Grace and peace to you from all of us here at ESR.

September was a blessed month at the Earlham School of Religion. We had the dedication and renaming of the ESR classroom building and my installation as the seventh dean of ESR. The classroom building was renamed Perkins-Wildman Community Center (PCC) in honor of the Perkins and Wildman families’ generous contributions to ESR and many Quaker organizations for over two generations. The Perkins and Wildman families have given to ESR to support international students’ scholarships, set up the Perkins family lecture series, and now they have agreed to support renovating our worship meeting area, which known to many of you as Quigg.

So, what is the ESR experience?

ESR provides space for Quaker discussion and dissent. In the last two years, for instance, ESR has held conversations on the Separation Generation, opening conversations about the splits that have occurred in several yearly meetings. The Quaker Leadership Center held a conference last year that included Friends from 16 different yearly meetings from across Quaker traditions, bringing with it new exposure and healing between Friends. Young adult Friends are insistent that we heal these rifts.

ESR brings together students from different Quaker traditions and students from around the world. We receive interest from hundreds of prospective students from other countries, primarily East Africa. Unfortunately, we can only accept two to three of these students.

ESR draws those with a strong appetite for learning—not only through the classroom structure, but also by living in and investing in the world around us. As Dale Dorrell, an ESR alumni and member of the ESR Board of Advisors, is known to say, “I came to ESR with lots of questions and left with even more.”

ESR is a community of compassion. Whether in clinical pastoral care positions, congregational ministry or social justice, students and alumni work for social good—helping people cope with existential crises and spiritual angst, as well as offering deep listening, spiritual perspectives and friendships based on eternal hope.

ESR is a community that encourages the prophetic voice grounded in Quaker understanding. While about half of our students are Quakers, half come from other denominations or do not identify with a denomination. Our Quaker theological foundations and our commitment to being welcoming and inclusive draw people to study here. Whether studying Quakerism, writing in the Theopoetics Program or witnessing in the Peace and Social Transformation Program, ESR encourages the expression of thoughtful change.

In short, ESR is building cultures of peace and communities of compassion. Earlier, I posed the query, “If ESR could change the world . . .” And the truth is, it does. We do. Every day. We are forever indebted and grateful.
There is a perpetual question that has often haunted me throughout my life: “What do you want to be when you grow up?” I remember being asked this in 5th grade. We were sitting in our desks lined up in rows, and my desk was in the center. I had half the class to get through before I had to have an answer ready. This caused my little heart much anxiety. What if my answer isn’t right? What if it isn’t enough? And then came my turn. “Teacher. I want to be a teacher.” And because the response from my teacher was positive, I went with it. I graduated high school and attended a local university. “What do you want to be when you grow up?” There it is again. What’s my major, what are my plans, what will my future look like, what will I do when I graduate? “Teacher. I want to be a teacher. Oh no, not that type of teacher. Like a high school teacher. Yeah, yeah, a high school teacher. I’m majoring in English.” A major in English turned into a Bachelor of Arts in English with a Concentration in Language and Linguistics. And that turned into a two-year stint in West Africa teaching English. And that turned into a Teaching English as a Foreign/Second Language Certification. And that? That just never felt right.

This perpetual question often haunted me. What I really wanted to be or do felt so niche because I honestly just wanted to get coffee with people and help them process their lives and emotions. But that’s not a real job, is it?

One day, as an interfaith healthcare chaplain, I came into work, sat at my desk, and checked my email. I had received a speaking engagement request for the healthcare system that I am employed with. They had been impressed by my talk at a different event and wanted me to speak to a larger community about the ways that faith and health are entwined. This was the moment that I realized that I was no longer haunted by the question of my youth. Being an interfaith chaplain allows me to do what I wanted all those years ago.

I get to journey alongside people in their griefs and losses and experiences and emotions and to support them as they want or need. I get to walk with people through their story and how that’s affected their health. I am given the gift of their vulnerabilities and their fears. And sometimes I get to just hang out and drink coffee with them because that’s how they experienced community at the homeless shelter. Or I get to take a piece of chocolate and some lavender to a staff member who is having a rough day and listen to their story. Or I get to hold a baby and talk to the nurses about how I can support them in their jobs. I get to do these things because what people really need is a friend.

