

Among Friends

No 106: Summer 2007

Published by the Europe and Middle East Section of Friends World Committee for Consultation
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Dear Friends

April was a busy month for Friends in Europe and the Middle East. In this issue of Among Friends you will find epistles from FWCC/EMES Annual Meeting at Woodbrookershuis in the Netherlands and Europe and Middle East Young Friends Spring Gathering in Moscow and a report on a Work Camp organised by Hungarian Friends in Serbia.

At the Annual Meeting we were delighted to have Middle East Yearly Meeting represented by Jean Zaru of Ramallah Monthly Meeting for the first time and share here the text of her moving contribution to the opening panel session on our theme. Sadly no-one from Brummana Monthly Meeting in Lebanon was able to come.

Sabah Baz, Clerk of Brummana Monthly Meeting, and current clerk of Middle East Yearly Meeting, has sent the following message: "Regrettably in 2007 the Middle East Yearly Meeting is once again postponed. The situation in Lebanon and the Region is not stable and we do not want all those good people who plan to attend to have problems like last year with air tickets and other costs and plans."

I am constantly reminded, as I stay in touch with Friends across Europe and the Middle East, of the very varied circumstances under which we live and of just how

different are the challenges we face. I feel both humbled and enriched by this contact with Friends as well as, at times, quite overwhelmed by the pain suffered in some parts of the Section.

Friends World Committee for Consultation exists to facilitate contact between the different parts of the worldwide Quaker community and we are glad to announce that next year there will be an opportunity for a greater number of European and Middle East Friends to come together than at our usual Annual Meetings. Please note the dates 20 – 24 March 2008 and the place, Vienna, for a joint EMEYF-EMES Gathering. We have space for about 120 Friends booked. This offers the opportunity for ANY interested Friend to apply for a place as it will not just be for nominated representatives. However we shall have a quota arrangement to ensure that delegates from any one single country do not swamp the event. The joint planning group meets soon. More details and booking forms will be distributed with the August issue of Among Friends.

Bronwyn Harwood
FWCC-EMES Executive Secretary

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Two FWCC-EMES Publications

Meeting the Spirit

(re-print now available)

An introduction to Quaker beliefs and practices. Particularly suitable for new enquirers.

Friendly Advice on Quaker

Ways (NEW in 2007)

A more detailed look at Quaker organisation and practice which is relevant for both long-standing and newly-emerging Quaker groups in Europe and the Middle East.

Copies are available (cost 5 Euros or £3) from the FWCC- EMES office.

EMES epistle

To Friends everywhere, Greetings from the 59th Annual Meeting of Europe and Middle East Section (EMES), held at Woodbrookershuis, The Netherlands, April 5-8 2007

40 of us have come here from 17 countries ranging from Palestine to Finland and from Russia to Ireland. What do we value about EMES and the annual Easter Gathering?

We value the opportunity to strengthen and deepen our Quaker community. This week-end we have looked at the theme 'How do we make manifest the Glory of God that is within us while being part of a broken world?' In a moving testimony Jean Zaru (Ramallah



MM) spoke of finding a connectedness beyond the cultural differences that inflame the Middle East. She also witnessed to the unique way in which each of us receives and reflects the Light of God. Diana Lampen (Britain YM) spoke of Meeting for Worship as the source of sustaining strength for those undertaking to serve and to witness. Franco Perna (Italy) recalled questioning why Quakers acted as they did and discovering the three part interdependence of the individual, the group and God. We re-affirmed that the divine within each one of us enables us to respond faithfully wherever we encounter brokenness.

We are excited by the prospect of building on the Visiting Friends' programme which has already done so much to support isolated Friends and small meetings. The new project on Ministry and Outreach, funded by a Quaker Trust, will explore the needs of Friends in Europe and the Middle East. It will look particularly at communication and spiritual nurture through visits and online study groups. Many Yearly Meetings and worship groups have in their care widely dispersed Friends for whom such contacts are invaluable.

EMES includes in its membership Middle East YM. Sadly, Brumanna Friends were not represented this weekend. From Ramallah, we have heard news of the refurbished meeting house which has become a centre to build peace and non-violence. Amidst the oppressive restrictions of life for Palestinians, there is hope. The practical and prayerful support offered by Friends in EMES helps to sustain Middle East Quakers in their witness.

Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC), of which we are part, is about to celebrate its 70th birthday during the Triennial meeting in Dublin in August 2007.

World gatherings open our minds and hearts to the variety of theology and practice among the world family of Friends - eight days of deep sharing, building friendships and shared worship.

Beyond the celebrations, there is continuing uncertainty about the way forward for FWCC. EMES too is concerned about its future. It exists 'to encourage and strengthen the spiritual life within the Religious Society of Friends and its outreach in the world.' As we joyfully commit ourselves to giving more help and support, we hope opportunities to further these aims will continue to be available in future years.

We hope that this epistle will help us to share with you how much we are uplifted by encountering the diverse expressions of the Glory of God.

Marit Kromberg, Clerk, on behalf of EMES Annual Meeting

EMEYF Spring Gathering, April 2007



To all Friends everywhere,

From Russia with Love, 2007

We send our warmest greetings from the Motherland Russia where the Spring Gathering of Europe and Middle East Young Friends (EMEYF) took place this April.

Our group was fluid in numbers throughout the week. There was a freestyle merge between participants and speakers with everyone feeling very much at home.

We arrived to the rustic charm of missing floorboards, request for documents and cold weather. Our group of 18 gathered together expanding our horizons to include the

experiences of people from 13 different countries, 4 continents and 8 languages.

We soon discovered that the Russian soul and style was unique and we began to adapt to it as the gathering progressed, developing a flexible and versatile approach. Our community settled despite initial feelings of restlessness.

Through different sessions and shared experiences we further broadened our horizons in part through exploring ministry in life's work. We were enlightened by an American Quaker Missionary, who revealed how she was led to let her life speak in Russia, giving us an insight into different aspect of Quakerism.

In a later session we discussed the concept of Sacrifice within Quakerism deeply and at length. The way in which being a Friend has led, and can lead, individuals to God through sacrifice (like in the cases of John Woolman and Tom Fox) was examined over the course of Quaker History and aroused many strong feelings and different perspectives amongst us.

Emotions were also aroused through experiencing an Alternative to Violence Project (AVP) Session. We came to this session with varying expectations. We experienced some of the AVP uses in building relationships. Time constraints was in part responsible for some of us coming away with a feeling of frustration and a thirst to know more.

We discovered and have been enriched by the stories of Quakers in Russia since the early stages of the Quaker movement. We were excited to hear of the Young Friends activities in Russia in the 1990s and were disappointed that in the recent past involvement has declined. We were left feeling eager to support Young Friends in Russia.

There was an overall interest in what it is to live fully as a Quaker responding to the inner light. It was a joy sharing our spiritual journey and approached to Quaker Theologies. There was some feeling of spiritual centredness arising from a shared network of spiritual connection between participants.

Then we had fun :

- Running around table tennis tables with paddles and occasional balls;
- Being aware of the running bison as they might just charge through the fence;
- Being soothed by the charming smiles of our littlest participant Alexandra (5 1/2 months);
- Quaker United out-Foxing the locals in the language of football during the Luzkhi Cup; Eating Easter cake through day and night after;
- Trustfully misplacing our cycling Friend to another church when taking part in the Midnight Easter

Celebration where we dodged Baboushkas in the snow;

- Exploring the meaning of body language in other cultures;
- Practicing control of indoor campfire;
- Playing Sardines for worship while listening to Sufi Music.

By the way how many languages can you fit into 1 game of wink for Ministry?

- Russian - English – French – German – Dutch
- Spanish – Arabic - Laughter

The diversity of Quaker backgrounds in our gathering was impressive: unprogrammed Christocentric, universalist, programmed evangelical, agnostic, Islamic... and those coming from the Russian orthodox tradition, of course. We found these different Quakers identities to be enriching and easily recognised a common Quakerism between us.

*Ali Ghanem, Clerk,
on behalf of EMEYF Gathering*

How one thing leads to another...

In August 2005 we, Hungarian Friends, had a concern when we had heard about ethnic conflicts between the Serbs and the Hungarians in Vojvodina, Serbia and also about a Tolerance Group there. We decided to support this group in Backa Topola. A visit to Novi Sad by some members of the group was followed by a „Study tour” in the region, and by „the Novi Sad hot days” in June 2006, when five of us did whatever odd jobs were available at EHO, the Ecumenical Humanitarian Organisation.

