



FWCC/EMES Annual Report 2005

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What is FWCC/EMES?

Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) was set up at the 1937 World Conference of Friends in Swarthmore, Pennsylvania. Its purpose is 'to facilitate loving understanding of diversities among Friends while we discover together, with God's help, our common spiritual ground; and to facilitate full expression of our Friends' testimonies in the world'. Representatives, appointed by the affiliated Yearly Meeting and groups, meet once every three years at Triennials in different parts of the world. They aim to provide links between Friends as they seek to perceive God's will more clearly, so that they may more effectively make their corporate witness. An Interim Committee meets annually to continue FWCC's decision-making processes and guide the work of the staff between Triennial Meetings on behalf of Friends.

The World Office in London is the centre of worldwide communications for FWCC. Its staff help organise Triennial Meetings and other gatherings and maintain contact with the work of the four Sections and the Quaker United Nations Offices. The International Membership programme links isolated Friends and worship groups around the world to the family of Friends. By means of staff travel, correspondence and publications, the office seeks to help Friends to gain a better understanding of the worldwide character of the Society of Friends and its vocation in the world.

Europe and Middle East Section

The FWCC Europe & Middle East Section (EMES) was established in 1938 and now consists of 11 Yearly Meetings, several Monthly Meetings and other smaller national groups. Events such as the Annual Meeting, the International Family Gathering, border meetings, seminars, peace and service consultations, the Quaker Youth Pilgrimage (in cooperation with the Section of the Americas), and other activities, encourage mutual respect and trust, leading towards greater involvement of Friends. A small Executive Committee, assisted by a part-time Executive Secretary, ensures communication within the Section and with other Quaker bodies and individual Friends. A team of Visiting Friends has also been appointed to travel in the ministry within the Section. Among many different interests, the Section also focuses on justice, peace and service issues.

The Europe & Middle East Young Friends (EMEYF) is well-established, cooperating within the Section but remaining fully autonomous.

Some Quaker Addresses in Europe

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From the EMES Clerk

A generation of Friends is passing away. Early this year Austrian Friends informed us that Grete Scherer had died. Grete, nearly blind, still made the effort to write to me some months before, expressing gratitude for the work of EMES and QCEA, two Quaker organisations she had been actively involved in. Friends in Europe and in the Middle East are grateful for her life's testimony to the work of the Spirit.

An important event this year was the registration of FWCC/EMES as a charity with the Inland Revenue in Scotland. Only small amendments were required to our present Constitution. The proposed revised Constitution was accepted at the Annual Meeting 2005 of FWCC/EMES in Bienenberg (Switzerland).

Following the FWCC Triennial in New Zealand, the Sections started work on an updated Mission statement of FWCC. Going through my personal FWCC/EMES files, I came across FWCC minutes 137 and 139 of a Committee meeting in 1952. Purpose and Functions have much remained as they are today, focusing on the spiritual life and a better understanding of different traditions and cultures within the Religious Society of Friends. The composition and structure of the "Main Committee" and the "Executive Committee" (now FWCC World and Central Executive Committee) have changed dramatically, with an initial membership of 128 members, not representing their Yearly Meetings! Many years later, in 1992, Norway YM asked EMES to consider afresh our purpose and function. The energies of the Section should be directed towards the spiritual nurture of its constituent meetings and the new groups in Eastern Europe.

The Executive Committee feels that the EMES Visiting Friends Scheme is contributing considerably towards this goal as their regular reports testify.

The FWCC/EMES Annual Meeting was held at the Mennonite Study Centre in Bienenberg (Switzerland). Two panels of three Friends witnessed to the influence of the testimony of Peace, Integrity, and of Simplicity and Equality in their lives. As they are sometimes challenged and inspired by the testimonies, we had the courage to face dilemmas and to ask ourselves awkward questions.

A major event which took place last year was the World Gathering of Young Friends 2005, where 58 Yearly Meetings and 9 Monthly Meetings and regional groups were represented, with speakers in more than 20 different languages. The theme was taken from John 15 "I am the vine, you are the branches. Now, what fruit shall we bear?" and William Penn's suggestion "Let us then try what love will do". The Gathering was the beginning of a process. Bridges of love have been build which will reach into the future.

At the request of Ramallah Friends Meeting, FWCC/EMES resumed responsibility for the running and the oversight of the Ama'ri Play Centre in the UNWRA refugee camp in Ramallah. Our Executive Secretary has been working hard to be supportive of and cooperative with all Friends work in the area of Middle East Yearly Meeting.