There’s death in the tiniest and the oldest among us. There’s suffering. There are mental health issues. There is pain. And still, there is being a friend. There is holding the mother who lost her son to drug abuse, the staff member who is going through a divorce, and the family who chooses to donate their loved one’s organs. And still, there is being a friend.

And in the process, I get changed by being a chaplain. I am figuring out what it means to show up as myself when I feel like I’ve been showing up as other people my whole life. I get the chance to lay claim to those dreams that seemed so ridiculous all those years ago. I get to be fully me when that has often been discouraged. I get to talk to that anxious and confused 5th grader and let her know that it’ll all work out, let her know what’s possible, and let her know she’s good just the way she is.

To me, that just makes sense for a Quaker. As a person who watches death knock on the door or simply sits with a patient before they get discharged, I can truly say every moment is spiritual. I am ready to give what’s meant for others. And I am ready to receive what is meant for me. I learned this at ESR, I learned this from Friends, and I learn this every day at the hospital.

Chaplaincy changes you.
The 60s were ending, and so was my college education, but not the Vietnam war, or not fast enough. My quest to attend medical school, more my uncle’s vision for me than mine for myself, had also closed. Various factors claimed my life, and I felt God’s call.

It came initially through a college professor who, at that moment, knew me better than I knew myself. I sat in the office of his side job, for I was working for him at the time. I was frustrated in finding my way forward when he told me straight-up that my profession was already chosen for me. He asked, “Who is the campus Dear Abby? Who gets the knock on the door when someone is distressed and needs to let it out in the presence of someone useful?” He helped me see the obvious and let me simmer in that awakening.

I was also feeling the leading to attend seminary, for I was awakening to a closer walk with God and felt a call to become a Christian marriage and family therapist. To escape America and the draft, I was inquiring about seminaries in Canada. Each told me that to graduate, a certain creed had to be professed. That was a hard stop for me. No, I do not do that.

A little later, I’m back to my prof’s side-job office with further lamenting. This good man was a Quaker, and he told me he knew of a seminary that would give me a quality education without requiring me to profess a creed. He also suggested that graduate school would keep me out of the draft. Earlham School of Religion was now on my radar.

I applied and was accepted and made plans to attend. I was told that ESR could equip me to be a Christian marriage and family therapist. That was an overreach that required me to get a second master’s degree and finally a D.Min. to make my way to my goals.

Even though ESR’s overreach frustrated me and required me to pursue additional education, I got some outstanding brain training while at ESR. I really did not favor thinking like a minister (too soft and not so fact-based). I liked thinking like a scientist (B.S. in chemistry), and I favored thinking like a “shrink” (M.A. in counseling psychology and a D.Min. in marriage and family therapy). While I was at ESR, my religious/theological thinking blew wide open (from conservative to liberal/progressive). I easily came to the awareness that I no longer wanted to be a “counselor.” I wanted to be a therapist with broad and deep skills.

Yet, while at ESR, I was supported as I discovered my way. I fell in love with the mystical understanding of Christian Scripture and experience. The seeds that were planted in me at ESR took root and flowered in beautiful ways. I have led a book reading discussion group called the Koinonia Sunday School Class, and I have been doing it for decades. I think of my work as a psychotherapist as a ministry and bring qualities of ministry into my work.

Although I think I was granted entrance into ESR because my check did not bounce, I was helpfully guided into a good and fulfilling life by the women and men that made up the ESR community. I graduated from ESR in the spring and from my M.A. in counseling psychology that summer. After a time of searching, I secured a job at a mental health center in Ohio. I served in that position for just under three years. While there, I sharpened and deepened my skills (a never-ending endeavor). When that position ended, I entered private practice in the shadow of ESR in Richmond. I thought it would be temporary. I thought I would secure employment in another mental health center soon enough. But that was not the course my life would take.

I have maintained that private practice for over 45 years. It has been a professionally demanding and rewarding journey. Testing skills against the private marketplace is challenging tough to say the least, but very rewarding. Early on, I taught a half-credit course in marriage and family therapy at ESR. It pleases me to say that two people from that class pursued a vocation as therapists.

Psychotherapy is an honorable profession. It is maybe the last profession where experience trumps the newbies’ technical wizardry. Although I work to keep religion and belief out of the consultation room unless the thought disorders involved are part of the problem, the Spirit and God are always present, if almost never acknowledged.

