

This issue of QHE offers articles in three separate areas. **Stephen Potthoff** and **Janet Gray** start off the **environmental** section with two classroom-focused pieces. First, Stephen writes movingly about engaging his conservative, eco-skeptical *Values and Ethics* students at Wilmington College. Stephen provides a combination of readings, videos, discussions and hands-on experiences that provide entry to deep ecology principles from Native American and Christian perspectives. Janet follows. Drawing on insights from Parker Palmer, she offers poignant observations about challenging exploitive economic and social practices in her *Ecofeminism* course at The College of New Jersey.

The issue's second section addresses the important issue: **developing vibrant communities of Young Adult Friends**. **Emily Higgs** from Haverford College begins by describing the exciting fruits of the collaborative intervisitation program among several Quaker colleges. **Stephen Dotson**, writing from his perspective as a member of Baltimore Yearly Meeting, pursues this challenge a step further, thoughtfully describing the stark absence of Quaker community that Young Adult Friends have experienced over the last several decades after leaving college. However, he also presents encouraging indicators of renewal rapidly developing with the assistance of social networking technology.

Guillermo Gibens concludes the issue with his article addressing the topic of the third section: **mentoring Hispanic students**. Guillermo has substantial experience doing so at William Penn University, and he is a valuable resource to us all.

Built into these five articles, there is something new in this issue of **QHE**. As I read the articles, I found myself anxious to have more information about many of the individuals, books, videos and organizations cited by the authors, and I found myself searching online for this information. Somewhere along the line, a light bulb went off and I realized that I could insert **hyperlinks for the readers**, in case they, too, are interested in such information. So, scattered throughout the issue you will find these links. They appear in **violet and underlined**.

Submissions: *QHE* is published twice a year, in the spring and the fall. Articles submitted for possible publication should be sent as Word documents to: weinholtz@hartford.edu. Since *QHE* is not wed to any particular referencing format, you may use the professional style of your choice. If you would like to discuss an idea that you have for an article, my telephone number is: 860-768-4186. In case you want to send a hardcopy, my address is: Donn Weinholtz, Department of Educational Leadership, University of Hartford, 223 Auerbach Hall, 200 Bloomfield Ave., West Hartford, CT 06117.

Dreaming the Dream of the Earth in the College Classroom

Stephen Potthoff
Wilmington College

For FAHE's 2010 conference at William Penn University last summer, I had the pleasure of presenting my experiences over the last seven years with a class titled *Values and Ethics*, a Religion and Philosophy department course I teach at Wilmington College, a small Quaker school in rural southwest Ohio. I developed *Values and Ethics* as an introduction to how philosophers and ethicists grapple with a wide variety of moral issues. A particularly relevant course unit exposes students to environmental ethics, and the science of global climate change.

While my students are often skeptical of science, evolution, and global warming, they are much more open to Native American and indigenous wisdom about our relationship to the cosmos. Guided by the philosophy of deep ecology and its indigenous roots, I engage a wide variety of readings, videos, and experiential service learning projects in my efforts to foster a deeper, more meaningful connection to the living world, the earth, and the cosmos as a whole.

Perhaps in Wilmington more than elsewhere, discussing the topic of evolution, or the latest theories on the origins of the universe, or global warming, can become a troublesome task. Just over the border in Kentucky lies the Creation Museum, a popular field trip destination for many Christian students on campus. Southern Ohio is also home to pastor [Ken Ham](#), a self-

appointed creation science evangelist with a national following. Conservative and libertarian politics have long dominated Wilmington, and southwest Ohio in general; dismissive skepticism toward the science of global warming typifies prevailing attitudes in the church-based, close-knit communities in which my students have come of age.

In contrast, my fascination since childhood with nature, ecology, human and planetary evolution inspires me to share my own wonder and excitement over the profoundly mysterious nature of the universe, the earth, and the life and consciousness it has brought forth. Given how fundamentally my own (continually evolving) story of cosmic and human origins defines me, I understand how scientific origin accounts, often denounced and demonized from the pulpit, can deeply disturb many of my students. Thus, I often struggle with how to present the revolutionary insights of evolutionary science and astrophysics without precipitating a faith crisis or intensifying the existing polarization of the creation-evolution debate in this country. Given that my students often harbor skepticism toward the science of climate change as well as evolution, what does it mean in this situation, as my predecessor T. Canby Jones might express it, to lead my students to the Truth and Teacher within themselves?

Though I will continue to live this question as long as I teach *Values and Ethics*, I have discovered a number

of helpful texts, videos, and experiential approaches that have encouraged consideration of the possibility that religious and scientific worldviews need not be in conflict. I generally begin my environmental ethics unit with a discussion of three creation accounts in the Hebrew Bible: the seven-day creation account (Genesis 1:1-2:4), the Garden of Eden story (Genesis 2:4-3:24), and Psalm 104. Comparing the Genesis stories, which are somewhat familiar ground for many students, demonstrates that the ethic of dominion presented in Genesis 1:28 is qualified by the ethic of stewardship implied by Genesis 1:25 (God pronounces all creation good) and Genesis 2:15: “The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.” Psalm 104, a poetic celebration of ongoing creation based on an ancient Egyptian hymn to the sun disc god Aten, completes the picture by presenting the Hebrew creator God, like the sun, engaged in life-giving and ongoing care for the entire natural world, modeling the ethic of stewardship for every human being to follow.

Discussing these biblical texts prepares the ground for viewing a DVD by Bill Moyers entitled *Is God Green*, which introduces students to the Creation Care movement that has taken hold in many evangelical Christian circles over the last decade or more. Moyers profiles several evangelical Christian groups that have gone green, including one in Boise, Idaho, and another in West Virginia. Many of my students identify particularly with the West Virginia Christians who have adopted the cause of caring for the earth in response to the environmental and human devastation resulting from mountaintop removal coal mining.

