



ESR Reports  
Vol. IV, Number 2

### In This Issue:

#### Theme Articles

- 1 Building Community Among Young Adult Friends  
*By Erin McDougall*
- 1 Calling a Generation of Peace  
*By Micah Bales*
- 4 Global Learning: Theology in Context  
*By Mandy Ford*
- 8 The Dean's Word  
*By Jay Marshall*

#### Features

- 2 Coming Up @ ESR
- 3 Conference Opportunities
- 4 In Memoriam: Maxine Beane
- 5 People and Places: Faculty News
- 6 Nowadays: Alumni/ae News
- 7 Looking Back

ESR Reports is published in the fall and spring for alumni/ae and friends of Earlham School of Religion

Katherine Murray, Editor  
Susanna Combs, Art Director

## Building Community Among Young Adult Friends

*By Erin McDougall*

*C*onvergence is a catchy word in Quakerism these days. For those of you unfamiliar with the term, *convergent* is a term coined by Robin Mohr, a well-known Quaker blogger from Pacific Yearly Meeting. It is a combination of the terms *conservative* (in relation to the tradition of conservative Friends) and *emergent* (to reference the strong presence of the emergent church movement as a revival movement among Friends today).

Though it is an ever-evolving conversation, the general definition has to do with a commitment to living in a radically faithful way within contemporary culture. In order to do this, Friends are focused on building local and global community, in which they aspire to personally and communally witness to their beliefs.

Convergent Friends are attempting to put the traditional beliefs and practices of early Friends in dialog with postmodernism, in order to revitalize the Religious Society of Friends on both a corporate and personal level.

One of the main threads of discussion within this movement deals with intrafaith dialogue, especially between theist and non-theist Friends. Thanks to the wonderful invention of blogs, Friends are able to share their own

belief systems and explore how that informs their faithful living. Obviously, within this type of dynamic, Friends are presented with countless opportunities in which they are challenged and/or supported in their faith.

Having said all that, one has to question whether “convergent” Friends are a new trend

within Quakerism (as many would imply) or if this movement has existed in other forms and incarnations before now. The Religious Society of Friends has long believed in many of the tenets of the Emergent Church, including the importance of community, radically lived faith, equality of min-

*Continued on page 2*

## Calling a Generation of Peace

*By Micah Bales*

*T*he significance of the current movement underway by the Holy Spirit to raise up young people from across the world to the service of Christ in the Religious Society of Friends is nothing less than God's calling out and raising up of a new generation of valiant Quaker ministers. Just as the early Friends were called by God 350 years ago, in the “Quaker Galilee” of Northwestern England, the Spirit of Christ is in this generation, gathering the people of God and teaching us to be faithful and capable servants in the work that God has for us. God is calling a remarkable and surprising group of young men and women to be soldiers in this fresh campaign in the Lamb's War. We can trust that God is calling and teaching those who have the gifts necessary for the work of the Kingdom in the world. We can trust that working together as co-laborers in the Spirit of Christ that the world will see the perennial re-emergence of the Light of God and the reality of God's reign in the world.

We are called from many different regions, backgrounds, theological understandings, and personal gifts and capacities. But laboring together in the Spirit of God, we know that we have been raised up together for a purpose, and that each of us

*Continued on page 3*



## Up Coming @ ESR

### ESR Pastors' Conference

September 20, 2008

Dr. Thomas Boomershine, speaker  
"Biblical Storytelling"

### Ministry of Writing Colloquium

October 24-25, 2008

Dr. Robert Wicks,  
Author of *Riding the Dragon*

[See page 7 for more details]

**COMMUNITY**  
*continued from page 1*  
istry, understanding the secular as sacred, and the importance of Jesus' life and teachings. Exploring the relationship between traditional Quakerism and this new movement is one of the focuses of the convergent Friend movement.

Because Friends believe in ongoing revelation, Quakerism is a religion that has been in a state of constant renewal and growth throughout its (relative short) history. Each generation of Friends explores how we live our faith on a daily basis in a radical way. Each generation of Friends also continually discerns which beliefs must be adhered to in order to be considered faithful members of the Religious Society of Friends. One example of this constant discernment is the involved history of divisions and reunifications among Friends.