To cut a long story short, this spring we got invited to Kishegyes/Mali Idjos, a small Hungarian village in Vojvodina. We were asked to bring good cheer to the village and rouse the community through beautifying the village: tidying the playground, picking rubbish and planting flowers.

BUT as it happened, people in Budapest were busy and could not make themselves free for the workcamp. And then something fantastic happened! On the one hand, some of the Young Friends who were considering a peacecamp in Serbia in 2008 decided to come and on the other, young Serbian volunteers from EHO were delighted to join us. Financial support came from Hall Green Meeting, Birmingham and Dutch Yearly Meeting so the Serbs did not have to pay. And Cathy Butler managed to come and support us all the way.

Around the work we visited the local school, practised English/German with some of the children and learned from a local arts-and-crafts lady how to paint Easter eggs.

The community expressed their thanks with a special farewell camp-fire.

We held Meetings for Worship whenever we could: in the playground and near the flower beds. The Serbs joined in the worship and the morning sun was shining on us all. Friendly introductions at the beginning and Cosy Glows at the end of the workcamp added to the Quaker flavour of our activities. In the end two local women asked how they could join Quakers.

We felt it was valuable for the Young Friend volunteers to come to this area of which they knew very little, to learn of the ethnic groups here and how they live and to make new friends. To the local people, on the other hand, it was a pleasant surprise that young people from the West were happy to give time and money to do something for their village.

This is certainly not the end of the story...

*Zsuzsa Eastland
Budapest Worship Group*

News from Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre UK

Amidst the chaos of a snow storm, 24 Friends from 17 countries managed to arrive at Woodbrooke for the European Clerks Gathering 8-11 February. Judith Roads and Julia Ryberg guided the group through an exploration of the theme of Quaker business method as practised by Britain Yearly Meeting and its variations as practised by Friends in different European contexts. A central question was How do we remain faithful to Quaker process while adapting to the needs and context of European meetings? Here are some voices from the gathering:

“I am feeling excited, daunted still by the responsibility ahead, and yet more upheld and uplifted by knowing I am not alone!”

“I personally realised how I had slipped from my own ideal of what I thought a clerk should try and do and what I was actually doing. I then realised how much I wanted to change what I had been doing and get back to the ideal.”

“The gathering for European clerks was a moving experience for me. I owe much thanks to the course leaders for their patience and trustful guidance. To share with the (small) group anxieties and uncertainties about being a clerk was very helpful and supporting.”

“Years of thought, work and caring by Woodbrooke’s staff have created a warm, nurturing atmosphere that literally wraps around everyone who walks through the door: I felt cared for physically, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually the whole time I was there. Judith and Julia...made sure that we all had

ample time to question, contribute, and, most important, talk to each other.”

“I felt quite thrilled by what we had experienced at this course...shortly afterwards we had our meeting for suffering in Berlin. Being one of the clerks of the German yearly meeting I am the one to write the invitation and the agenda. This time I put some of the main thoughts that I had brought with me into the invitation... the result was wonderful! Some Friends offered their feelings, some encouraged me, some were helpful watching the process to stay with ‘rules & methods’, all in all there was a general improvement.”

**Postgraduate Opportunities
in Quaker Studies**

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THE UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

Looking ahead:

- Dutch Friends Inge and Karin Herrebut are scheduled to lead the fully-booked course Celebrating the Mother-Daughter Bond, 27-29 April at Woodbrooke.
- Julia Ryberg recently facilitated a Woodbrooke-on-the-Road event for Moscow Monthly Meeting (21-22 April), and the Central European Gathering in Poznan, Poland (25-27 May) will include a Woodbrooke-on-the-Road event in its programme.
- Thinking of attending a course? Catchpool Fund bursaries are readily available if financial help is needed. Call +44 (0)121 472 5171 or visit our website to request a brochure.

Contact Julia Ryberg, European Project Co-ordinator, for information on the Catchpool Fund at julia.ryberg@woodbrooke.org.uk or +46 (0) 175-715 30. See www.woodbrooke.org.uk for general information.

How do we make Manifest the Glory of God in a Broken World?

*“We are born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us,
It is not just in some, it is in all of us.”*

I want to take you on a trip to my hometown of Ramallah which lies ten miles north of Jerusalem. It is 10:30 in the morning and I am sitting in my lovely, bright living room which looks onto a courtyard garden. A beautiful olive tree that my late husband planted is growing in the centre of the courtyard. For him the planting of the tree was a symbol of peace, perseverance, sharing, beauty and preparing for future generations.