Moyers interviews evangelical Christian leaders on both sides of the climate change debate in documenting the widening rift over global warming and related issues that has emerged in evangelical circles over the past five years or so. *Is God Green* has proven very helpful in illustrating to students the strong Christian theological and philosophical basis for caring for the Earth as God’s creation.

Augmenting short articles on topics such as consumerism, and the science of global warming, the main text for the environmental ethics unit is ecotheologian and deep ecologist Thomas Berry’s book *The Great Work*. Defined by the two principles of self-realization (the idea that we as individual selves are all part of a larger Self) and biocentric equality (all living things have an equal right to survive and flourish), deep ecology grows out of Native American and other indigenous philosophies which recognize the entire natural and living world as sacred and a sacred expression of the numinous dimension of the cosmos. Many students raised on farms and otherwise close to the land resonate with the words of a speech we read attributed to Chief Seattle, which translates the somewhat abstract principles of deep ecology into more concrete terms: *Every part of the earth is holy, the streams run with the blood of our ancestors, and the flower and horse are our brothers and sisters.*

Because many of my students claim Native American ancestry and identify with contemporary Native cultures, they also often resonate strongly with a segment of a Native American-produced documentary entitled *In the Light of Reverence*, which details the struggles of three different Native communities to reclaim

their ancestral lands in this country. Hearing Western cattle ranchers describe Native American rituals honoring sacred sites like Bear's Lodge (Devil's Tower) as a "land grab" awakens in many students a sense of outrage while simultaneously accentuating the profoundly different ways Native American and Western European cultures view the earth and our relationship to it.

Before we read Thomas Berry's *The Great Work*, I also introduce the story of the universe, the planet earth, and the evolution of life, material addressed by Berry but often unfamiliar to my students. A particularly useful resource in this regard is [The Great Story](#) website, which contains numerous resources and links for recounting the story of the universe. As a way of piquing student curiosity and encouraging exploration of the impressive timelines the website offers, I often bring in 440 million year old Ordovician marine fossils from our area and invite students to locate them in the history of life on our planet. If I can awaken curiosity, wonder, and awe, I feel I have taken the first step in helping students discover the Truth and Teacher within.

Perhaps the most substantial "hands-on" component of the course, however, is the service learning project. This project has previously taken many forms, but for the 2010-2011 academic year, my students have been collecting materials in preparation for building a pop bottle greenhouse on campus in conjunction with the College's new [Grow Food, Grow Hope](#) initiative, which provides garden plots and instruction to local low-income families on growing their own food. Students learn many practical lessons from this

project, not only about the greenhouse effect and reuse as an alternative to recycling, but also about the importance of teamwork, self-sufficiency, sustainable economies, and community service. At a deeper level, though, such projects can empower students by demonstrating how, despite the overwhelming magnitude of our global climate crisis, they can move beyond feelings of guilt or paralysis to address ecological concerns at the immediate, local level.

As the culmination of the service project and the course unit on environmental ethics, I ask students to write a paper not only evaluating their contributions to the service project, but also relating what they have accomplished to Thomas Berry's *Great Work*. Central to Berry's *Great Work* is learning to live in a more harmonious, mutually self-sustaining relationship with the cosmos, the earth, and the living world. In order to recognize the deeper spiritual, miraculous dimension of our universe and the life it has brought forth, Berry says we must relearn to participate in the dream of the earth by harnessing the creative inspiration and psychic energy of classic archetypes such as the Cosmic Tree, Sacred Center, and Death-Rebirth.

Wilmington students—and not just those taking my Values and Ethics class—readily grasp the significance of such fundamental archetypes as part of an ecospiritual relationship with the earth and living world. Their openness to dreaming the dream of the earth became apparent to me on a recent trip to Costa Rica with a tropical ecology class, during which I invited students to record their dreams in a communal dream journal. Based on their enthusiastic response, and my related

experiences teaching a course on dreams and world mythology, it is clear that dreams can serve as a powerful medium whereby students can respond at a deeper level to the environmental crisis as they discover and learn to listen to the Truth and Teacher within. I look forward to sharing some of my students' dream wisdom about our relationship to one another and to the living cosmos when Wilmington College hosts the FAHE conference in 2012.

Register Now

The June 2011 FAHE Conference on "Living Our Heritage: Seeking Equality Through Education" will be held June 16-19 at Bryn Mawr College in Bryn Mawr, PA. You can sign up at: <http://legacy.earlham.edu/~fahe/current%20conference.htm>



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Shifting to Abundance: Reflections on Environmental Education

***Janet Gray
The College of New Jersey***

Spring break 2011: in my Ecofeminism course, our explorations of epistemology have begun to compete with *doing*. For this third round through the course, I've redone it to address my lingering disorientation about conflicts among different schools of ecological thought, and I'm learning a lot. The group is the biggest yet: 28 students at all levels of their college careers, with majors in all seven schools on our campus. And they're fired up. Before the break, charged with brainstorming an "eco-adventure," they sketched a plan for raising support for the campus garden. We're heading into readings on

science and spirituality, and committees need forming, missions need defining, strategies need to be put into action.

FAHE's announcement of the theme for its 2009 conference, Educating for Abundance, came as I was first preparing to teach this course and, at the same time, reading **Parker Palmer**. This convergence prompted me to consider "abundance" as a framework for reflecting on what the course needed to do. "Abundance" fittingly describes the trove of materials one faces in designing such a course; vast in scope and varied in perspectives, ecofeminism has the "grace of great things" that Palmer

names in *The Courage to Teach*. “Abundance” also thematically links Palmer’s writing with ecofeminist thought: both urgently call for a radical change in how we organize and act on our knowledge of the world--a shift to a conception of ourselves as part of a vast fullness, a wider sufficiency.