One important distinction in the current conversation is the use of the Internet as a tool to facilitate dialog and relationship among Friends. The Internet is an interesting factor to consider because of the way it tends to encourage a younger generation of Friends to participate in this discussion.

Throughout the history of Quakerism, young adult Friends have been an integral part of the Society. In fact, Quakerism was started by 23 year-old, charismatic George

Fox. There are many examples of this phenomenon, but instead of walking through the history of Friends by the light of young adults, let's skip ahead to the early twentieth century. The movement to reunite the Orthodox and Hicksite split was generated within circles of young adult Friends in places like Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Canada. After the reunification(s), young adults came together to build relationships with each other, across the divides of Quakerism, and to deepen their faith through the creation of the Young Friends of North America.

As a current young adult Friend, I am constantly aware of conversations regarding the presence (or absence) of youth/young adults within the Society today. Many meetings and churches despair over the apparent lack of interest coming from the youth, as shown by declining numbers and attendance. Quakers are working hard to find ways to encourage their younger Friends to attend meeting and become involved in some way.

To these Friends I would offer the excitement and energy

found within the movement of young adults in the Society today. This virtual world is a powerful one and does not exist merely in cyberspace. The energy generated from this mode of community building is helping to inspire young adults to come together and do this same exploration in person. Not only does it inspire community building for young adults, but is a valuable tool in building intergenerational relationships, as well.

The world of convergent Friends online is full of possibilities for relationship building (within and across the branches of Friends) and opportunities to redefine what it means to live faithfully. It is a way that all generations of Friends are able to reach across the theological and geographical barriers that separate us, and attempt to build life-giving relationships that challenge and sustain us.

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*Erin McDougall is a current M. Div. student at ESR with an emphasis in pastoral care and counseling. She grew up in Vancouver, BC, Canada. In her spare time, Erin enjoys writing, cooking, and crafts — including working with recycled glass to create art.*



Photographer Lauren Baumann,  
ESR student

### GENERATION continued from page 1

has a special role to play in the Body of Christ. Through trust in God's sovereignty and faithfulness we can be loving to one another, even when we do not completely understand one another in human terms. We know that we share one heavenly Parent, the Truth in which we all live and have our being, and that though we have different gifts, different understandings, different calls, we form part of one Body, and we are one people in Christ. It is this understanding, this trust in the Power of God which is over all, which enables us to strive together in the work of our shared Divine Parent. Knowing that we are one in the Spirit of Christ, we come together across the divisions that have so long plagued our small but fractured Religious Society. We find ourselves to be truly friends, truly brothers and sisters in the same Spirit of Truth that has called us all. We are a religious society of friends, in that God has called us to friendship and unity with one another, just as the Holy Spirit has called us to friendship and unity with God.

God intends this generation of Friends to be an example to our elders, so caught up in the divisions of theology,

regionalism, and personalities. We are Friends because the Spirit that was in Christ has called us to be friends of God and, in God, friends to one another. We are brothers and sisters in the Spirit, born again as we are of a new birth from above that has brought us to acknowledge the one Parent we all share. We seek to follow with faithfulness and obedience the guidance of the Spirit of God, to be friends of Jesus by following in his footsteps and doing what he has commanded us. We are called to

despise no one, cut off no one, and give up on no one. We are called to be instruments of God's peace and unity that is beyond human understanding. Some of us were shown this in Lancaster, England, in 2005. This was demonstrated to some of us once again in Burlington, New Jersey, in 2007. God is calling this generation to be one of true peace, the peace that takes away all occasion for war and strife and inaugurates the Peaceable Kingdom in the unity of the Spirit.

*Micah Bales is a student in the Master of Divinity program at ESR. He was born in Wichita, Kansas and grew up in University Friends Church, part of Mid-America Yearly Meeting (EFI) and Great Plains Yearly Meeting (FUM), where his parents were co-pastors. He became convinced as a Friend during his time working at the Casa de los Amigos in Mexico City and is now a member of Heartland Friends Meeting, part of Great Plains Yearly Meeting. Micah carries a concern for Gospel ministry and for the encouragement of young adult Friends worldwide, as well as a concern for promoting and nurturing friendship between Friends from different branches of the Quaker family.*

3

### UPCOMING

## Conference Opportunities

The first conference of the 2008-2009 year will once again be the annual **Pastors Conference**. This year's conference, however, will take on a decidedly different flavor as it is being held in conjunction with a storyteller's conference. Our keynote speaker, the Rev. Dr. Thomas Boomershine, founded the Network of Biblical Storytellers in 1977 and has lectured and led biblical storytelling workshops around the world. As the G. Ernest Thomas Distinguished Professor of Christianity and Communication at United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio from 2004-2006, Tom also served as Professor of New Testament for more than 20 years. An ordained elder in the West Ohio Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, Tom now writes and produces multimedia resources for the interpretation of the Bible in digital culture.