Okay, there is way more to the story, but that is the skeleton of my story, and I’m sticking to it. The journey has been very good, and my season at ESR has granted me an enduring blessing.

ESR blew wide open my theological thinking
by Angelo Giannitelli, ’74 LMFT, LCSW
“Keith Esch and Tom Mullen, and the many others on whom they drew for ideas, funds, and expertise, created a place where transformative experiences occur—in worship, in classrooms, over meals, through conversations, in times of prayerful questions and listening, in tears and laughter and robust discussions.”

— Stephanie Crumley Effinger ‘83
ESR Alumni

The Story of Perkins-Wildman Community Center

narrated by Stephanie Crumley Effinger ’83

Delivered during the dedication ceremony on September 22, 2023.

Since its opening in the fall of 1989, I was a visitor to this building for its first decade, and I have become that again for the past three years since retiring. But from 2000–2020, it played a major role in my life, as it has for countless students, staff, and faculty.

So, from my vantage point, I am offering some color commentary on life with this building:

I begin by paying tribute to Keith Esch, whose daughter Brenda is with us today. A 1966 alum from ESR’s early days, Keith provided many forms of ministry after that time, both congregational and administrative, but primarily in a number of positions working at ESR: as Admissions Director, he admitted me as a student in the spring of 1977, and later he served on the Board of Advisors and Earlham Board of Trustees.

Starting in the mid-1980s, Keith worked closely with then-Dean Tom Mullen to raise the funds for this building and played a key role in its planning and construction. He always teased me about having so many stalls in the women’s restroom because of my input as a member of the Alumni/ae Council that throughout every class break of my four years as a student, we women had to wait in line for the single one in RBC!

But mostly, I want I give you a sense of life in this building since it came into use 34 years ago.

Beginning with the Gathering Room, as one enters: Here, folks cross paths, sit and chat, and welcome visitors. And prior to Common Meals, the tradition of standing in a big circle-ish formation, before Covid holding hands, sharing joys and concerns, closing in a time of prayer.

A memorable event from 15 or so years ago: We had a wonderful, large, lively entering class of 20-something-age students. One late night, I believe it was, someone among them realized that this would be the perfect place to bounce a superball, perhaps even toss it off the balcony. From what I heard, this experiment was a resounding success—until it struck and broke the glass part of the piece they referred to as “the eye of God,” located in the circle above what is now the fireplace wall. As you can imagine, the students were mortified and apologetic; the Dean, Jay Marshall, was not amused.

Quigg Worship Room, just off the Gathering Room, is the main place for community worship, both waiting worship and that with some program. Powerful times of centeredness and sharing occur there, some more formal and some less. Originally, the benches, as I understood from Keith, chosen by his Episcopalian assistant Claudia Ettel, were upholstered in a brilliant cherry red fabric! At some point, they were re-covered in a more muted color, but they remain as heavy as traditional church pews that are fastened in place, and it takes a strong back or assistance to move them, which discourages the practice of setting them into different formations as creative seminary students like to do.

Meditation Room and Reading Room: The smaller rooms along the south corridor have multiple uses, but the one on the corner, the Meditation Room is especially conducive to prayer and reflection in solitude or in small groups. A decade or so ago a spirituality class, in its practice of using candles to support centering, resulted in a spilling of wax. This, as you can imagine, was hard to remove from the carpet; it led to a great candle policy debate, which I imagine Tracy Crowe, the business manager at the time, remembers well.
Moving to the west wall, the **Snack Room** is a place for storing Common Meal leftovers, or one’s lunch or supper to be eaten at a class break. My favorite aspect of it is the collection of a wide variety of mugs, and, especially, boiling water on demand for tea.

The **Kitchen** and **Dining Room** are the more formal places for food preparation and sharing, for Common Meals and other occasions like lunch today. Board of Advisors meetings and other events often take place there as well.

Climbing the stairs, or taking the elevator to the second floor, each of the four **classrooms** differs considerably from the others in its characteristics and feel:

The **DeCou Room**, on the southwest corner above Quigg Worship Room, is the largest and most formal, and in recent years had the most technology installed in it. Larger classes and lectures often occur there, and when it’s ESR’s turn to host Joint Faculty Meetings once a semester or so, the tables are stretched around the circumference. ESR and Bethany faculty squeeze between the walls and the chairs to find a spot.

