the faculty, I was encouraged to develop spirituality courses to include more consideration of the multi-faith world that we live in, and that has been a particular joy.

In response to an invitation to express my hopes for the future of ESR, two matters come to mind. First, I hope that ESR will be as deeply Quaker as possible.

This would include staying in touch with developments in the Quaker world, to recognize the changing needs for ministry. It would include maintaining a truly robust Quaker presence on the faculty and among students. ESR should continue to be a place where Quaker spirituality and practices can be learned both within and beyond the classroom. The world already has enough nondescript seminaries that are struggling to survive and to find a reason to continue. I believe that precisely by being as deeply Quaker as it can be will enable ESR to be open to the wider spiritual world and to new ways to be of service in this time of a rapidly changing religious landscape—and this openness is my second hope. It makes little sense to offer the very finest theological education from the 1980s, for example, in the 2020s. As I retire, I realize and accept that the needs of the future will be different. I welcome the new directions that my successor will offer, with the confidence that new developments will be based on a discernment of the needs of a new generation.

As I turn toward retirement, I seek to remain open to new opportunities that may come my way. There are some writing projects that may beckon my attention. It has been my privilege to be a guest in other religious communities, and I may gather some reflections on the experience of crossing the threshold into the home of another faith. I continue to be nourished by Quaker spirituality, and I may find more words to say about our Quaker inheritance. On a more personal note, I look forward to more time with family and more opportunities to enjoy reading, music, and the outdoors. Fine memories of my time at ESR will continue to bless my life as I step aside to allow new ideas to flourish.

ALUMNI FOCUS

Travis Etling '17



My journey in ministry, both during and after my time at ESR, has been filled with rich learning and remarkable people. It's difficult for me to locate either a beginning or an ending to the story! And, of course, many of the relationships that began during my time at ESR continue to flourish in interesting ways.

Though I'd grown up in the United Methodist Church, I'd left that "home" and had been a "seeker" for many years. Around 2010, I finally found what felt to me like a "spiritual home" among Quakers at Cincinnati Friends Meeting.

I chose to apply to ESR after several conversations with ESR graduate, Donne Hayden. Donne was the pastoral minister at CFM when I first started attending there.

A seminary experience was something I'd vaguely and wistfully dreamed about for many years, so it really didn't take much "convincing" before I reached out and started the application process.

My time at ESR was really a wonderful time of exploration and spiritual, intellectual and emotional growth. It was

a difficult period in my personal life, so it was wonderful to have the small, intimate classes, supportive professors and caring classmates.

While at ESR, I had the opportunity to develop and present two different workshops for the annual Spirituality Gathering. Those experiences really helped me to find a focus for my supervised ministry: facilitating small group spiritual nurture among "unprogrammed" Friends in Durango, Colorado.

After seminary, I continued to feel an invitation to work with Quakers in Durango, Colorado. To support that work financially, I worked as a case manager for adults with developmental and intellectual disabilities. After a couple of years, I felt led in a different direction and applied for a clinical pastoral education residency in Salt Lake City. I started my CPE experience, learning the art of hospital chaplaincy in June of 2020, in the midst of the pandemic.

Clinical pastoral education was incredibly intense for me. I learned a great deal about myself! I found CPE to be challenging, in some ways painful but also healing and deeply good. Strangely, at the end of those 15 months, I said to myself: I now feel ready to try pastoral ministry (my original concentration at ESR was pastoral ministry).

So, I returned to the Midwest and answered a call to First Friends Meeting, Richmond. I've only been in the role of pastoral minister for a few months now, but it's been a joy to get to know the

people of First Friends and to begin this journey with them.

Though I started out with a focus on pastoral ministry, I was really drawn to classes that allowed me to explore spirituality. My first class at ESR was with Carole Spencer, who was the professor of spirituality at the time.