Sure enough, a few months after he planted the tree, my husband passed on to the other shore, but our children and grandchildren have enjoyed its shade, olives, beauty, and the birds singing in the morning and afternoon. The birds sing in spite of the bitter olives that they must eat. Can we be as grateful as the birds?

Facing me on the table is a lovely arrangement of roses from a bush that was planted by my two sons at the entrance of my home. The olive tree and the flowers outside and inside my home have come out of the darkness of the earth, which is itself the shadow of divine darkness from which all things come. They came out of the darkness into the light of the world – radiant with its brightness and reflecting its glory.

In another corner of the room there is a lovely green plant with all leaves turning towards the light. No matter which direction I turn the pot the leaves direct themselves to the light. Facing me above the fireplace is a beautiful framed photograph of the opening prayer for Muslims that I received as a gift from Hartford Seminary. A section of the prayer reads: “Lead me to the right path”. Paintings of birds from Mexico and Egypt, beautiful handicrafts from Africa and other parts of the world, pictures of my children and grandchildren, Palestinian embroidery and hand-blown coloured glass fill my vision.

As I look on this world of things around me, each one separated in space, each moving in time ... all is one, united in a simple vision of being. I use images to help me turn my mind to the divine light and allow it to

enlighten me. I can say that my living room and the world in which we live are like the bright light of the sun in which all the colours of the rainbow are present, while each retains its own distinctive character.

Or I can say it is like a symphony in which all the notes are heard in a single, perfect harmony, but in which each has its particular time and place. Or going deeper, it is like a community of person in love in which each understand the other and is at one with the other. As I think of my family and the countless persons of different background – national, racial, professional and religious – from all corners of the world who have been in my living room, I am constantly reminded that each human being is a focus of the divine light of God which shines within all equally, each receiving it according to his or her own capacity.

No two souls are the same, and the experience of each is unique. Each of us is a unique reflection of the divine. It is as though the one divine light is received by each of us, but everyone is reflecting it in his or her own way and breaking it into many colours. I have taken you home to my living room. I have shared with you the divine light of beauty, interconnectedness, awareness, of the miracle of sharing, and the vision of universality and equality.

However, I have not taken you on a trip to see the evil in our world, the direct and structural violence, the oppression, the poverty, the denial of basic human rights and community rights, the injustice, chauvinism, and the religious and national fanaticism which also exists in our world. For the divine that has enlightened me also exposes the sin and the structures of domination in our broken world.

Sin is both personal and systematic. It is violence committed against another human beings and against the world around us. Those with greater sin – the powerful – continue to oppress and victimize others. The victims of oppression are not blameless. In fact, they often become the oppressors of others.

Many individuals and religious groups forget the fact

that the divine shines in the heart of everyone, young and old, good or evil. By centering on God's light and enlightenment, we as human beings can become more open to the universal divine light rather than to feelings of exclusivity, superiority, and the assumption that their light is the only light. Such beliefs lead people to think that the light came from them and they can become the judge and master over their fellow human beings.

This is the original sin and the great illusion. Each becomes centered on herself or himself in conflict with their neighbour and forgets to strive for solidarity with all humanity, with creatures and creation. Centering on ourselves and refusing to surrender to God leads to darkness and sin. Sin is the failure of love – a failure to respond to the movement of grace which is ever drawing us out of ourselves into the divine life and into the light.

Light cannot be thought of apart from darkness and when we are committed to the light, we are committed **through the light** to work against the forces of sin and darkness. It is not only the recognition of sin in ourselves and in others, individually and collectively, which comes into view as we become aware of the reality of God, but also the commitment to work for goodness, righteousness, and truth, and for the healing of our broken world. Elizabeth Gray Vining says,

“the realization that there is a spark of the divine in every human soul draws people together of all races, all cultures, all nations, all classes. That is why war is evil, and social injustice is unendurable, why religion is not complete without service.”

Let us nurture the growth of a breakthrough community of friends that crosses boundaries, deconstructs the dominant ideology, that normalizes sin and injustice, and moreover shapes an alternative praxis of mutuality where we see the glory of the divine in all creatures and creation.

Let us affirm a spirit of hope and compassion available to all by which our lives will be more whole, more harmonious as we draw on the spirit within, without and everywhere.