Next door to Decou, the **Moriuchi Room**, above the dining room, is living room-like, which includes several large comfortable armchairs. It’s a comfy place for small classes, clearness committees, and worship groups.

Continuing down the hall, the **Trueblood Room**, located above the kitchen and snack room, includes pictures and quotations from D. Elton Trueblood. My favorite, first in his words and then translated, is:

“A man has made at least a start on discovering the meaning of human life when he plants shade trees under which he knows full well he will never sit.”

“A person has made at least a start on discovering the meaning of human life when they plant shade trees under which they know full well they will never sit.”

And then, walking along the balcony, one comes to my favorite classroom, the **Kendall Room**, in the northeast corner, which I always preferred for teaching, unless the class was too large to squeeze in. It is small and cozy, and one of the windows on the north wall looks out on a maple tree which often turns a glorious red in the fall.

There are many more memories I could share, and others who have spent time in this building can add many of their own—and correct any errors I have made.

**Keith Esch** and **Tom Mullen**, and the many others on whom they drew for ideas, funds, and expertise, created a place where transformative experiences occur—in worship, in classrooms, over meals, through conversations, in times of prayerful questions and listening, in tears and laughter and robust discussions. This space indeed is a forest of the “shade trees” they planted, which, while during their lifetimes they did get to sit among the young trees, have grown much larger and provided hospitality for countless numbers of people who have spent time within it, and will for those yet to come.
Into my second year of teaching at the Ramallah Friends School in 1971/2, as I completed the required alternative service as a conscientious objector, I was planning to enroll in graduate school for German studies. My intent was to return to the U.S., do an M.A., and teach in a public high school. A meeting in Jerusalem with other Vietnam-era conscientious objectors, however, not only scuttled those plans but changed the trajectory of my life.

The Brethren and Mennonite C.O.s in the group shared about how important the undergraduate experience at their denominational colleges had been, and it got me thinking. I had gone to Ball State University and missed out on the tight-knit collegiate community they described. However, I began reflecting on what had been a very important part of my time at BSU: the Ball State Fellowship of Friends and participation in the wider campus ministry program on campus. I began sensing a bit of a crisis in my vocational plans. What had really been my “bliss” at the university was not my academic studies but my participation in the Quaker Fellowship. Would there be any way to “follow that bliss” in my career?

In one of those “God moments,” after returning from the meeting in Jerusalem to my residence in Ramallah, I happened to pick up the most recent Quaker Life magazine. As I leafed through the pages I came across the announcement of a new program at Earlham School of Religion: preparation for campus ministry. I knew right then that it was what I had to do. I applied, and in the fall of 1972, I found myself without any theological education or formal study of Quakerism in seminary.

It was a struggle. Theological education was like learning a new language for me, and the academic expectations were like nothing I’d experienced before. But Gene Roop opened the Hebrew Scriptures to me in new and exciting ways; Hugh Barbour introduced me to the depth and breadth of Quakerism; Jim Yerkes tried to get me through the finer points of theology by way of Langdon Gilkey. D. Elton Trueblood eased my way through the latter by responding to my confession of absolute cluelessness about those finer points. “Remember, Max,” the old philosopher told me, “the great truth of Christianity is not the divinity of Jesus but the Christ-likeness of God.”

As I headed into my second year on the campus ministry track, Tom Mullen arranged for me to be the Head Resident of Bundy Hall on the Earlham campus as my required internship. Along with assisting Tom, Earlham’s “Campus Minister-at-Large,” in his “Baby Bible” class with undergraduates and the Meetinghouse Cabinet (a planning group for the weekly All-College Meeting for Worship), I “ministered” to 180 college males in the residence hall. It was all an incredible immersion into the varieties of campus ministry as the ’70s unfolded around us.

Along the way, I met a co-ed involved in some of those campus ministry programs, Jane Deichler, and we married in 1974. Together, we continued as Head Residents, became the youth ministers at West Richmond Friends, and I eventually became an Earlham Admissions Counselor and was invited to start an “official” Office of Campus Ministry at Earlham. It was all very exciting and rewarding. But I sensed that I needed a Ph.D. if I were to remain at Earlham and include teaching in my ministry. In 1982, then, we packed up and headed to Philadelphia for my doctoral work in American religious history at Temple University.