On October 24-25, 2008, ESR is pleased to welcome Dr. Robert Wicks, professor of Psychology at Loyola College in Maryland, as keynote speaker for the **Ministry of Writing Colloquium**. In his clinical practice, Dr. Wicks focuses on working with psychotherapists, physicians, nurses, educators, relief workers, and others in full-time ministry. Dr. Wicks has also served as General Editor of three series of books and published more than 40 books for both professionals and the general public. One of Dr. Wicks' latest works is entitled *Riding the Dragon*. Jack Kornfield, author of *A Path with Heart* said, "Like a good friend's support in tough times, this book is both compassionate and wise."

Plan ahead to join us for these two stimulating opportunities!

## In Memoriam: Maxine Beane



Maxine Beane

ESR was saddened by the recent news of **Maxine**

**Beane's** death. Maxine lived a life characterized by meditation, contemplation, and thankfulness. She had a long history of involvement with numerous Friends groups and was a former member of the ESR Board of Advisors as well as a former trustee of several other Quaker organizations. As a past president of the United Society of Friends Women International, Maxine participated in meetings in Kenya, Palestine, Korea, India, and elsewhere. She and husband Ercil traveled in over 69 countries, lecturing on their philosophy of life and helping to establish numerous Chiropractic and Live Research Centers.

In her 1975 Johnson Lecture entitled *The New Creation*, Maxine challenged listeners to consider their concept of God, noting that "Our growth in the New Life will be limited by that concept." She proceeded to articulate the importance of recognizing the presence and activity of God around us, with the expectation that we can "walk in confidence and newness of life."

ESR joins Ercil Beane and family in celebrating the rich ministry Maxine offered to so many.

## Global Learning: Theology in Context

By Mandy Ford

For two weeks in January, ESR Associate Professor of Theology David Johns taught an intensive course in Mexico. *Theology in Context* was a continuation of a growing personal interest in Latin America and of Quakerism south of the U.S. border. The ESR students who traveled with Johns comprised only half of the class. The other participants were Quakers from Ciudad Victoria, the capital city of Tamiulipas, Mexico.

The course, including small group exercises, was taught in Spanish, with topics focused on fundamental faith concerns of interest to both groups. "This course was an example of ESR's commitment to provide theological education contextually," said Johns. "I think it adds to and deepens what we are already doing." There were opportunities to worship with Friends, participate in a local service project, and dialog with local Pentecostal pastors. ESR participants lived with Mexican

families during their stay in Victoria.

To offer a contrast and to illustrate diversity within Mexican Quakerism, the ESR group also traveled to Mexico City where they stayed at a Friends hospitality center, and worshiped with and interacted with Friends, including a number of expats living in the area. The group visited a number of important cultural and religious sites in the area including the Museum of Anthropology, the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe, the home of Frida Kahlo, and the Pyramids of Teotihuacán.

The trip was transformational for the students who attended, including Master of Divinity student Micah Bales. He stated, "The chance to visit Friends in Mexico was a great blessing. I was awestruck by the hospitality of our hosts in Ciudad Victoria. I am pleased by the growing friendship between Friends there and Earlham School of Religion."

Over the past few years the seminary has been building and strengthening relationships with Friends leaders in Latin America. Under the direction of Jay Marshall, ESR faculty traveled to Honduras in January 2006. Additionally, David Johns has taught two theology courses in the Colegio Biblico Jorge Fox in Honduras, and several workshops in Mexico, Honduras, and Guatemala. During summer 2008, Johns will be Friend-in-Residence at the Casa de los Amigos in Mexico City.

"It is one thing to recognize in theory the importance of contextual education, it's quite another to do it," Johns said. "Clearly there are challenges... much for us to learn, many ways to improve. However, we have a commitment to continue deepening the leadership preparation we offer at ESR."