Ecofeminism offers an interdisciplinary lens on the world, building on the precept that the abuse of nature is linked to social oppressions based on categories of othering, including gender, race, and class. The messy, multidimensional bigness of ecofeminism makes it a dynamic resource for merging critical thinking with engaged citizenship. The public college where I teach, The College of New Jersey (TCNJ), centralizes preparation for community leadership in its mission and pursues institutional imperatives to address environmental issues with both a local and a global scope. The College thus cultivates *abundance* in the sense of a wider interconnectedness. Yet to get anything done here, one must confront lacks: of funds, people, time, space, imagination—scarcities that become more daunting as state funds for higher education shrink. Whatever the college’s priorities, we are beholden to the fractured priorities of our political and economic context. And, as Palmer points out, educational institutions are rooted in paradigms that produce abundance for some at the expense of scarcity for others: paradigms of social inequality and human domination over nature. If we do not intentionally resist those paradigms, we reproduce them.

At the FAHE conference, *Carole Spencer, the plenary speaker*, focused our attention on the contemplative practice of “the abundant life,” drawing

on Paul’s epistles. My contact at FAHE had urged me to consider this scriptural meaning of the conference’s theme as I prepared a session. I found, however, that in English translations of Jesus’ teachings, variants on “abundance” most often appear in the context of social critique, referring to negative excesses: the quantity of evil that pours from the mouths of “vipers” (Matthew 12:34); the surplus gained by those who have as the have-nots are deprived (13:12); the excess from which the wealthy skim off their charity (12:44); or the material goods that do not constitute a man’s life (Luke 12:15). Only in the Gospel of John does “abundance” refer to a state of grace.

In *The Promise of Paradox*, Palmer offers a way of understanding connections between these divergent scriptural meanings. Today’s anxieties about the division between “haves” and “have-nots” and diminishing natural resources, he writes, have their counterpart in a state of spiritual awareness he characterizes as “the life-destroying habits of scarcity” (94-95). When we tie our sense of the good life to material consumption, fears about not having enough in the future drive the “haves” to grab and hoard more than we need—behavior that worsens the deprivation of the “have-nots.” Why do we buy into the scarcity paradigm? Blaming “the greed of a few,” Palmer thinks, is too easy. Our compliance reflects a failed strategy in our search for meaning: defining ourselves through possessions, only leading to more anxiety and grasping. We need to rid ourselves of the false notion of abundance that underlies this failure. True abundance, he writes, comes “to those who are willing to share apparent

scarcity in a way that creates more than enough.”

Palmer’s discussion dovetails with detailed analysis by ecofeminist writers who argue that modernity *produced* the specter of scarcity by redefining abundance as the product of technology. The paradigm of the “good life” envisioned by the Western myth of progress depends on denying the evidence everywhere that it is actually eroding the quality of life through environmental degradation. Further, colonization built this model of abundance, draining resources and devaluing diverse worldviews, ways, and knowledge. Its continuation depends upon the existence of an exploitable elsewhere where economic, social, and environmental costs can be shifted out of the beneficiaries’ sight.¹

The first two semesters I taught Ecofeminism were adventures through varied inflections of abundance and scarcity: for one class wonder, collaboration, and self-investment, and for the other, bafflement, resistance, and scattered epiphanies. The idea of starting a garden on campus originated with the [Bonner Center](#), which coordinates community engaged learning on our campus. With coaching from the Bonner staff, the nineteen students in the spring 2009 class took on the task of envisioning a garden that would be a resource for schools and community organizations in our area, as well as for TCNJ courses across the disciplines. The task required the students to find their place in a change process much larger than themselves; they struggled to take ownership of a project that would outspan their college careers. In teams, they networked and researched and left as their legacy a wiki of best practices, lesson plans, and contacts. The semester

ended in elation as they shared their vision at a gathering of faculty, staff, and students.

A year later, the garden project posed new difficulties for the twelve students the Ecofeminism class. Others had created the vision of the garden, but there was still no garden. My efforts to persuade the students to think of the garden as a potential space of abundance met with tense faces. Instead of feeling like partners in a larger process, the students felt used; the Bonner Center was demanding their scarce resources, time and thought. I changed the assignment, inviting the students to find their own hands-on ways of engaging with the environment. And for most, those smaller experiences were transformative. That summer, Bonner students planted and tended a small demonstration garden and took the produce to the Trenton Area Soup Kitchen. It was a start at growing into the vision, one that my current students have embraced.

With the new syllabus, I have benefited from the current students’ insights into ecofeminism’s intersections with two prominent strains of environmental thought, deep ecology and social ecology. Deep ecology removes humans from the center of the universe, insisting on the oneness of all of life. For social ecologists, who focus on how environmental abuse causes and results from social injustice, the contemplative orientation of deep ecology offers privileged individuals the lofty experience of dissolving into a universal whole, but leads to environmental strategies that are callous to human suffering. Deep ecologists charge social ecologists with anthropocentrism.² Both critiques seem to me partially just.

Great things, Palmer writes, demand diverse viewpoints because of their “manifold mysteries”; their vastness calls on us to embrace ambiguity; they generate creative conflict that challenges our narrowness; they invoke our honesty to do justice to their truth; they become visible only to our humility; they empower us for liberation (*Courage* 107f). The “grace of great things” thus offers an orientation toward abundance much like ecological thinking: while undermining the certainties that underwrite paradigms of dominance, it offers a framework for responding to difference and community and taking responsibility for the implications of our knowledge (Code 21, 24).