Over the past year the Executive Committee has given much time and energy toward a revision of different publications such as the “Meeting the Spirit” brochure and others. With a view to introducing enquirers and new Friends to Friends ways, a member of the Executive Committee wrote a “Friendly Advice on Quaker Ways” in Europe and the Middle East which will be available shortly. Also the role of our newsletter “Among Friends” has been reviewed, and the effort of our Executive Secretary to upgrade it with more diverse information and spiritual reflection is generally being well appreciated.

The Executive Committee received the invitation for European Friends to attend the 2006’s Middle East Yearly Meeting session in the Lebanon. We hope many of us will be able to go and share our faith and spirituality with the scattered Friends in this part of the world.

Anita Wuyts, Clerk

From the EMES Executive Secretary

On sitting down to write this report I review in my mind the events and encounters of 2005 and the temptation is to want to share them all. It is a privilege to serve the Section and to gain an ever growing sense of connection with Friends around Europe and indeed across the world. I have met so many inspiring people along the way: Friends living and working in greatly varying contexts.

To visit **Ramallah** and spend time with Friends there is to be humbled by their resilience in the face of daily adversity and their continuing lives grounded in faith and hope and love. In March I visited the Friends Schools and the Amari Camp Play Centre and attended the re-opening of the Meeting House and its launch as Friends International Centre. I spent several days with the International Support Committee and staff of American Friends Service Committee travelling around witnessing the devastating effect of occupation, the separation wall, the denial of human rights and meeting Palestinians and Israelis working for justice and peace. Daily life can be extraordinarily tough but Ramallah Friends continue to witness faithfully. I returned from my visit with a real sense of the role for the EMES Secretary for that context. Others go as Ecumenical Accompaniers, or members of Christian Peacemaker teams or for other more or less political purposes but my role is to support the Quaker community and ensure good communication to Friends throughout EMES about the life and work of Quakers in the Middle East. At the Annual Meeting of EMES it was agreed that I should explore with Friends the setting up of an Israel-Palestine Support Group or Network. Work on this has started slowly and I hope will pick up momentum in 2006. Especially once the newly appointed Friend in Residence, Kathy Bergen, has taken up her post.

In **Lebanon** relative calm had returned in recent years although some of the events in 2005 threatened to de-stabilize the country again. I met with Friends in September for a weekend of meetings and discussions – a particular focal point was their plans for

a Middle East Yearly Meeting in 2006, the first this century. Although not normally part of the Executive Secretary's role, it seemed appropriate in the context to agree to help with some of the planning and practicalities. Ramallah Friends have been closely consulted and intend to be at the Yearly Meeting to be held in Friends School Brummana in September 2006. Friends have bravely chosen the theme of "Leading the Middle East to a lasting Peace".

One of my longer visits of the year was to **Moscow**. Where I attended the Board Meeting of Friends House Moscow one weekend and then stayed on for a gathering with Moscow Monthly Meeting Friends the following weekend. I remain much impressed by the work on a tight budget of Friends House Moscow – contributing to a range of projects from Alternatives to Violence to a Women's Crisis Refuge Centre to work with children. The Russian language Quaker web-site is a major resource which reaches out across the Russian-speaking world. Latvian and other new groups of Friends have found it particularly useful. New enquirers are in touch and where possible invited to relevant gatherings of Friends. Three seekers from Siberia are expected at the forthcoming Woodbrooke on the Road in Latvia.

In "**Old Europe**" it is sad to see Friends get stuck in internal conflicts which seem so irrelevant to the wider world. Several Yearly Meetings had issues they were unable to resolve during the Yearly Meeting in session and as the report from Denmark indicates there have been some serious problems within that small meeting. But having said that there is still much to celebrate in these older yearly meetings, the backbone of EMES – and from where I sit I see a renewed commitment across Europe to outreach and the desire to share the precious gifts of the spirit with others.

Connecting with the wider world of Friends through **FWCC World Office** and the three other sections, Africa, Asia and West Pacific and the Americas, is also part of the role. As your Section Secretary I have attended meetings of the Central Executive Committee of FWCC and of the International Planning Committee responsible for plans for the next FWCC Triennial Meeting in 2007, and have been engaged in some of the ongoing work looking at the future of FWCC. For the first time I visited Friends in the USA. This was a particular privilege and an education. I visited Friends in Philadelphia and spent time in the FWCC Section of the Americas Office and then went on to Des Moines, Iowa, to attend the Friends United Meeting Triennial Meeting and take the opportunity to visit some Friends Churches and Meetings in the area.