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Mandy Ford is the Director of External Relations at ESR.



# ESR People & Places FACULTY NEWS

During her fall 2006 sabbatical, **Stephanie Crumley-Effinger** participated in a weekend workshop led by Helen Palmer, founder of the Narrative Tradition of the Enneagram system of personality type. Stephanie is following up this learning experience by pursuing teacher certification through the Enneagram Professional Training Program (EPTP) developed by Helen Palmer and David Daniels. In October 2007, Stephanie had the first level of training, a week-long intensive, and in January 2008 she participated in the second level, learning to do typing interviews with individuals and to interview panels of people representing a given type. In March, she took the third step, an internship in which she conducted a series of interviews and panels under the oversight of a mentor. She plans to complete the internship in time to return to the October 2008 intensive to conduct panels and interview as a trainee, which is the final step in the certification process.

**Jim Higginbotham** traveled to Washington, DC in March for the Ecumenical Advocacy Days, an interdenominational gathering of peace and justice advocates, including American Friends Service Committee and Friends Committee on National Legislation. The theme was "Claiming a Vision of True Security" in which participants discussed that the use of military for security is both less effective and not consistent with our values. Instead, more money and resources should be used for development and diplomacy. Jim, along with 14 other Hoosiers (including Episcopalians, Lutherans, Catholics, and Presbyterians) met with representatives of the Indiana senators to urge them to divert resources away from defense.

Information about the conference can be found at <http://advocacydays.org/>.

Jim also just completed an article entitled, *Before & After the Reunion: Pastoral Care in a Time of War*, which will be used as an online resource for congregations in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ. The article reminds Christians that a commitment to peace does not negate the responsibility to care for veterans and their families and offers suggestions and resources for providing pastoral care. This article is part of a peace education project called, "From War to Peace," produced in response to the fifth anniversary of the Iraq war.

**Jay Marshall** accompanied **David Johns'** Contextual Theology class to Mexico and preached at the Ciudad Victoria Meeting. He also preached at West Newton Friends Meeting. He was the keynote presenter at ESR's Philadelphia Vitality Series, addressing the theme of "Vitality Among Friends" as well as presenting a workshop titled, "If These Walls Could Talk." In February he participated in a focus group with Indiana Yearly Meeting seeking to understand and address the financial challenges facing Friends ministers.

In the previous issue **Tim Seid** reported on his book on Hebrews. He has since signed a contract with Wipf & Stock and expects the book to be published by the fall. Tim presented an address at ESR's Vitality Among Friends conference on April 12, focused on leadership among Friends. Tim's presentation, "Leading the Soul: Helping Each Other Reach the Goal of Human Existence," put into more practical terms what he has been researching and teaching

for the past few years. This topic will also be part of Tim's writing project during his sabbatical the second half of 2008. The working title of his current project is *(Trans)forming Early Christian Communities: Reconnecting with Ancient Philosophical Practices*. Following FAHE in England at the end of June, Tim will travel to Rome, having been selected to participate in an NEH-sponsored summer classical studies seminar during July. He will give special attention to the study of households in the Roman Empire during the first century. Tim's leading has been to study Arabic and to travel to the Middle East during the fall semester. He is making plans to be a Friend in Residence at Ramallah Friends School, take classes in Arabic and in Palestinian/Arab culture at Birzeit University, and teach a class at Bethlehem Bible College.

In January, **Susan Yanos** conducted a writers' workshop in Monteverde, Costa Rica, entitled "Writing as Ministry: Ways to Engage and Transform Readers." Twelve participants came from five Central American countries: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico. Each participant completed a series of writing exercises in order to produce a personal essay. The workshop was requested by Latin American Friends and was underwritten by FWCC and its Committee of Latin American Friends (COAL).

In December, she attended the Modern Language Association's annual convention in Chicago, where she presented a paper on teaching Indiana literature to reflect the region's outer and inner landscapes. In March, she attended the College English Association to present a paper on Annie Dillard's writing techniques in *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*.