Considering environmental studies in light of abundance responds to my sense that when I teach deeply, with courage, I’m tapping into my lived experience of Friends’ testimonies. My experiences tell me that our religious thought can serve us as critical leverage—a tool for asking and teaching questions that challenge exploitive paradigms. Environmental studies can address the need to understand and intervene in systemic factors that hold destructive paradigms in place. Wonder and reverence may drive us to seek healing for our alienation from nature, but individual contemplative practice is no shortcut to paradigm change. And shifting to abundance is not a single cognitive or spiritual act that we can undertake once and for all; we must *do*, and choose our doing based upon cultivating in communities a shared critical understanding of the ways that *scarcity* governs our inner and outer worlds. However lofty the idea of abundance, it comes into being in the

immanent, everyday structures of our lives.

NOTES

1. For example, Diamond 116ff; Mies.
2. Our readings included selections on deep ecology and social ecology in Merchant, Warren (1994), and Warren (1997).

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QHE You can access all back issues of *Quaker Higher Education* at: <http://legacy.earlham.edu/~fahe/pubs.htm>



Building Community Among Our Quaker Colleges

*Emily Higgs
Haverford College*

Friends' institutions of higher education have played an integral role throughout history in not only educating younger generations of Quakers, but also in nurturing and strengthening the Religious Society of Friends as a whole by providing support for the leadership development of Young Adult Friends and access to a wider network of Quakers that connects and serves those young adults throughout their lives.

As FAHE's existence demonstrates, the interconnectedness of these institutions of higher education is an essential characteristic of their effectiveness. While there have been many important programs that connected young adults across the Quaker colleges in the past ([Young Friends of North America](#), [Quaker work camps](#), [Youth Quake](#), etc.), the current generation of Young Adult Friends has not had these kind of programs made available in the same ways. At [Haverford College](#), members of the Quaker student community began to feel frustrated by their lack of connection to or community with the young adults at other peer Quaker institutions.

In the spring of 2009 a small group of Haverford students applied for

a [Thomas H. and Mary Williams Shoemaker Fund](#) grant to develop a program that would bring together Quaker students from around the country. The Haverford students' initiative was grounded in wanting to share and learn from other students at Quaker colleges, as the Haverford student Quaker community had undergone an extraordinary period of revitalization and growth from 2007 to 2009. The grant application radiated their desire to connect with other students, to see what other Quaker young adult communities were out there, and to develop a more national Young Adult Friend community.

The Shoemaker Fund recognized the Spirit moving in this powerful group of young adults, and affirmed their efforts with a sizeable grant that funded nearly two years of intervisitation initiatives around the country. In the spring of 2009 a small group of Haverford students traveled to [Guilford College](#) over spring break for the pilot intervisitation weekend. It was (needless to say as we are writing about it two years later) a transformative, fun and deeply meaningful experience for all. The Haverford students were able to witness the powerful [Quaker Leadership Scholars Program \(QLSP\)](#)

at Guilford and even participate in a good old-fashioned barn-raising. The students returned inspired and energized by the experience, which shines through in this quote from one student who traveled to North Carolina: “This retreat provided us with new perspective on our own Quaker community at Haverford. When Guilford Friends asked us if we were trying to start a Quaker group at Haverford it felt good to be able to say wholeheartedly that we have already succeeded in doing so.”

In the fall of 2009, a group of Guilford students returned the visit and came to stay at Haverford during their fall break. The Haverford group enjoyed hosting the Guilford delegation in Haverford’s Quaker House, a communal house on campus for interested students to live in intentional community around Quakerism and spirituality. There was worship, a campfire and singing by the Haverford duck pond, apple pie baking, and even a game or two of Wink. Following worship sharing around the nature of community, one student noted that “the worship sharing was a beautiful culmination of the thinking we had been doing on community, especially Quaker community here at Haverford. It had a wonderful atmosphere of worshipful thinking and listening so that I think we were really able to hear what our true ideas of community were.” This first reciprocal visit revealed to these two Quaker college communities how much joy there can be in intervisitation, and how much we have in common with one another across geographical distances.

That same fall, ten Haverford students piled into a van and drove to Richmond, Indiana to visit [Earlham College](#). As with any trip, a large part of

the experience was the journey there. As our students wrote in their report following the visit, “while the premise of eight Quakers driving through four states worth of cornfields and mountains may seem like the beginnings of a good joke, we found the ten-plus hour journey to be chock-full of fellowship, camaraderie, conversation, singing, car trip games, and back rubs.” This important aspect of the intervisitation experience—the “getting there”—shouldn’t be underestimated. As another student noted, “over the entire trip, but particularly en-route, we bonded extremely well as a group. These bonds enabled us to better discuss with each other the insights we gained from the trip.”

The Intervisitation Program was growing, with each trip offering a different group of students the opportunity to travel and experience the unique ethos at each peer institution. At Earlham our students were able to participate in different kinds of Quaker worship and experience the rich Quaker community in Richmond. Our students marveled at the number of Quaker faculty they met, and soaked up the mid-western welcome.

In the spring of 2010 four Haverford students flew from Philadelphia to Newburg, Oregon to visit [George Fox University](#). While Earlham and Guilford afforded a myriad of new experiences for our students, the trip to George Fox University was the first fully cross-branch intervisitation of the blossoming program. The GFU community opened their arms to the Haverford delegation and it was a joyful and eye-opening experience for all. This visit was such a powerful experience that

GFU successfully applied for another Shoemaker grant to support a delegation of George Fox students to travel east for a reciprocal visit in the fall of 2010.

In September of 2010 Haverford hosted the first three-college intervisitation with delegations present from both Earlham College and George Fox University. The weekend was full of a vibrant sense of familiarity and fellowship, as many students were beginning to know one another and stay in touch between visits. Currently, Haverford is looking forward to planning an intervisitation experience with [Wilmington College](#) next fall.