There, my ESR preparation came in very handy—as it did in teaching Bible, Quakerism, and World Religions in Philadelphia’s Friends Schools. ESR’s comprehensive education also enabled me to teach in Philadelphia Yearly...
Meeting’s Quaker Studies Program, overseen by another ESR alumnus, Sam Caldwell.

After my eight years in Philadelphia to complete the Ph.D., however, a position back at Earlham was not available. My work in campus ministry at Earlham, however, caught the attention of Friends Center at Guilford College. They were planning to launch Guilford’s first “official” Office of Campus Ministry, and I was invited to apply. I was fortunate enough to be invited to accept the position in 1990, and it was off to Greensboro, North Carolina, with wife and three children in tow.

Everything I had learned at ESR, in campus ministry at Earlham, and in my further graduate studies was put into play at Guilford. I essentially replicated the program I developed at Earlham in forming Guilford’s campus ministry. I borrowed heavily from my studies at ESR and Temple in creating courses in American religious history; Quaker testimonies, spirituality, theology, and history; and the exploration of intentional community. ESR’s emphasis on the “equipping ministry” informed my emphasis on experiential education, student-centered learning, and the creation of the Quaker Leadership Scholars Program. Of whatever “accomplishments” I can claim in my 45-year career in Quaker education and campus ministry, I am proudest of what my former students have gone on to do in their careers.

Along the way, I re-ignited my passion for the work of Friends in the Middle East and began leading annual service-learning trips to Palestine and Israel as well as speaking and writing widely about the search for a just peace there.

Eight years into retirement now, I continue to draw on my ESR experience in all aspects of my life, not only in writing and continuing to teach in senior citizens’ programs; in my wife’s and my work for peace in the Middle East; and in service to the wider Quaker community, but also in the way I see the world and my place in it. ESR’s tag line in the ’70s was “We hold that Christ is present, leading, guiding, and directing.” That confidence in the Real Presence of the Inward Light of Christ has guided and sustained me throughout and has made my life more expansive, meaningful, and fulfilling.

I’m kinda glad I found that ad for ESR’s campus ministry program all those years ago in Ramallah.

Max L. Carter retired in 2015 as the William R. Rogers Director of Friends Center and Quaker Studies at Guilford College. A member of New Garden Friends Meeting (North Carolina Fellowship of Friends), he has served on numerous Quaker boards, including ESR’s Board of Advisers. He is the author or co-author of a variety of journal articles, encyclopedia entries, devotional writings, and several books, among which are College Spirit, Tales from the New Garden Friends Graveyard, Palestine and Israel: A Personal Encounter, and Annice Carter’s Life of Quaker Service.
A Holiday Greeting and Appeal
**Peace is the Way**

*Dear Friends,*

“Peace!” punctuates holiday greeting cards and is woven into traditional holiday lyrics. It sits atop little white doves on paper napkins, tree ornaments and all manner of holiday kitsch. This holiday season, though, one might detect a note of dissonance between the peace proclaimed and the global reality unfolding in Gaza, the West Bank, Israel, Syria, Lebanon, Sudan, DRC, Nagorno-Karabakh, Ukraine, and elsewhere. So many pleas for peace directed at those who have the most power to affect change are met with disturbing indifference. We are told that innocents killed is just “the price of waging a war.”

At Earlham School of Religion (ESR), however, we refuse to accept this logic of violence that all too often achieves bipartisan consensus even in our polarized political state. The work of peace is not partisan. It speaks truth to power without regard for the party of the one who sits in the seat of power. The work of peace rejects the notion that anyone is expendable, and it knows that peace is only achieved through just means and only exists in its fullest expression alongside justice.

Peacemaking takes many forms and peacemakers follow a range of leadings toward how their gifts might serve justice. This year, ESR students, alumni and faculty have answered calls to serve peace. Students have traveled to Poland to take part in Friends Peace Teams trainings with Ukrainian peace activists, hosted delegations of Earlham College peace activists traveling to D.C., worked with an organization that supports resettled refugees for their supervised ministry placement, and supported interfaith gatherings in Richmond. Faculty have attended conferences on colonialism in Bethlehem, tended to colleagues and friends in the West Bank and Gaza, and joined alumni in visiting legislators in partnership with FCNL’s ceasefire campaign. And we would love to hear how you have been called to serve peace in your home, community and world.

