

Earlham is a Quaker College, but what does that mean and why is it important?

This year I've asked our community at Earlham to engage in a serious conversation about what it means to be a Quaker College. This is a discussion we should have every decade or so, not to bring into question whether our Quaker grounding is important to us, but rather to focus our attention on what we will need to do to sustain our Quaker identity.

Below are seven questions that I have already invited faculty, students and staff to answer. To continue this discussion, I would like to invite alumni of the college to these questions as well. (If these questions don't get at the heart of the matter for you, by all means address what you do think is important about Earlham's Quaker-ness.) Hearing from those who experienced Earlham five, ten or even fifty years ago could be beneficial to us all.

I would appreciate any and all submissions, from a few sentences to a few paragraphs, and you don't have to be a Quaker to have opinions on these questions. By all means offer specific examples to illustrate what you have to say. Feel free to submit them by responding directly to this email.

I'd like to ask that responses come before the middle of November. After that, I will try to provide a summary of the responses we've received both from on and off campus, noting where there seems to be some substantial agreement and where we seem to disagree.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Best regards,  
Douglas C. Bennett

#### Quaker College Questions

- (1) What does it mean that Earlham is a Quaker college? And is it important that we are a Quaker college.
- (2) Does it mean that our goals are different from other colleges? If so, in what ways?
- (3) Does it mean that we teach different things, or teach in a different way?
- (4) Does it mean that we support regular opportunities for Quaker worship on campus? If so, what are the important characteristics of Quaker worship?
- (5) Does it mean that the guiding ethos or central values of the college derive from Quakerism? If so, what is that ethos or values, and how do they derive from Quakerism?
- (6) Does it mean that we do others things in a Quaker way? If so, what things? And what are Quaker ways?
- (7) Does it mean that a significant number of us are Quaker? If numbers matter, for which groups does it matter: students? faculty? staff? members of the board of trustees? What is a

significant number for the groups that matter? And how should we insure those numbers stay high enough?

(8) Is it important that Earlham remain a Quaker college? If so, why? Or why not?