One of the most useful “lessons learned” throughout the life of this program thus far, has been the opportunity to compare the presence of Quakerism between our Quaker institutions of higher education. Each college has a unique and important perspective to offer. Haverford students were delighted to share their experiences of growing student community with their peers from George Fox and Earlham, where student participation is in the exciting stages of revitalization and growth. Guilford and Earlham students were glad to share the ideas and success of their institutions’ structural approaches to Quakerism with those from Haverford and George Fox, where each is in the process of developing their institutional resources for Quakerism. George Fox students were able to share their unique positioning within the more Christian-orientated Quaker community, while Guilford and Earlham were able to relate the experience of being located at the intersections of diversely affiliated yearly meetings, and Haverford could offer the Philadelphia-based unprogrammed experience (including a trip to Friends Center and Arch Street

Meeting with George Fox University students). All of these comparative experiences help solidify a sense of self within each institution, but also encourage an appreciation of the beauty of our subtle differences as Friends. As one student leader at Haverford said when processing these experiences, “we came home having learned a lot and with a renewed commitment to our own community.”

The Intervisitation Program has visibly deepened the sense of community among Young Adult Friends at different Quaker colleges, and is thus contributing actively to a deepening and strengthening of the Religious Society of Friends. We must continue to support and empower the younger generation of Friends to remain at the forefront of such cross-branch community building, demonstrating the power of our similarities and not our differences.

This work has come at a fortuitous time, in which we are witnessing a host of Young Adult Friend intervisitation initiatives. In addition to cross-branch YAF gatherings from year to year, there was also a Friends United Meeting and Friends General Conference sponsored event on cross-branch intervisitation for Young Adult Friends in November 2010, which two of our Haverford students attended. As we speak, a Facebook group for Young Adult Friends was created only a few months ago and already has 640 members. There are also plans for a website (with students from the Quaker colleges involved in its creation) that will serve as a forum for Young Adult Friends to come together and learn to grow collectively as a Religious Society

of Friends to be leaders in the world we must transform.

At the last FAHE gathering, the staff members from each college/university involved in this program gave a presentation and spoke about the impact of this work on our individual institutions and our sense of growing and deepening community through these experiences. These staff members, who have each made this work possible, include: Max Carter and Deborah Shaw (Guilford College), Trish

Eckert (Earlham College), Jamie Johnson (George Fox University), and Emily Higgs (Haverford College). In sharing about this invaluable work among our peer Quaker colleges, we invite the FAHE community to think about how these types of intervisitation experiences help address the divisions separating our Quaker institutions of higher education and the Religious Society of Friends as a whole.

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***Transition, Integrity, Diversity, and Community:
the Lives of Young Adult Friends***

***Stephen Willis Dotson
Baltimore Yearly Meeting***

Quaker students, recent graduates, and other young adults are hungry for structural assistance to unite and empower them in their individual efforts to articulate their faith in the 21st century. Just as there is a clear and vital need among Quaker faculty and staff to meet, form bonds, and learn from one another through networks such as **Friends Association for Higher Education (FAHE)**, there is a need for similar connection between the lives of the students and young adults that FAHE's member organizations serve. Not only is this a desire for a container that can help them individually, but it is a place of preparation for engaging the Religious Society of Friends as it is now, in all its contemporary successes and failures. When considering this, it is clear that this scaffolding for young adults may first aid the individuals, but eventually, the greatest beneficiary is the future vitality of our entire faith tradition.

British Friend Edgar Dunstan underscored the importance of finding container to enable Quakerism to be cogent and engaged with current generations and events by stating that:

'Have you anything to declare?' is a vital challenge to which every one of us is personally called to respond and is also a challenge that every meeting should consider of primary importance. It should lead us to define, with such clarity as we can reach, precisely what it is the Friends of this generation have to say that is not, as we believe, being said effectively by others. What, indeed, have we to declare to this generation that is of sufficient importance to justify our separate existence as part of the Christian fellowship?

In addition to justifying our separate existence as part of the Christian fellowship, it is undeniable that Quakerism must name its place and relationship to non-Christian traditions due to the increasingly global and inter-religious nature of our society. The Religious Society of Friends has the ability to provide college students, recent graduates, and young adults at large, with experiences that prepare them to wrestle constructively with the diversity between the branches of Friends. Additionally, this can enable them to better engage and develop involvement with the varied strains of Christianity, and the plethora of religious traditions increasingly found next-door to our own. Friends cannot afford the price of failing to create a container for our young people; we need must make available the tools and experiences that will enable a relevant answer to Dunstan's challenge. Friends can better prepare rising generations to cogently apply their skills for leadership, discernment, right relationship, and Spirit-led vocation in both Quaker and non-Quaker circles (or as it is often called in our schools, "the real world"). Without such a container the Religious Society of Friends is likely to continue to find itself increasingly divided internally, misunderstood and absent from wider circles of faith, and ultimately, fading into obscurity and irrelevancy.

In faithful service to these needs, our Quaker colleges and universities could create opportunities for Quaker students and recent graduates to weave together their Quaker-lives (both their personal faith and their experiences within the often-insulated world of their home Church or Meeting), and the outer world. There are already a variety of organizations that can help in providing these sorts of opportunities through ecumenical and interreligious engagement. These include the [Student Christian Movement](#) (SCM-USA), the

[Inter-Faith Youth Core](#) (IFYC), [The National Council of Churches' New Fire Network](#), [Church World Service](#) (CWS), and [Ecumenical Advocacy Days](#) (EAD). I have witnessed firsthand the powerful ways in which these networks foster leadership, creativity, and commitment in the lives of the young people who are involved. Participating young adults walk away with a renewed sense of who they are as religious people, a keener understanding of what they believe and how to articulate it, and an inspiring experience of applying who they are and what they believe to the pressing issues of the day.