"Dear young People,  
choose God for your  
Portion; love his Truth,  
and be not ashamed  
of it: Choose for your  
Company such as serve  
him in Uprightness; and  
shun, as most dangerous,  
the Conversation of  
those whose Lives are  
of an ill Savour; for,  
by frequenting such  
Company, some hopeful  
young People have  
come to great Loss, and  
have been drawn from  
less Evils to greater,  
to their utter Ruin. In  
the Bloom of Youth no  
Ornament is so lovely as  
that of Virtue, nor any  
Enjoyments equal to  
those which we partake  
of, in fully resigning  
ourselves to the divine  
Will: These Enjoyments  
add Sweetness to all other  
Comforts, and give true  
Satisfaction in Company  
and Conversation, where  
People are mutually  
acquainted with it; and,  
as your Minds are thus  
seasoned with the Truth,  
you will find Strength to  
abide steadfast to the  
Testimony of it, and be  
prepared for Services in  
the Church."

—John Woolman, *Journal*.

# Nowadays

ALUMNI/AE NEWS

**David Ashcraft** helped present in November “Mind, Body, and Soul,” a training seminar for clergy presented by NAMI, National Alliance for Mental Illness. David Johns of ESR was also a speaker for this training, which prepared local clergy for dealing with mental illness within their congregations.

**Stan Banker** is in his 17th year as pastor of Indianapolis First Friends Meeting. In October 2007 he led his eighth group to Costa Rica and, as always, visited the Quaker community in Monteverde. His wife, Jennie, is now in her 28th year of teaching. Their daughter, Jennifer, is a family practice physician and their son, Nathaniel, is an architect. And the best news of all, Stan and Jennie became grandparents with the birth of their grandson, Joshua, this past April. Everyone is living happily ever after in Indianapolis.

**Brent Bill's** new book, *Sacred Compass: A Way of Spiritual Discernment* will be released in May 2008. With a foreword by Richard J. Foster, Brent's book uses a compass metaphor for our spiritual lives and the work of discerning God's will for them. “God doesn't speak as clearly and as obviously as Mapquest or GoogleMaps or GPS,” says Brent. “Maybe that's because we don't navigate the life of faith via anything remotely resembling GPS. Instead, the divine compass points us to the mind and love of God. Our sacred compass operates in our souls and calls us to life with God. The sacred compass leads us on a life of pilgrimage—a hike to wholeness and holiness.”

Brent also co-wrote *Holy Places:*

*Matching Sacred Space with Mission and Message* with two of his fellow staff members of the Indianapolis Center for Congregations. *Holy Places* is a practical guide congregations need to help them with the challenges of renovation, remodeling, expansion, or building. It was released by Alban Publishing in December 2007.

**Jane Brown** is presenting a workshop in Norfolk, Virginia at the American Association of Pastoral Counselors' 45th Annual conference at the end of March. The workshop focuses on the effectiveness and psycho-spiritual impact of using meditation to diminish pain. Jane is a fellow in AACP and currently Chair of Health and Wellness at Antioch University McGregor in Yellow Springs, Ohio.

**Josh Brown** sends this update: “I've got a new book out! My new book, *Rumors of the Resurrection: Seven Meditations on Easter*, is a sequel to my earlier book, *What Does an Angel Look Like? Six Meditations on Christmas*. It brings together what I feel are my very best Easter thoughts from 25 years of ministry. I've been planning this project for the last several years, and I hope that you will like it! You can read more about it on our web site at [www.goodreadpress.com/rumors.htm](http://www.goodreadpress.com/rumors.htm). There's an order form, plus links to all of the other books which Joyce and I have produced over the last 10 years.”

**Anne Buttenheim** continues to be active in her Frederick, MD monthly meeting and is spending more time working on local political campaigns and issues as well as serving as an officer of the local NAACP. She is looking for

work now that her children are older but finds her job hunt gets sidetracked by all the reading she does (racism, social justice, biblical scholarship, Quaker history, etc.).

**Gary Cummings** is a case manager Registered Nurse for AtHome Care in Charlottesville, Virginia. Faith (Funk) Cummings, is pursuing Braille Transcriber certification from the Library of Congress. They write, “Currently we are attending a Wesleyan Church and have spent the last year soaking up Holiness Theology.”