The **Annual Peace and Service Consultation** towards the end of the year provides an opportunity for networking amongst representatives of Quaker Peace and Service committees and agencies across the section. Although the opportunity to meet is always welcomed by participants for some years now it has been difficult to find clerks or Friends prepared to commit to the planning process. It was heartening to find at the 2005 meeting a real sense that there was a community of interest here which would continue and that forward planning was possible. We left the weekend with an agreed

agenda for next year which included: continuing the work of learning about best practice in planning our project work and an exploration of how to develop a 'culture of learning' in our work together. We welcomed the offer from Julian Hodgkin to set up an email and web-based discussion group to continue the discussion, problem-sharing, celebration and support that we had been involved in this time and we had a team of four clerks identified to take responsibility for the Peace and Service Consultation in 2006.

John Warder Fund The fund has been drawn on to support travel to international Quaker events, which in 2005 included the World Gathering of Young Friends, Border and Regional Meetings, the Annual Meeting of EMES, the Peace and Service Consultation.

Visiting Friends Programme The work of the Section has been enhanced by the availability of the Visiting Friends programme which has also been funded through the John Warder Fund. At the invitation of Yearly Meetings and Groups the work of these Friends over the past year has included: nurture of new Quaker groups, helping groups to understand Quaker process, support of wider gatherings of Friends, links with isolated Friends and encouragement of new International members, concerns about shrinking and aging membership, a painful conflict within a meeting. During 2005 the following links continued: David Blamires with Finland, Diana Lampen with Denmark, Tony Fitt, and Moira Fitt, with Central Europe, Ute Caspers with the Baltic States, Elizabeth Morris with Spain, Tamara Dragadze was in touch with Russian Friends but not able to arrange to travel to Moscow until 2006. Julia Ryberg has remained a member of the group, although not specifically assigned by EMES to visit Friends in a particular place she was in fact called on during the year to support Friends events in both Norway and Denmark. All of these Friends have given of their time freely. Their travel expenses have been supported through the John Warder Fund. In 2006 as the three-year appointments of the Visiting Friends come to an end the programme will be reviewed.

Finally news from Edinburgh. We continue to seek ways of improving EMES communications Friends across the section. The Executive Committee has decided that the number of issues per year of the Among Friends newsletter should increase from three to four from 2006. We aim to keep the web-site up-to-date with information about where Friends meet around Europe and the Middle East and to post new publications there as they come out. We have struggled with ongoing technical problems with emails – but hope that on the whole your messages reached us and we were able to respond.

Early in 2005 Ben Miller Williams joined us as EMES Assistant to replace Anna Dunford whose work on behalf of the World Gathering of Young Friends became full time and more. Anna and Ben shared an office in our home and in the run up to the World Gathering the house became quite lively with frequent comings and goings of Young Friends, committee members and volunteers. It was a good time of sharing. We were glad to be able to support Anna and WGYF and in our turn benefited from their presence and Anna's continuing availability to assist us with the occasional tricky finance-related question. Edinburgh Friends have continued to support us in a variety

of ways: Jonathon Riddell continues to look after the EMES web-site, Alastair Reid manages to fit the preparation of Among Friends for the printer into a very busy life, a cheerful group of volunteers turn up to help to stuff envelopes, and we feel surrounded by prayerful support.

Bronwyn Harwood

Reports from Yearly Meetings and Groups

Belgium and Luxembourg Monthly Meeting

Affiliation	FWCC Europe & Middle East Section
Established	1976
Membership	23 members and over 40 attenders
Meetings	Sundays, 11 am, in Brussels with worship groups in Antwerp and Luxembourg
Website	www.be-lux.quaker.org

In 2005 we were greatly saddened by the death in May of Laura, the unborn daughter of Alice Jolly, a regular Attender at our Meeting. Our Friend Mike Stone died in July after a long illness which he endured with fortitude and calmness. An old Friend of the Meeting, Brian Stapleton, died in France in November. He had been a committed member of this Meeting and was remembered by many.

While our Meeting has no complete families attending or in Membership, we were very happy to welcome the return of the Children's Meeting in October. Anne Stone leads this enthusiastic group of three little girls on the first Sunday of each month, and the Meeting is delighted to see them.

The annual Border Meeting for Friends in Belgium, France, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Germany was on *Religion, Politics, and Quaker Spirituality: Our Witness of Hope in a Divided World*, and took place in September in Antwerp. It was very good.

We are pleased to report that our Meeting's primary concern, the Quaker Council of European Affairs is continuing to thrive. See <http://www.quaker.org/qcea> for what the Council is doing.

We continued our systematic consideration and discussion of the Advices & Queries at monthly Meetings for Learning, preceded by a bring-and-share lunch which never failed to feed the gathering. We find these occasions most helpful for focusing on those parts of the Advices and Queries and other Quaker topics which we most need to reconsider.