Though I was nurtured by all the faculty at ESR, and Bethany, I did feel a special connection with this spiritually generous and mystical Holiness Quaker. Carole invited me to present at that first spirituality conference and she introduced me to many wonderful spiritual friends including the Desert Mothers and Fathers, Julian of Norwich, and Ignatius of Loyola. I think we were also both deeply nurtured, at points in our spiritual lives, by Foster's Celebration of Discipline.

I also had the opportunity to travel with Carole to San Pedro, California in order to interview members of Anna Woofenden's Garden Church project (Anna is another ESR graduate and founding pastor of The Garden Church).

Mostly, when I think of ESR, I think of the creative tensions that allow for both intellectual and spiritual growth: academic rigor, caring and astute staff and flexible programming. I'm deeply grateful to the people, spirituality, and energy that make ESR such a unique and rich space for ministry formation.

TRAVIS ETLING
Pastor, First Friends Meeting
Richmond, Indiana

RELIGION
The Religious Society of Friends

"If, at its most basic level, 'theology' is 'words about God' then the only persons who shouldn't engage in theological contemplation and discussion are those who give no thought to, and have nothing to say about, God."

— Jay Marshall

ESR Dean Emeritus and
Director of Entrepreneurial
Ministry Program



From Nairobi, Kenya to Richmond, Indiana The Story of Sussie

The Earth received a bouncing baby girl in the tropical coastal town of Mombasa, in Kenya, situated on the East African Continent, a firstborn child of my Mother Esther and Father, the late Hezron Ndanyi. Her name — Sussie Ndanyi grew up surrounded by a large extended family, amongst them is one sister she adores and two brothers who mean the world to her.

Yes, Sussie is my name with a gentle spirit, yet a firm personality that has enabled the immediate former, first female General Secretary of Friends Church (Quakers) Nairobi Yearly Meeting, in Kenya. A duty I loved to do and enjoyed to be of service in this way, for 10 years.

One unique thing about me is my affinity for the mattress. I look forward to a good, deep, and long sleep whenever an opportunity presents itself. With the administrative skills acquired from working within the church, it became necessary to pursue my religious studies. Cognizant of the scholarship offered to aspiring Kenyan students, I did apply to the renowned institution of Earlham School of Religion (ESR) and the rest is history.

Crossing over more than 7,000 miles, an indigenous African woman trying to assimilate into a new culture, ESR has become a home away from home. Indeed, the intentional concerns by the office staff to help me settle, a faculty who exercised patience as they directed me accordingly to resources that are meaningful, and ultimately

fellow students who have held my hand to integrate me into this culture all make the experience at ESR awesome!

The reality is that the Mdiv Program at ESR is intense, stretching my mind as I apply myself in the arena of academic rigor in the study of humanities, which I had not interacted with before. I am intrigued by relating with Hebrew studies from a feminine perspective and the other course offerings that are crafted towards upholding justice in the community.

ESR has given me an entry point in the community, like at West Richmond Friends Church, where I am humbled to be sharing my faith, my experiences with the Divine, within myself, and my relationship with others, hoping that in this way, we encourage each other to remain steadfast on that "narrow path."

The huge network of partners of ESR is amazing. My interaction with this cohort so far gives me hope that my administrative skills and experiences, as well as the knowledge in pastoral care that is being sharpened here at ESR, would add value to the diverse work being undertaken in the non-profit sector. My mind is open, I cannot wait to see where all this will lead me.

As I attempt to sprint to the finish line of my first academic year, my spirits are high, immersed within a community that has my ultimate good in mind.

SUSSIE NDANYI
2nd year M.Div. Student
Nairobi, Kenya

Faculty Updates

STEVE ANGELL

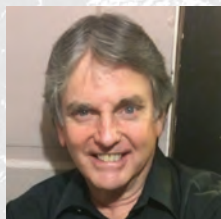


Leatherock
Professor of
Quaker Studies

Steve served
on the planning
committee for the
Friends Association

for Higher Education (FAHE) 2022 Virtual Conference. The Theme of the conference was *Quakers and Racial Justice*. Steve's presentation was titled "Hamilton the Musical and the 1619 Project." The gathering was co-hosted by Earlham College and the Earlham School of Religion. Steve chaired the search committee for Hebrew Bible at ESR.