**Ingrid Fabianson** sends this update: “I am presently working for Skagit Hospice in Mt. Vernon, Washington, and I will be based in the San Juan Islands, so I can finally live at home. I am active in our small worship group on the island and continue to stay in touch with my friends in Bend, Oregon where I last lived. Hello to all my friends at Earlham.”

**Michael Fales**, 2007 ESR graduate and Director of Church Relations and Campus Ministries at Olivet College, was ordained at Olivet College Homecoming at the Olivet Congregational Church on October 21, 2007.

**Martha Hinshaw Sheldon** celebrates this spring the end of her ninth year at Wilmington College as campus minister, which she describes as rich, challenging and transforming work. This is also her last year at the college. Her aim is to find part-time work, do odd jobs, and eventually find another full-time job that would allow her husband to take a break. He has been struggling with cancer and working full-time these past three

years. Martha adds, “Sometimes clear leadings come without clear paths.”

**Jennie Isbell**, 2007 ESR graduate, jumped this fall into her work at ESR as Coordinator of Leadership Development (a one-year pilot project). As part of this work, she spent some time this past fall talking with alumni and friends of ESR about the needs and characteristics of Quaker leaders. Here in Richmond, she spent an afternoon with Earl Prignitz, Phil Johnson, Mary Elizabeth Long and Maureen McCarthy. And in the Philadelphia area, Jennie visited with Margy and Martin Trueblood, (son and daughter-in-law of D. Elton Trueblood), Martin's brother, Arnold Trueblood, Patricia A. Brown, Micky Edgerton, and other residents of Foulkeways. Jennie also attended a Quaker leadership consultation sponsored by the Shoemaker Fund where she met Sam Caldwell.

**Susan Jeffers** traveled in October 2007 first to Poughkeepsie, New York, to lead Bible Study sessions at the Friends General Conference Young Quakers conference, and then on to LaVerne, California to lead several Bible study workshops for the Church of the Brethren's Pacific Southwest District conference. She has been quite active teaching online Bible courses through the COB's Susquehanna Valley Ministry Center, in addition to teaching NT Greek for Bethany and occasional Quaker Studies courses for ESR.

**Howard Macy** is facilitating the January 2008 book discussion at Barclay Press' website ([www.barclaypress.com](http://www.barclaypress.com)), on Thomas Kelly's

## LOOKING BACK on *ESR* Events

book of essays *The Eternal Promise* (Friends United Press), whose Foreword Howard wrote. Several ESR alums are participating in the discussion, including C.G. White and Susan Jeffers.

**Kathy Luethje** writes, "I am in the process of completing a musical comedy about the life of Hildegard of Bingen, for which I received a small grant, and will be presenting [a talk] about the play at the Hildegard of Bingen Society conference in Philadelphia in late May. I hope to actually put on a production of it at the Indianapolis Episcopal Cathedral within the next year, but dates have not been set. I would love to hear from others, old friends, and especially anyone interested in Hildegard. Blessings to all."

**Lisa Lundeen Nagel** has completed two units of her first CPE residency and has accepted a position as a second-year resident, at Moses Cone Health System in Greensboro, NC. Spouse Ehren Nagel is an actuarial analyst on a professional leadership track at a prominent local firm. They are continuing to build their nest and to settle back into their faith community, First Friends Meeting, since moving back to Greensboro in August 2007.

**John Zehring** serves on the Adjunct Faculty of Bryant University in Smithfield, Rhode Island where he teaches public speaking. He is Senior Pastor of the Kingston Congregational Church in Kingston, Rhode Island and was recently the Preacher of the Meeting at the Rhode Island Conference of the United Church of Christ.

In the spring of 2008, ESR hosted a series of one-day workshops on issues of Quaker vitality and leadership. Held at the Arch Street Meeting House in Philadelphia, PA, these workshops took place Saturday, February 16 and Saturday, April 12.

The February workshop, *Vitality Among Friends*, featured keynote speaker and ESR Dean Jay Marshall, and provided workshops by Jennie Isbell, ESR Coordinator of Leadership Development, and Joanna Schofield, Director of Academic Services for both ESR and Bethany Theological Seminary. *Leadership Among Friends*, the topic of the April 12 workshop, featured keynote speaker Tim Seid, ESR Assistant Professor of New Testament Studies and Associate Dean. He spoke on the topic *Leading the Soul: Helping Each Other Reach the Goal of Human Existence*. Other workshops were presented by ESR Leatherrock Professor of Quaker Studies Stephen Angell and Jennie Isbell.