We are preparing a new leaflet on the activities of our Meeting for interested enquirers. We also held a Meeting for Picknicking in September.

Kate Macdonald, Assistant Clerk

Britain Yearly Meeting

For our staff members in Friends House, 2005 will be remembered for the response provided on July 7th, the day that four terrorist bombs went off in that part of London. They stopped their usual work, the building was opened to all who needed a place to go, someone to talk to, a phone to use and a cup of tea. Subsequently, the importance of understanding Islam and making links with Muslims has been felt again by many Friends and taken up as they are able to. Awareness of the situation in the Middle East also continues to be strong thanks to the continuing involvement of Friends in the ecumenical observers' programme and the talks they give after their time there.

The Woodbrooke "Hearts and Minds Prepared" course for groups has continued to be widely used and valued by the many meetings that have taken it up. Those leading 'Quaker Quest', the ongoing programme of outreach in London, have been running training sessions in many parts of the country, resulting in local Friends feeling confident to organise open evenings for enquirers and newcomers in their own areas. Friends in Westmorland General Meeting have been doing a different form of outreach following the publication by them of *Preparing for Peace*, a book of essays by prominent experts. They have met with MPs, MEPs and others in distributing the book. The renewal of the British nuclear weapons system ('Trident') is currently under consideration by the Government and giving Friends further opportunities to make their witness for peace.

The meeting of the G8 in Scotland in August saw many Friends joining in the big 'Make Poverty History' demonstrations. Staff from QPSW joined those from QUNO and elsewhere in the Quaker Team in Hong Kong for the WTO meeting in December, providing thorough reports for those interested back home. Many meetings are involved in supporting Fair Trade, including joining in campaigns to get their towns to take on Fair Trade status.

Our Yearly Meeting was held at York University and attended by about 1600 people, including a large number of children and young people, who made clear that they wanted their views heard by the adults. Some of them organised a memorable commemoration for Hiroshima Day with floating candles on the central lake. YM itself was dominated by consideration of the RECAST report on ways of restructuring the Society in the hope of making it more effective for present day life. There also need to be changes to fit new charity laws. Despite extensive advance consultations, the proposals are not to everyone's liking and there is more work to do on them. The launch of *Singing in the Spirit*, a new Quaker Song Book was, however, welcomed and is providing good fresh resources.

British Friends were glad that the World Gathering of Young Friends took place in Lancaster in August and many contacts with participants were made. All such opportunities are important for helping us to appreciate the wider Quaker world. We are fortunate in having the FWCC World Office and EMES Office in the UK and grateful for the personal contacts made possible for some of us.

Chris Lawson

Denmark Yearly Meeting

2005 has been an unpleasantly turbulent year for Denmark Yearly Meeting. Nationally we Danes have suddenly found ourselves the object of anger and resentment from over a billion Muslims because of a few cartoons that seemed to be rather innocent, to us at least. Alas, others violently disagreed. The end result of this turmoil seems to have been, unfortunately, a strengthening of right-wing hardline politics, general resentment towards all things Islamic and a polarization of the population into them-versus-us. It has also, fortunately, led to the realization that dialogue and inter-religious understanding is the only useful way forward.

In our own little Quaker meeting things have not been too pleasant either. Serious disagreements arose at the Yearly Meeting which led to a period of general unhappiness and mutual accusations, the exact nature of which are relevant only to DYM. One Friend has withdrawn from the Meeting, and others have been giving a lot of thought as to their future involvement in the group.

We have now begun a long period of reconciliation and healing, in which we will focus on how we deal with Concerns and how we communicate with one another. In this process we have had immense help and support from our Visiting Friend Diana Lampen who has served as mediator, freely sharing her compassion and wisdom in what it means to do things the Quaker way.

On the more positive note, we are now fully committed to giving assistance and help to the newly formed Latvian group. Several of our members have worked very hard to assist the Latvians, and a large sum of money has been reserved for this project. We hope that the enthusiasm and let's-make-this-work attitude of the Latvian group will rekindle the spiritual flame in our own meeting.

All in all, we look more optimistically upon the future than we did just a few months ago, even though we are aware of the need for constant dialogue and tolerance. But we feel confident that the Light will help us find the best way forward.

Hjerre F. Hviid, Assistant Clerk

Finland Yearly Meeting

We are very pleased to report that 2005 saw an increase in the average number of people attending Meeting for Worship. In Helsinki on Sundays, usually between 4 and 8, and the meeting room has been quite full a few times which means 15 persons or so. This is due to some new regular attenders, including a couple of regular visitors to Helsinki meeting from other Friends' meetings. Worshipping groups also meet monthly in Tampere and Oulu. In Tampere the group consists of about 8 to 12 attenders who meet in premises made available for their meetings by the local Lutherans. Members from Helsinki have visited the Tampere meeting every couple of months. One of the Tampere attenders has applied for membership.