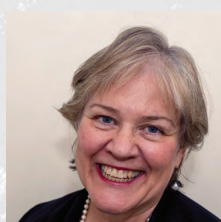
PHIL BAISLEY



Phil wrote a chapter
titled "Preparing
to Teach a Bi-
vocational Ministry
Seminary Course" in
the latest published
book, *Bi-Vocational*

and Beyond: Educating for Thriving Multivocational Ministry, edited by Darryl W. Stephens and published by Atla Open Press, Chicago, 2022.

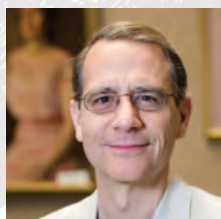
GRETCHEN CASTLE



Gretchen will be
giving the Plummer
lecture at the Illinois
Yearly Meeting,
Gretchen will be
attending "Pathways
to Tomorrow" in

Pittsburgh, PA and Western Yearly Meeting. She will serve as Friend of the Week at Quaker House in Chautauqua, NY in July.

JIM HIGGINBOTHAM



Jim, associate dean,
participated in
the 2022 Religion
and Foreign Policy
Workshop hosted
recently in New
York. The workshop

was designed to advance understanding between faith leaders and international relations policymakers. Jim chaired the search committee for the Peace and Justice position at ESR.

XAVIER JOHNSON



Xavier is the
new director of
contextual ministry
and assistant
professor of
practical theology.
Xavier will be

leading a workshop on "*Is There a Word from the Lord?*": *Preaching in Perilous Times*, organized by the Engle Institute of Princeton Theological Seminary in Princeton, New Jersey.

GRACE JI-SUN KIM



Grace was the
keynote speaker for
the 2022 Willson
Lectures at ESR.
She talked about
"Reimaging Spirit"
based on her new

book, *Reimaging Spirit*. She has also published other books including, *Invisible: Theology and the experience of Asian American Women* (2021) and *Keeping Hope Alive: Sermons and Speeches of Rev Jesse Jackson* (2020). Grace was also the 2022 commencement speaker at Central Seminary in Shawnee, Kansas.

APRIL VANLONDEN



Joint Seminary
Registrar

April will be leading
the Bible study
sessions at Lake
Erie Yearly Meeting,
July 28–30, 2022

from 9:00–10:00 AM.

Retirements

MICHAEL BIRKEL



Michael has taught
religion courses at
Earlham College
for nearly three
decades. He joined
ESR six years ago
as professor of

Christian spirituality. His retirement leaves behind too big a gap to be filled.

NANCY BOWEN



Nancy retired as
the professor of
the Hebrew bible
or First Testament
(as she loved to
refer to it). Nancy
served in this role for

approximately three decades and we are profoundly blessed to have had her.

MIRIAM BUNNER



Miriam retired as
the Assistant to the
Dean of ESR in 2021
after serving for
about nine years.
ESR expresses
deep gratitude and

appreciation for Miriam's service to the ESR community.

STEPHANIE CRUMLEY-EFFINGER



Stephanie retired
as the Director of
Supervised Ministry
at ESR after many
years of faithful and
dedicated service to
the ESR community.

LONNIE VALENTINE



Lonnie is retiring
after close to 33
years as professor
of peace and
justice studies. ESR
is greatly indebted
for his humble

service to the community.



• • •

esr.earlham.edu
228 College Avenue
Richmond, IN 47374

(765) 983-1423
esr@earlham.edu

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
RICHMOND, IN
PERMIT NO. 1



ESR's newest alumni, the graduating class of 2022, with faculty and staff.

"Theology is so encompassing because it often grapples with mysteries that evade us, the real and vital interaction between humanity and God."

— David Johns
ESR Class of '89
Former ESR Associate Professor of Theology, 2001-13