What Friends lack is an intra-Quaker structure or process to enable this sort of engagement. Currently we have only the ad-hoc organizing of young adult Friend (YAF) gatherings, and budding attempts at forming sustainable programs for volunteer service and inter-visitation opportunities. In other Christian communities, there are intra-communion structures (for example, the [Lutheran Student Movement](#)) that enable participation in wider ecumenical and inter-faith circles. Undoubtedly, the nature of Quakerism would demand that our structure be more organizationally "flat" than other traditions and acknowledge that no one Friend can speak for all Friends.

It is worth noting that a contemporary structure is likely to differ significantly from what has existed in the past. Historically, Friends have celebrated the activities of Young Friends of North America (YFNA), and to a degree, the alternative service opportunities and workcamps of the [American Friends Service Committee](#) (AFSC) that spoke to these needs. However, these kinds of opportunities for engagement have faded from the lives of Young Adult Friends today. Without a structure, Friends are

poorly connected in these wider interreligious and intrareligious aspects. Additionally, our young people are without opportunities for in-depth contrast with other traditions, and thus miss a vital opportunity to better understand what is unique and precious about their own faith. They potentially graduate from institutions of higher learning without the ability to articulate how Quakerism is uniquely prepared to speak to the condition of the world at this point in history. Without such a container or network, emerging adults have little institutional support in integrating their faith with the world such that they are “in it, but not of it”, as the gospel of John entreats us (John 15:15-19, John 17:14-19).

My own experience as a young adult led me into studying these issues. I was a seeker at age 11, later Convinced of my Quakerism by the Baltimore Yearly Meeting camping program at age 14, and became a member of Goose Creek Monthly Meeting soon thereafter. Many of my counselors attended Quaker colleges, and I decided that I also needed to go to a Quaker school. I made my way to Guilford College and the next 4 years were an intensive period of personal growth and discovery. I praise the [Quaker Leadership Scholars Program \(QLSP\)](#) and Max Carter for guiding me through a transformative process of wrestling with my own skepticism and exposing me to the rich and radical Christian foundations of our faith.

Upon leaving Guilford and QLSP, I found that I had no clue how I could realize my intention of living an integrated life first and foremost as a Friend, but also undeniably as a white, upper middle-class, American, male, and member of the digitally-native, post-9/11, Millennial generation. Even more daunting was the question: how do I live out my faith in a

community that truly understands my needs and is willing to hold me accountable, support me, and empower me to make meaningful contributions through my faithfulness? It seemed most places I went Friends didn't know what to make of me; I came away with the impression that until I was married with kids there was neither a solid process for helping me identify my gifts nor a clear role for what I could or should offer the community. The re-entry into Quaker life beyond my college experience was a rude awakening to the disparity between the illustrious history and spiritual toolbox of Friends that I was exposed to at Guilford, and the current state of our Quaker communities and their rusting tools. I struggled to integrate my internal experience and belief of what Quakerism is in theory with the reality I found in non-academic Quaker circles. I was even more helpless when that surprising reality was extended to broader circles of faith. If I couldn't say what role young, inspired Quakers play within Quakerism, how could I ever hope to grasp what role we may have in the wider world? One needs strong roots in native soil to successfully sprout outward into new worlds and remain grounded.

Moreover, I had no idea how to find and develop relationships with my Quaker peers, who I imagined were also wrestling with these challenges. Slowly, I sought them out individually. We compared our experiences around this transition to independence and discovered that we could learn from and support one another, especially as Friends. This naturally turned into a collection of worshipful conversations, which I began to take audio recordings of (110 hours now and growing). As I met with more and more young adult Friends (YAFs) I found that my own experience was not all that unique.

Overall, there were 5 common desires that many Friends I spoke with shared:

1. A sustainable means to have dialogue and build relationships of trust within their cohort;
2. A clearer understanding of what it means for them to live in the world as a Quaker today, and not be of the world;
3. Ways to engage their communities in the discernment of location, relationship, vocation and/or gifts;
4. Support and accountability in the form of spiritual tools and relationships (elders, mentors, spiritual friendships, travelling minutes, and anchoring committees);
5. Opportunities to make meaningful contributions to the Religious Society of Friends, their cohort, and the wider circles of faith. In other words, embracing young adult Friends as the present, as well as the future.

Fast forward to Memorial Day weekend of 2008, in Richmond, IN. I attended a YAF gathering and witnessed for the first time what my generation looks like as a gathered body. There are few experiences that come close to the depth and power of the worship and engagement I found there. However, it was an isolated event, and though it was extremely potent in the moment, I was left without any clear means to continue building the trust, relationships, and understanding that I believe to be the blood, bone, and marrow of a real community. This was encouraged by the brevity and intensity of the event. Overall, the YAF gathering was a good experience, but it was filled more with the confrontation of the diversity in my cohort than the culmination of what that diversity

could mean if harnessed in sustained relationships. I have been to a number of such gatherings now, and a hunger remains unmet. I was, and am still, hungry for some means to have ongoing relationships with those people I met, to be consistently aware of how God was moving among us as a generation of Friends, how we may be more by working together. I left the gathering energized, with a glimpse of how my life and others' lives held a possibility for greater integrity as a family of Friends, but ultimately with more questions than answers.

Way opened in the summer of 2008 when a Friend by the name of Anne was compelled to share an opportunity to serve as a steward at the global assembly of the World Student Christian Federation in Montreal, Canada. I applied, was accepted, and spent three weeks discovering the global world of ecumenism and the existence of structures designed to network and serve the needs of young adults in other Christian denominations (the United Methodist Student Movement - UMSM, for example) to bring their unique witnesses for the justice and peace of God's Kingdom. However, I was deeply disappointed that I was the only Quaker at that gathering in Montreal. We didn't have a presence there because we lacked a process to facilitate that opportunity for Quaker students and young adults.