Helsinki has initiated discussions after meeting for worship on the second Sunday of each month in response to the perceived desire for more interaction. These have been generally well attended.

We were glad to welcome David Blamires again twice during the year in his capacity as Visiting Friend – a special weekend with him with a theme of ‘Communication’, and the Yearly Meeting.

In 2005 there were no changes in our membership. We are grateful that a new editor came forward for our newsletter when our previous long-serving editor wished to lay down the task. Our newsletter in Finnish is published twice annually and sent to about 60 addresses. Apart from the newsletter, our main outreach activity in 2005 was to participate in a popular weekend-long fair organised under the auspices of the Finnish Service Centre for Development Cooperation, a service base for Finnish NGOs interested in development work and global issues. This has been an annual event for some years in Helsinki but 2005 was the first time that the Quakers have been represented there. We distributed information about Friends in English and Finnish and talked to interested persons.

This past year, we were able to send a representative from FYM to each of Sweden Yearly Meeting, Britain Yearly Meeting, and the World Gathering of Young Friends (in addition to EMES). One junior young Friend also was able to attend a gathering of Quaker young people in UK. All of these contacts add energy to our meeting.

Anne Herbert

France Yearly Meeting

Quakers are dispersed all over France in small groups (We have over 100 people who meet regularly). At present there are 11 small groups meeting in France and two main larger meetings The International Quaker Centre in Paris and The Quaker House in Congenies. Small groups are situated both in the north and the south of France. Many Quakers and sympathisers will drive a long way for a meeting (as I know in Brittany often 200 kms). The enthusiasm and motivation is there and all are happy to be able to meet and share meetings, projects and true friendship

In Paris there are many visiting Friends that pass by There is a weekly Sunday meeting and also regular meetings monthly meetings, a ‘cafe artistique’ and study weekends. We have been preparing for the second Salon for Peace initiatives which is taking place in Paris from 4th to 6th of June and is followed immediately after by the large arms trade fair Eurosatory; both these events call for Quaker participation and we will be holding a stand representing both French and international Quaker organisations. We invite anyone who has interesting literature leaflets etc or posters to put on this stand to represent Quaker activities to contact Joy Liengaard There is an international conference where representatives from FWCC, QCEA and EPLO will talk about their activities. We continue to support financially Ramallah Friends Meeting House, the

Tara project in Senegal, and adhere to the campaign for abolition of commercial arms and Abolition 2000 related to Stop Essaie and nucleaire arms.

The yearly assembly is always a moment of happy réunion and this year we met near Congenies and were delighted to have our inaugural meeting in the Quaker House of which the ground floor is newly renovated thanks to all the hard work and donations of many committed members. More work is needed to finish the whole house and complete the vision. The next step is to continue with building a summer kitchen. There has been a summer children's camp and also regular meetings and retreats taking place here. This year there have been two retreats organised by Friends in The Midi.

Joy Liengaard

German Yearly Meeting

Our premises in Planckstrasse 20 have now been in continuous use since 1925, as a centre of Quaker work and worship through all the upheavals of the past 80 years in Berlin. The story is an inspiring one of faithful witness, and deserves to be better known. Today the rooms serve as the administrative centre of the Yearly Meeting; and Berlin Meeting worships there every Sunday. Their programme of evening gatherings has helped Berlin's members to get to know each other better as Friends. In Bad Pyrmont too, weekly Sunday worship and other meetings take place in Friends' own historic premises. In the rest of the yearly meeting, meetings for worship are held less frequently, and often in borrowed or rented property, or in Friends' homes. The "Quäker" magazine gives details of 27 meetings or worship groups throughout Germany and Austria, some with a regular calendar of meetings, and others just getting together by arrangement. Local meetings only keep going where there are Friends committed to doing this work. Many Friends are unable to get to any Meeting at all, and with this in mind, all Friends are welcomed to set aside the time between 7 and 8 pm on Sundays to join in worship, independent of place and physical constraints, and concentrated on peace.

Local meetings come together in their "Bezirke" for a day or weekend three times a year. Since these regional meetings are the functional equivalent of Quarterly meetings, business matters form an important part of the programme. Themes have centred round our identity as Friends, examining our procedures and our Testimonies. What is the interrelationship between our religious life and our social witness? Should Friends as a Yearly Meeting be "speaking truth to power", or should this be left to individuals and small groups? (A recent West German Radio broadcast commemorating the anniversary of George Fox's death spoke approvingly of the fact that after September 11th German Friends had appealed to the government to try to break the spiral of violence).