“We form a circle of hope

We pass the flame to one another

If my candle goes out, yours will light it.

Together we enable a brighter light ...

And each candle promises of its own

That darkness is not the last word.”

David McCauley

Jean Zaru, Ramallah Monthly Meeting



Friends World Committee for Consultation

Europe & Middle East Section

QUAKER YOUTH PILGRIMAGE 2008

Great Britain and Ireland 18 July - 15 August 2008

We are still seeking two adult leaders

(We will be looking for pilgrims for QYP 2008 later this year. Please watch this space!)

For application forms please contact:

Nigel Hampton, Moyallon Friends Meeting House,

117 Stramore Road, Portadown, Northern Ireland BT63 5JZ

Telephone +44 (0) 28 388 31752 Email nigel.hampton@utvinternet.com

Closing Date – 22 June 2007

Please remember: Trees for Africa

Now that Friends worldwide are preparing to travel to the 'Green Island' for the Triennial it is time to remind Friends of the need to compensate for the CO-2 emissions involved.

Of course I am well aware that in combating climatic change a lot more needs to be done but planting trees! To save on energy use, to apply alternative and more sustainable energy sources, to reduce (air) traffic movements, to change the patterns of production and consumption, yes even our lifestyle, these are but a few of the dimensions involved. But in the totality of that package a legitimate place is earned for the short and medium term for compensation by planting trees!

Some air companies and travel agencies are offering 'climate neutral' journeys by including tree-planting schemes in their arrangements. If looked at closely though very often the way in which this is done involves a significant part of the (financial) compensation flowing not to the trees planted, but to third parties involved, such as banks. In the case of *Trees for Africa*, the funds flow from Friends in Europe to Friends in Kenya and significant numbers of trees are being planted! If you know that for a mere 10 Euro Friends in Kenya are planting a tree, you will appreciate that until now more than 100.000 seedlings have been sown in more than 10 tree nurseries, involving 13 Yearly Meetings and more than a hundred Monthly and Local Meetings! Moreover the local coordinator in Kenya informed us that he likes the project so much partly because it is one of the few projects that all Kenyan Yearly Meetings pursue in common! Now what do we want more?

Often however I am asked what amount Friends should have in mind when compensating for their travel. Mostly a flight within Europe would involve a donation of about ten Euro. An intercontinental flight however would soon involve at least three or four times that much! There are websites that can calculate the CO-2 emission and compensation involved in air travels

In Netherlands Yearly Meeting we have agreed to pay the compensation needed for those Friends who travel by air in an official capacity. I work out the compensation needed and inform the treasurer. The compensation payments will then be included in the travel costs in our YM budget....

If your Meeting decides to follow suit, I am of course quite willing to do this for your Meeting also!

May I call on Friends, individually and corporately, to continue to support Trees for Africa?

Donations may be sent to Quaker Hulpfonds, Deventer, The Netherlands,

IBAN NL68 PSTB 0000 220644, BIC PSTBNL 21

News in brief

Meeting for Worship at a Distance

Continues to be held on the first Sunday of every month. A reminder of how it works without going anywhere, you, and anybody you might think of, are invited to this Meeting, which will take place on the first Sunday of every month at 7 o'clock in the evening, your time. The Meeting will, in other ways, sustain the same parameters as others. It will be for an hour, although of course you are free to leave early or enter late as in any Meeting, if that is right for you. It is not necessary to say that you are at this Meeting but you should know that it is being sustained by at least two and perhaps many more, and if it is your desire to say that you have been there – to symbolise the holding of hands at the end, or to bring a concern to the light, or simply to know that there are others like you, perhaps geographically far and wide, but all going to that Light at 7pm in their time on that day, you could send an e-mail, or write a letter, or make a telephone call. There is a small but growing community of Friends who are in touch in this way.

E-mail to caroline.wilson@esade.edu, or write to Conca de Tremp 51, Interior 3, 08032, Barcelona.

Europe and Middle East Young Friends

If you would like to know more about EMEYF please contact Matt Loffman at Quaker Council for European Affairs mloffman@qcea.org or see the web-site: <http://emeyf.quaker.eu.org>

Churches Worldwide to Participate in Mobilization for Peace



Concrete plans to mobilize churches around the world for peace were approved by the World Council of Churches (WCC) executive committee in early March. What is expected to become a major worldwide mobilization of churches for peace will culminate with an International Ecumenical Peace Convocation to be held in early May 2011 and an Ecumenical Declaration on Just Peace.