On March 1, 2008, the ESR Center was alive with the energy of the 8th annual **Spirituality Gathering**. As persons entered to register, they were greeted with classic, old songs honoring God and creation and bringing to the morning memories of times past. Local artists Margie Stoller and her musical partner Gene Webb offered a blessing of music to begin the day. Keynote speaker Christine Whitmire effectively set the tone for the day with her opening remarks. Later workshops led by ESR students, faculty, and graduates covered a wide range of topics directed toward a search for simplicity in life. A group of more than 80 agreed, almost to a person, that this was the best gathering yet. At the close of the gathering, participants were asking about next year's date so they could mark it on their calendars. The day was, indeed, a successful one of "Seeking Simplicity."

ESR hosted the annual **Willson Lectures** on Monday and Tuesday, April 7 and 8. *The Quaker Testimony of Community: Interfaith and Intrafaith* featured Friend Ann Riggs, theological author, editor, and member of the adjunct faculty at ESR. Riggs presented three lectures during the two-day event. Monday's lecture focused on *Community and Solidarity*, and Tuesday's lectures were on *Community and Transformation* and *Community and the Otherness of Others*.



DEAN'S WORD  
continued from page 8

In recent years, ESR has witnessed a resurgence of students in the "twenty-something" age range. Originally, volunteer experience or campus ministers seemed to be the two most influential factors. The declaration of war against Iraq created a wave of interest in peace studies that continued the stream of younger students. But at this point, it seems clear that something bigger is in process. ESR is enjoying the influx of younger students who come seeking spiritual community in which to deepen their knowledge of Friends' understanding of the Gospel and to explore their own calls to ministry.

This issue of *ESR Reports* invites two of these Friends to share their reflections with you. In conversations I have had with various students at ESR, these young adult Friends seem to want faith with conviction, community with integrity, and relationships with accountability. They are willing to invest time and energy to create space for conversation and theological reflection. They are insistent that they themselves take partial responsibility for discerning their path together. Their questions and expectations challenge us at times, but these are precisely the accountability checks that older generations need in order to guard against complacency and irrelevancy.



## ESR and Young Adult Friends

Jay Marshall, Dean of ESR

### THE DEAN'S word

The phrase *Quaker gray* has a current meaning that is different from its earlier reference to Friends' plain dress. For many meetings today it is reference to the dominant hair color that populates our pews and benches. A frequent worry among some Friends—and for that matter, among other faith traditions—is that our congregations are aging, or graying, if you will. This is not the case everywhere, but it is true in many locations.

There is something about the presence of the young among us that puts us more at ease with the state of our meetings. A few years ago, as I listened to a congregation lament its small numbers and complete absence of young families and children, I posed a few questions to them. What would it mean to embrace an identity of a congregation of retirees? What would be required to release their anxiety about the lack of youth? Could they imagine celebrating their

age and developing ministries that catered to that segment of the population? These trial balloon ideas never got off the ground because it was impossible for this group to imagine a future without a younger generation surrounding them.

Regardless of whatever wisdom may come with age, the power of youthfulness captivates the hearts of older generations. I have reached a point in my life where I am experiencing this phenomenon myself. Perhaps it is the youthful combination of zeal and ideals that sparks reminders of our own deep yearnings for triumphant change powered by God's Spirit. Maybe it is the abiding comfort that settles around us when we sense there is yet another generation to embody the testimonies and values that

“Whatever the reason, when we see signs that the Spirit is moving among the younger generations, we interpret it as evidence that God is still at work among us and that the future remains ripe with possibilities.”

define our understanding of the work to which Christ calls us. Possibly, it is nothing more than one last challenge against our own mortality. Whatever the reason, when we see signs that the Spirit is moving among the younger generations, we interpret it as evidence that God is still at work among us and that the future remains ripe with possibilities. Moments like those stoke hopeful fires that had nearly died out.

*Continued on page 7*

EARLHAM SCHOOL OF RELIGION  
228 COLLEGE AVENUE  
RICHMOND, INDIANA 47374  
1-800-432-1377  
esr.earlham.edu

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

*In this issue:*  
**ESR's Future with Young Adult Friends**