Special interest weekends, retreats and Border Meetings all have the attraction that participants don't have to be to thinking of routine business. The Meister Eckhard seminar in Erfurt and the German-language (Sw-D-Fr) Border Meeting in the Black Forest both showed what inspiration can be gained from a weekend which allows

time for leisurely exploration of a theme, not just in formal sessions but on walks, in silence, and at meal times. At the “western” Border Meeting in Belgium Dan Snyder helped us to welcome, rather than regret, the inspiring tension between our spiritual concerns and our social concerns - one growing out of the other. The Peace Committee on two separate weekends looked at “conflict” and at “Russia today”, both seminars offering valuable insights to the (few) Friends who attended.

The use of the Internet as a means of outreach and of communication now takes place without much comment. Alongside the Yearly Meeting website, the Peace Committee has its own Weblog (<http://friedenszeugnis.twoday.net>); Young Friends and some local meetings are working on their own sites.

Our Quakerism is not limited to activities done sitting indoors. At Yearly Meeting, one group’s response to the Cary lecture was a series of glowing water-colour paintings. And at the regional meeting in Langenburg, children of all ages spent the weekend in and around a stream creating “Land Art”, in a wonderful spirit of worship and mutual trust. Teenage Friends got very wet on a canoeing trip on the Aller, and an older group once again joined in with young people from Belarus for further canoeing adventures there. Five Young Friends from the yearly meeting were at the World Gathering of Young Friends in Lancaster as representatives and/or interpreters, and one young-at-heart German Friend gave one of the keynote lectures. They experienced something of the enormous variety in Quakerism in the world today; what they have told us will go on challenging our generalisations about what Friends are like and should be like. Young Friends take responsibility in leading activities for Juniors (teenage Friends); and are eager to impart the values and attitudes that they know will help the group to function together happily.

This year saw the 80th anniversary of the founding of German Yearly Meeting. Throughout many of these years, including the years of separation, Eva Pinthus of BYM has accompanied us, so it was fitting that she should give this year’s Cary Lecture at Yearly Meeting in Bad Pyrmont in November, on “not throwing out the baby with the bathwater”. She reminded us of the importance of stories, legends and myths in defining who we are. Our spiritual roots are in the stories in the Bible, and if in our emphasis on individuality and modernity, we neglect these roots we are in danger of losing contact. She emphasised the enjoyment of religion, and this joy was noticeable even in our business sessions, with laughter bubbling up from time to time. The welcoming of new Friends into membership and the appointment of a new clerk added to a feeling of continuity. Our time-honoured Saturday “bunte Abend” has become a “Bühne der Kreativität” but was as colourful as ever, with the children giving a spirited portrayal of Judge Fell arriving home from his travels to find George Fox ensconced in Swarthmoor Hall. Margaret’s insistence that her husband first sit down and eat supper before taking any further action brought this story to life for us. Stories are indeed vital to keeping us connected to our roots.

Janet Kreysa

Austria Quarterly Meeting

In the year 2005 Friends in Austria dipped to single-digit numbers through the loss of several members, among them Grete Scherer and Henriette Vermes who both died at age 92.

Our clerk Susanne Jalka, with financial support from German YM, has taken care of the website berthavonsuttner2005.info which informs about the year's events commemorating the 100th anniversary of Bertha's Nobel Peace Prize. She also runs a related project, Imagine Peace, that asks young people to visualize and illustrate peace in new ways. Our Friend Ernst Schwarcz has summed up his life-long pacifism in a book against atomic war.

Our Worship Group in Vienna is still drawing its stream of attenders and visiting Friends. Among them was Bee Clegg from Bristol FM who escaped from Nazi Vienna in 1938 on a Quaker Kindertransport. While here, she also searched for traces of architectural work by her father Georg Karau among Quaker-sponsored housing of the 1920s. Friends from Bavaria shared two of our Quarterly Meetings. Highlights of our monthly open-house events were sympathetic discussions with Sunni Sufis and with Bahais. At the closing of the year, our resonance with Hungarian Friends continued in a shared meeting and weekend in Vienna.

Ewald Eichler

Hungary, Budapest Worship Group

2005 was a good year for Budapest Recognised Meeting. We introduced a second meeting in the month for either learning (worship sharing based on Hearts and Minds) or business. We hosted the 9th Central Europe Regional Meeting in Taksony on 6-8 June and there is a good feel about it still (see Linda Carranza's article in Among Friends).