Part of the approved plan is for some 50 ecumenical “living letters” teams to visit churches facing situations of violence between 2007 and 2011. The “living letters” teams will be a concrete expression of solidarity as well as an attempt to share insights and learn from each other. At least three visits will take place in 2007, and some 15 visits a year are envisaged between 2008 and 2010.

“The aim is to reach out to as many interested church groups as possible and to invite their contributions to the Declaration in the form of texts, prayers, songs, pictures,” says Geiko Mueller-Fahrenholz, a German theologian who is coordinating the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (IEPC) expected to adopt the Declaration.

An effort will also be made to “engage with representatives of other faiths in the search for ministries of peace that enable us not only to overcome widespread - and growing - prejudice and mistrust, but also to struggle against recent trends that turn political conflicts into religious confrontations,” he adds.

Website of the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation: overcomingviolence.org/iepc

The Inner Light

The third German Swiss Border Meeting took place on the sunny Lindenberg in the Black Forest, February 02-04, 2007. We have received a long and interesting report on their consideration of the topic but sadly do not have room to publish it in *Among Friends* this time. If any Friend is interested in reading the report please contact the EMES office giving your email (preferred) or postal address so that we can send a copy.

Border Meeting 2007

September 14.-16, for Friends (mainly) from De, Be, Fr, Lu and NL, Fr, in the Jugendakademie, Bornheim-Walberberg near Cologne. www.jugendakademie.de ‘Beautiful dreams are not enough; I want beautiful realities.’

Speakers: Anna Snoek and Martin Kunz.

Contact: Janet Kreysa, Lessingstr 22, 53913 Swisttal, Germany, email: kreysa@t-online

Quaker House Belfast Project

Anne Bennett has been in touch to say that she is leaving Quaker House. We wish her well in “retirement”. Tim Foley and Olive Hobson are the new Representatives at Quaker House Belfast. They have been appointed to the post as a job share and will take up their responsibilities on Monday 4th June.

Contact: therepresentative@quakerhousebelfast.org; 02890 249293 Quaker House Belfast Project, 4th Floor, 40 Linenhall Street, Belfast BT2 8BA

A Liberating Approach to the Bible

Renato Lings invites you to visit his new website from April 2007: www.renatolings.com

Of particular interest might be sections on Sodom & Gomorrah, Biblical Studies and Fresh Research.

Still Here with Me

Book Review:

Teenagers and children: on losing a parent

**Edited by Suzanne Sjöquist, Translated by
Margaret Myers**

English edition 2007: Jessica Kingsley publishers

**Swedish edition 2005: Wabström and Widstrand,
'Du är hos mig ändå'**

The dedication at the beginning of the English edition of this book reads:

'This book is especially for you if you have lost your mum or dad while you were still very young.'

Still Here with Me comprises a very moving collection of personal stories written by teenagers and children about their own experience of losing a mother or father in childhood or adolescence. They share with the reader what it feels like to have gone through such a life-shattering loss, and how they have struggled to re-build their lives afterwards. The children write honestly and openly and take the reader with them into the depth of their experience. There are several pairs of siblings in the collection writing about the death of the same parent, and twins who lost both parents in the Tsunami in 2004. The youngest contributor is one year old, and the oldest is twenty.

I found this quite an amazing book for the depth of insight, understanding and wisdom offered by these young people. I would highly recommend it to anyone who is going through such a loss or who is in contact with a young person dealing with this kind of bereavement. It could also be useful for someone wanting to get in touch with unexplored childhood bereavement from years ago.

Jane Rose, Finland Yearly Meeting

Letter to the editor

Re: language

The letter from Judy Rangnes in the Spring issue of "Among Friends" spoke to my condition. It seems to me that if we are capable of using only English at our

supposedly international events, then whatever our intentions we must appear to non-English speaking people as a foreign and un-natural appendage trying to graft ourselves on where we do not belong. This surely applies in principle to anyone going abroad on whatever business: you should either learn the local language if you have the time and the skill to do so, or else you learn the International Language - which as Judy Rangnes pointed out requires very little of either. That is just common courtesy.

There seems to be an idea about that everybody speaks English these days anyway.