ESR nurtures a wide variety of gifts, offering each student spiritual formation and academic growth towards the peace work they’re called to do in the world. Join us in supporting ESR with your resources to make that possible.

*In peace and gratitude,*

Colleen and Julianna

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“ESR nurtures a wide variety of gifts, offering each student spiritual formation and academic growth towards the peace work they’re called to do in the world. Join us in supporting ESR with your resources to make that possible.”

— Colleen Wessel-McCoy

**ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF PEACE & JUSTICE STUDIES**

— Julianna Smith

**ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF HEBREW BIBLE**
COLLEEN WESSEL-MCCOY
Colleen Wessel McCoy: This summer, Colleen participated in the inaugural gathering of the Social Ethics & Organizing Working Group hosted at Vanderbilt Divinity School. She presented in an evening panel on Catalyzing Critical Consciousness. In September, she attended the Peace & Justice Studies Association Conference, where she presented a paper on “Martin Luther King Jr. and the Future of Labor” in the section Technology Horizons and Possibilities for Peace. Next year, the conference will be at Niagara University in New York in October.

GRACE JI-SUN KIM
Grace will preach and do a book signing at Knox College, Toronto. She will be a keynote speaker at King’s University College at Western University, London, Ontario. She will also give a talk at the Centre for Advanced Research in Catholic Thought, King’s University College. She is a guest preacher at Celebration Presbyterian Church, Markham, Ontario. Grace continues to host and produce the Madang Podcast hosted by The Christian Century with one episode every month and preaches most Sundays at Catasauqua Presbyterian Church, where she serves as their interim minister.

JULIANNA SMITH
Juliana will be teaching a Biblical Hebrew course in the spring. The course format would be two 1.25-hour meetings per week on Zoom.

BEN BRAZIL
Ben will be taking a group of students to Bolivia in the spring of 2024 for a cross-cultural class. The trip to Bolivia will focus on the Quaker experience in the country, as well as how Quakers are responding to climate change, social transformation, and other peace/justice issues.

STEVE ANGELL
Steve, together with Ben Pink Dandelion and David Harrington Watt, will be leading another round of book discussion on “Creation of Modern Quaker Diversity” in March 2024. Steve, Ben, and David are co-authors of the book, Creation of Modern Quaker Diversity.

JIM HIGGINBOTHAM
Jim is on sabbatical and is expected back to campus in the spring.
ESR Alumni and Students Connect with Prospective Students

Who wouldn’t want to talk to these smiling Friends about the M.A. in Peace & Social Transformation program (MAPST) or the Leadership & Service Scholarship? Recently, ESR grad Liz Nicholson, the dedicated Director of the Quaker Leadership Scholars Program at Guilford College, along with Christine Ashley, a passionate MAPST alum who returned to ESR for her M.Div., and Beulah Gullion, a new M.Div. student and Guilford graduate (not pictured), enthusiastically shared insights about the M.A. in Peace & Social Transformation program (MAPST) and the Leadership & Service Scholarship at the Guilford College Grad Fair.

ESR grad Ruth Cutcher, now the Recruiting and Marketing Coordinator for Quaker Voluntary Services, recently joined forces with ESR Admissions to table at the Indianapolis Festival of Faiths, representing both ESR and QVS. Additionally, Jackson Napier, an enthusiastic MAPST student, showcased ESR at the Earlham College Involvement Fair.

Thank you to these and all the ESR grads and students who enrich ESR’s recruitment and admissions efforts with their time and energy.
SAVE THE DATE:
A CONVERSATION WITH BESTSELLING AUTHOR

Anne Lamott

6–9 p.m. April 25, 2024
Goddard Auditorium

Mark your calendar as the ESR community prepares for a conversation with bestselling novelist and essayist Anne Lamott on the Earlham campus.

You won’t want to miss this highlight of the ESR alumni reunion as we open the 2024 Quaker Leadership Conference. A detailed program and information on how to reserve your tickets will be available soon.
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