I came away feeling as though I found exactly the kind of model that I was looking for, a model that could enable students to explore applying their faith in a contemporary and global context. Moreover, in the contrast I experienced between myself and the other participants there, I became increasingly aware of the unique empowerment Quakerism offers and understood better how to be a Quaker "in the

world" and the ways it guides me to not be "of the world". Each of us has been in a process of preparation by God to minister. The gifts of the Spirit are always diverse and the relationships between those diversities are difficult to understand. When one can experience the contrast across such a broad spectrum as that found in an ecumenical or interreligious gathering, it becomes much easier to grasp how the peculiar ministry of Friends fits into the larger story of the world. We are made who we are because of all that we are not. When we enter a place of diverse experience, we can see that our individual privileges, gifts of the Spirit, and "common" blessings are not all so common, and should not be taken for granted. I experienced ecumenism as a repeated challenge to convey a clear and substantive vision of what it means to be a Quaker today, and how Quakers fit into larger, ongoing endeavors being pursued by communities of faith. It was an act that implicitly asked me to claim my denominational identity, share its fruits, and think critically about how this tradition is enacted within the larger context of Christianity and the world. While some might imagine that engaging in diverse circles pushes individuals to dilute their identity to find the group's lowest-common-denominator, this experience only strengthened my identity as a Quaker and a Christian.

Thanks to the support of the [Clarence and Lilly Pickett Endowment for Quaker Leadership](#), I was able to shift my inquiry towards the question: "What does the next network of Quaker students and young adults look like?" What could we have that could enable us to be present in the wider world as a generation and as Quakers? I approached this question by posing the following questions to different groups of people and gathering their feedback:

- What are the needs and opportunities that such a structure could serve?
- What do other denominations have?
- What currently brings young adults and students together or seeks to speak to their condition?
- What has existed in the past within Quakerism?
- What would NOT work in this current age and context?
- And lastly, with these previous questions as a guiding framework, what could we aspire to create?

This took place as an interest group or workshop at YAF gatherings, FAHE's annual meeting (where I gave the presentation from which this paper originates), Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's annual sessions, and Friend General Conference's annual gathering. All told, about 100 people offered their thoughts to these questions.

The general consensus was:

- Something more is possible in terms of cross-branch Quaker support for young adults;
- A network or structure has the potential to strengthen not only this generation of Friends, but the Religious Society of Friends in lasting, diverse ways;
- Such a structure must have a strong presence in new technologies and communicate with rising generations through contemporary media;
- Young adults are energized, and there are some good resources for young adults, but generally they are scattershot and lack unity;
- Such a structure could not be a corporate decision-making body for all YAFs (they are not their own Yearly Meeting), nor try

to “solve” the differences among Friends or pretend that Friends are all the same. Lastly, it could not be under the umbrella of any specific group of Yearly Meetings, it would have to possess a certain degree of removed independence and political/theological neutrality and openness.

Across the world, youth movements and organizations are leaving an impression on the status quo, regardless of whether the establishment is involved or not. American Quakerism is no exception, and recent developments support this. The last few months have seen the initial creation of an online forum for all young adult Quakers as a means of sharing the wisdom that has been culled from numerous YAF gatherings, visits between Quaker colleges and universities, pilgrimages, and travels in the ministry. I set up a Facebook group for this website. The group was called simply “Young Adult Friends (Quakers)”, and while most Facebook groups are slow to grow, this group had over 400 members join within 3 days of its creation! Additionally, the month of February 2011 saw the creation of an online periodical for YAFs (The Quake : www.thequakemagazine.com) by Zoe Rei, the beginnings of an online Quaker radio show by Madeline Schaefer, and over 200 sharings of blogs, videos, job openings, comments, links, event invitations, and discussion between the (now) 600+ members of the “Young Adult Friends (Quakers)” Facebook group. Young adults also enjoy disproportionately large representation in online forums such as Quakerquaker.org which bring Quakers of diverse backgrounds together. In the physical world, places like the Cedar Park neighborhood in West Philadelphia and the Capitol Hill area of Washington, D.C. are

slowly becoming known as active and engaged young adult-led communities of experimental Quakerism, and possess burgeoning worship groups. Simply put, there is energy here, and it is eager to take form whether or not the historic establishment of Quakerism is involved.

Before us there is a great opportunity to create a vehicle to help young adults articulate and live out their beliefs, and thereby connect more completely with one another and the world from a basis in faith. Anne opened that door for me with the World Student Christian Federation, and for that I feel deeply blessed, but not everyone has an Anne in their life. And so, I remain convinced that an intentional foundation is needed to provide a sustainable, intentional, and strategic transitioning of recent graduates into their budding vocations, their communities, and the next committed step of their faith journeys. Undoubtedly, this would greatly enrich our Quaker organizations and yearly meetings. Imagine the implications for alumni giving and involvement at Quaker schools if we are able to cultivate stronger transitions in the lives of graduates. More importantly, imagine the implications for our Yearly Meetings and the institutions that we rely on as Friends! What if there were a coming generation of Friends that has known one another and worked together on real world issues throughout their 20’s and early 30’s? How might relationships between our Yearly Meetings change once these Friends come into positions of leadership in their late 30’s and 40’s? It is a hopeful vision, and one that the Religious Society of Friends would be wise to pursue if they intend to have members who can be living answers to Edgar Dunstan’s question, “Have you anything to declare?”