In August, in view of the worsening ethnic conflicts in Vojvodina, Serbia, we were called to support a Tolerance group there and four of us went to Novi Sad to find out more about the situation. As a follow-up, we are now organising a round trip of Vojvodina for 24-26 March 2006. We intend to meet people, Serbs and Hungarians alike, find out about their needs, try and make new friends and explore the possibility of a work camp there.

In 2005 new people joined us and brought new insights with them. Vera Várady inspired us to go on a worship walk in the Buda hills. Ákos Lencsés felt led to set up a new website for us, www.quaker.tar.hu

Two of us managed to attend short courses in Woodbrooke and Charney Manor respectively and our Young Friend was enabled to attend the World Gathering of Young Friends.

We enjoyed the loving hospitality of Viennese Friends yet again in Advent. This "border" meeting has now become an institution.

We have been concerned for health in two instances lately. As a result we have become more supportive of one another and more cohesive as a group.

Zsuzsa Eastland

Ireland Yearly Meeting

A new year and a new start for Irish Quakers – at least in terms of location. January 2005 saw our Yearly Meeting headquarters and the Friends Historical Library leave their historic Swanbrook. The new Quaker House was built and financed as part of the move of Bloomfield Hospital from central Dublin to a beautiful new site in the hills to the south of the city. Bloomfield is the Nursing and Mental hospital which Irish Friends have owned and managed since 1815. The Irish Minister of Health Mary Harney officially opened the building in May.

Several of our Young Friends were closely involved in the planning of the World Gathering of Young Friends and other attended the gathering as volunteers and participants. We were also pleased to have a few participants from elsewhere visit Irish Friends. As a Yearly Meeting, we sought to support them and the whole gathering practically and prayerfully and have been enriched by the experiences and sharing of our members who took part. In addition, two Irish Young Friends were among a small group of WGYF participants who travelled to Kenya to gather with some of those who were denied visas to travel to Lancaster.

We look forward to hosting the next FWCC Triennial in Ireland in 2007, and during the year planning began in earnest. As well as practical arrangements, the organising committee will be seeking to inform and enthuse Friends throughout Ireland about the work of FWCC and help increase understanding of our place in a world-wide family of faith.

Our planned residential centre at Moyallon in Northern Ireland has taken shape and the majority of the building work was finished by the end of 2005. We hope the centre will be open for use in April of 2006, particularly as booking have already started trickling in!

Consideration of the second draft revision of our book of faith and practice (previously called “Christian Experience”) has been challenging us to really hear views quite different from our own. What does it mean to be a religious community? What are the essential beliefs of Quakers in Ireland today - and which are for personal discernment? How does the Religious Society of Friends respond to social changes and attitudes, particularly about relationships? These discussions have been honest, painful and painstaking as our Yearly Meeting tries to find the will of God in this process.

Christine McCartney

Italy – Bologna Worship Group (and Rome)

The real good news of the past year is that now there is again a worship group in Rome. Following some preparatory contacts with Bologna Friends, the group in Rome meets twice a month, first and third Sunday, at the home of Ulisse and Antonella Di Corpo. A good number of people attend the meetings, so there is hope that the group will continue to meet regularly.

In Bologna we have moved to new premises (Scuola di pace, via Lombardia 36, quartiere Savena, 2nd and 4th Sunday). Following a critical, difficult period the group has now found some stability, with about six people, plus occasionally others coming from distant places, such as Lake Garda and Turin, and some times foreign visitors joining us. A series of open informative evenings with talks and readings have not given expected results, even though some were well attended and successful.

In addition to Bologna and Rome, we have had meetings with Friends in Tuscany, including a weekend retreat last September. A “national” gathering is planned (to be held on 12th March ‘06) and we hope many isolated Friends within Italy will also attend. Like in the past, we will have our annual retreat at Guscella near Bologna in June.

“Lettera quacchera” will resume publication shortly, thanks to efforts of two members, Dino and Pier Cesare. A number of documents about Friends in Italy (in Italian) can be downloaded from our web site: www.quaker.org/italia.

Mauro Bonaiuti

Latvia

Extracts from a report of a visit

We are witnessing the amazing burgeoning of a Quaker group in Latvia. In September 2004, the most recent in the series of Baltic Gatherings, which bring together Friends from the East and West Baltic, organised by Hans Aaen of Denmark Yearly Meeting was held in Lithuania. There were four Latvian participants, only one of whom had ever attended any previous Quaker gathering let alone a Meeting for Worship. In April 2005 these Latvian Friends hosted an ‘Eastern Baltic Friends Meeting Seminar “**Exploring Quaker Faith and Practice**” in Jurmala near Riga with shared input from Western Friends. It had over the weekend 17 participants from Latvia, 8 from Lithuania plus others from Russia and the West. Now in February of 2006 we have the application for recognition in the international Quaker family of a vibrant and well-grounded Quaker group in Latvia. It has three international members, four membership applications pending, and several enquirers seriously considering application for membership in the near future.