This is a delusion that largely afflicts English speakers! It might be easy to get this impression in the sort of places where English tourists commonly go, but from my own experience I know that when you step off the beaten track and stray away from the big cities and the tourist destinations, then English is not nearly as universal as some English people suppose, even in nearby countries like France and Austria.

I have met European Quakers who visited the offices of QCEA in Brussels and came away disappointed that in this supposedly international office nobody seemed willing to communicate in anything but English. This needs to be recognised as the crudest cultural imperialism, which gives a clear advantage to native English speakers over those who had to learn English, even if they have learned it well, and of course it rules out non-English speaking people completely. Just how narrow do we want the appeal of Quakerism to be? Esperanto was specifically designed to be a universal second language, where everyone could meet on a level playing field that was culturally and politically neutral, and made deliberately easy to learn while giving nobody any natural advantage over the rest. That sounds very Quakerly to me!

*Peter Bolwell, Hastings PM,
Britain Yearly Meeting*

Editor's note: We have checked and can assure Peter and readers that the current QCEA staff speak French, German, Dutch and Chinese fluently, and have a written knowledge of several other European languages.

Europe and Middle East Section (FWCC-EMES)

Friends World Committee for Consultation

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

Background

FWCC-EMES is now seeking a Friend to fill the challenging and rewarding position of Executive Secretary. The post is full time, but a job share arrangement would be considered. The office could be based anywhere within the Section. The remuneration is negotiable, but will approximate that of an experienced social worker.

Outline of the post

The FWCC-EMES Executive Secretary is the chief administrator of FWCC-EMES. The post-holder supports the FWCC-EMES Executive Committee in carrying out the range of tasks arising out of the annual meetings. This work will of necessity mean being involved in pastoral care, intervisitation, intercommunication across the section, and cooperation with FWCC worldwide. As a consequence, there is a considerable amount of travel not only throughout Europe and in the Middle East, but also occasionally to the other FWCC sections. A good command of spoken and written English is essential, and knowledge of other languages used in the Section would be advantageous. The Executive Secretary will also have overall responsibility for the FWCC-EMES Ministry and Outreach Project, working in close cooperation with its Co-ordinator.

Applications are now invited

Friends with a live Quaker commitment are invited to apply for this interesting post which will initially be for a period of three years from January 2008 .

For further information please contact FWCC-EMES Clerk:

Marit Kromberg

e-mail: marit.kromberg@c2i.net

Thereses gate 7A, N-0358 Oslo, Norway

Closing date for applications: 1st August 2007

Interviews to be held in Brussels on 27th September 2007

Diary Dates 2007

We are short of space for full postal addresses and phone numbers. Please contact the EMES Office if you need this information.

28 June – 1 July Norway Yearly Meeting, Sagavoll Folk High School, Gvarv (between Kristiansand and Oslo). Contact Marit Kromberg. Email: kveker@kveker.org Website: www.kveker.org

7 – 12 July QCEA study tour, Brussels and Strasbourg. Contact studytours@qcea.org

21 – 28 July Summer Gathering, Britain Yearly Meeting. Stirling University, Scotland. Contact Karl Gibbs: Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London, NW1 2AX, UK. Email: karlg@quaker.org.uk

10 – 19 August 22nd FWCC Triennial Website: www.fwccworld.org

28 – 31 August France Yearly Meeting, Conqueyrac (Gard). Clerk: Axel Jensen. Email: axena.jensen@wanadoo.fr Website: http://quaker.cherz-alice.fr

14 – 16 September Border Meeting, Jugendakademie Walberberg, (between Cologne and Bonn). Contact Janet Kreysa. Email: kreysa@t-online.de

25 – 28 October German Yearly Meeting, Quäkerbüro, Planckstraße 20, 10117 Berlin, Germany. Email: buero@quaeker.org

9 – 11 November FWCC-EMES Peace and Service Consultation, Brussels. Contact Bronwyn Harwood, emes@fwcc.quaker.org

16 – 18 November Europe and Middle East Young Friends, Quaker House, Brussels, contact Matt Loffman, emeyf@qcea.org

20 – 24 March 2008 EMEYF/EMES Joint Gathering, Vienna. Contact Bronwyn Harwood, emes@fwcc.quaker.org

Among Friends is the newsletter of Europe and Middle East Section of Friends World Committee for Consultation. We want **Among Friends** to reflect the diversity of Quaker life and experience across the Section and welcome articles, photos and news of forthcoming events.

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