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***Mentoring Hispanic/Latino Students:
Where to Start and How to Retain Them in College***
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In the 1988 movie “*Stand and Deliver*,” actor Edward J. Olmos plays Jaime Escalante, a mathematics teacher at Garfield High School in Los Angeles, California. Escalante is determined to help minority students achieve the highest level in their education and prove that they can be as smart as the Anglo students. Escalante wants all of them to go to college.

In one of the scenes of this real story, Escalante visits the parents of one of his students, a Hispanic girl, who told him her parents were opposed to her going to college. During the visit, Escalante listens to the parents’ arguments. “We need her here in our restaurant,” says her father. “She can work here and help the family,” he adds. “We don’t have the money to send her to college,” he explains.

Escalante makes an extraordinary appeal to convince the parents to let her attend college. After a long argument, the parents finally agree.

This scene explains clearly the situation that many young Hispanic teens, ready to enter higher education, confront when they face the end of the high school years. The desire to attend college is there; the drive to do it is high. But many of these boys and girls will have to jump the hurdles of their Hispanic families for whom their children attending college is, somewhat, an impossible dream. The parents wish they could send their kids to college, but

they see too many obstacles for their children to overcome.

There are also Hispanic youth who, unless they were born in the United States, are considered illegal residents in the country because their parents are illegal immigrants. With no social security numbers, such students do not have access to scholarships or student loans. The Dream Act legislation, defeated in the U.S. Senate in December 2010 (Wong and Toeplitz, 2010), would have corrected this situation.

The Dream Act (Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors) was introduced in the U.S. Senate in August 2001, was re-introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives in March 2009 (Wikipedia, April 2011) and will continue in limbo perhaps until after the presidential elections in 2012. This piece of legislation would have allowed boys and girls of illegal aliens, who are illegal themselves, to have access to the enormous resources this country has available for anyone who wants to attend college.

But there is also another segment of the Hispanic youth that, although being U.S. citizens, tend to drop out of high school, or finish high school, but do not pursue any college education. Mentoring them to get them into college and retaining them there until they finish is a process that should begin before they arrive on campus. It begins in many cases by mentoring their parents.

Many parents of Hispanic students are poorly educated. They came to the United States to work, and often they send money back to their countries of origin to help their extended families. For them, making money becomes priority number one, and the education of their children is secondary.

The sense of belongingness and solidarity for the family is strong among Hispanics, and many times the young boys or girls find it difficult to defy the wishes of their parents. Rodriguez (2008) states that because of this sense of loyalty toward the family, many Hispanics view working as a very significant element in the life of the family.

College recruitment efforts should begin by entering in contact with high school students even before their senior year, perhaps while they are juniors or even sophomores. Through the students, recruiters should get to know the families and start speaking to them about potential colleges for the youngsters.

This task can be accomplished by setting up visits to the students' homes. A college may begin with such efforts at college fairs, frequently where the first contact occurs. For example, if the recruiter notices some reticence on behalf of a Hispanic student or his/her parents to speak about college, then it may be advisable to follow up with a visit at the home of the student. However, some parents may not even attend the college fair. If that is the case, once these families are identified, the college recruiter may initiate a contact.

One has to underline the significance of getting to know the students' families. Since there is high respect for parents among Hispanic

families, such families can be the best allies for college recruiters striving to keep Hispanic children in high school until they finish, and also to prepare them for college. [The Pew Hispanic Center](#) reported in 2010 that "Hispanics have a much higher high school drop-out rate than do blacks or whites. Some 41% of Hispanic adults age 20 and older in the United States do not have a regular high school diploma, compared with 23% of black adults and 14% of white adults" (Fry, online, 2010).

In another study, Lopez (2009) reported that about 89 percent of Hispanics between the ages of 16 and 25 admitted that a college education is essential for a successful life as an adult. However, only 48 percent were planning to actually get a college degree.

Frequently, I am asked if I believe that colleges and universities should hire Hispanic recruiters for the goal of enrolling more Hispanic students. And if Hispanic professors should be involved in the efforts to retain them until they graduate.

Although I believe there is no need for a professor or recruiter to be a member of the same race as the students in order to be able to influence their decisions to attend college, it seems at times that Hispanic students tend to look for someone with whom they can identify and create special connections. My experience at [William Penn University](#) is relevant to this situation.

In the spring of 2010, a Hispanic student visiting our campus from Texas was told about my Hispanic heritage. The student intentionally asked to be put in contact with me. I invited him to one of my classes, and we had a conversation after the class was over. The student came to William Penn University in the

fall of 2010. Once asked why he chose this university, he responded that his decision was strongly influenced by my handling of the class and my conversation with him.

Nationwide, many community colleges and universities are structuring programs and education activities centered toward the recruitment of Hispanic students and their retention until graduation. For instance, the *Hispanic Business* magazine, in its September 2009 issue, reported that the University of Arizona College of Medicine had implemented a variety of services (including academic, professional and social) to help Hispanic students interested in the medical field. The magazine rated the UA College of Medicine as one of the top 10 schools targeting Hispanic students. According to the article, the school starts the recruitment efforts early:

The College also successfully recruits Hispanic students by working with many partners beginning early in the academic “pipeline.” UA undergraduates and medical students serve as “health-career ambassadors,” visiting elementary and middle schools to present interactive health-sciences programs to youth. Summer programs for middle and high school students provide academic enrichment and health-career exploration opportunities (online version).

The need for this approach to recruiting Hispanic students will become more vital as the population of Hispanics in the United States continues to grow. The US Census Bureau reported in March 2011 that the Latino population,

according to the 2010 census, is now 50 million (Ceasar, 2011)

Many of these Hispanics are still outside the educational system, and it will be important for them and for American society to have a more highly educated Hispanic population that can really act and participate as responsible citizens.

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