Three Quaker groups meet regularly, in the three biggest towns in Latvia and there

are also several isolated enquirers in other parts of Latvia, who keep in touch through correspondence and some of whom attended last year's gathering in Jurmala. Ivars Abelis moderates an internet forum which keeps Friends in touch with one another and also reaches out to interested enquirers.

In **Riga** Friends meet regularly on Tuesday evenings (in a comfortable meeting room at the workplace of one of the members) for worship, followed by worship sharing and business meeting, and sometimes "prolonged conversation". They frequently get international visitors passing through. The second largest town in Latvia is **Daugavpils** (240km from Riga). The population here is predominantly Russian. This is not too much of a problem in the wider Latvian Quaker group as most Latvians speak both Latvian and Russian. The group has grown up around Elena Belajeva and her family. She is very energetic in using the local media for spreading the word. She set up a religious discussion forum in the internet, through which she found 2-3 more people who are developing interest in Quakers. **Liepaja** is the third city in Latvia (220km from Riga). It currently hosts the monthly business meeting of Latvian Friends. The group meets twice a month, average attendance is four or five but has been as high as nine. Friends in Liepaja have a vacant flat available for the group and for overnight visitors. Currently Inese Ansule with a small committee is busy preparing to host a Woodbrooke on the Road weekend, "Coming Home to Friends". There will be 40 places available. Participants are expected from across Latvia and also from Lithuania, Russia, Denmark and Britain and there is excitement at the prospect of having three enquirers from Siberia. (whose interest arises through internet contacts)

Friends in Latvia make good use of Quaker texts available on the internet in English and Russian, or in print through Friends House Moscow. They have decided to put their own translations on to their Latvian Quaker website to make them available as widely as possible. Elena Belajeva who attended the World Gathering of Young Friends in Lancaster last year has produced a video on Quaker Youth, is in the process of producing one on Swarthmore Hall, and has translated the BYM video "Meet the Quakers".

Danish Friends have had long links with the area and continue to support through attendance at gatherings and through correspondence, as do several Friends from other Yearly Meetings. The FWCC-EMES Visiting Friend programme has been available to support this group in its development. Ute Caspers is in frequent contact with Ivars Abelis who acts as correspondent for the group and assisted him in facilitating the 2005 Eastern Baltic Meeting.

Ute Caspers and Bronwyn Harwood

Lithuania

Two worship groups meet regularly in Vilnius and in Kaunas. In 2005 the Vilnius group had help from Friends House Moscow to run several Alternatives to Violence (AVP) training sessions and set up a local AVP group. After hosting the Baltic Friends

Meeting in 2004 Lithuanian Friends have retained their links with the Latvian Quaker group and contact and intervisitation between the two groups is ongoing.

Russia, Moscow Monthly Meeting

Worship Group of Moscow MM is getting more established. There are now 15 members of Moscow MM. During the period since Easter 2005 we have one more member, namely Peter Dyson living in Saint-Petersburg who has transferred his membership into Moscow MM. And recently we have received an application for membership from an attender from Electrostal (a small town nearby Moscow). This attender whose name is Natasha have been a short time ago at Woodbrooke as Eva Koch scholar. She has a long time connexion with Moscow Friends and we are happy to have such devoted seeker amongst us.

Alongside with normal meeting for worship on Sundays we having had different types of activities such as the Bible classes roughly fortnight led by the American Friend Patrick Neifert assisted by me. Also we have had once in a week English classes led by Patrick's wife Christy. Patrick and Christy Neifert and their two children are Evangelical Friends from USA living now in Moscow. So, we practically learn the richness of our diversity within a large Quaker family. The study of the Quaker literature held in Friends House Moscow on Tuesdays continues on regular basis approximately once in a month.

There was Annual Gathering of Monthly Meeting in October at Friends House Moscow with a special guest from UK Bronwyn Harwood, Executive Secretary EMES/FWCC.

Thanks to generous contributions of predominantly American Friends the very significant achievement has been reached. Publishing programme led in Russia by a good standing Friend Mikhail Roshchin who is a member of Friends International Library and also the clerk of Moscow MM presented in recent times to Moscow meeting a new book. There was issued a unique edition in three languages Chechen – Russian and English. The English title of it is the *Power of Goodness*. In order to bring this project to life in many countries the committee members of Chechnya, Russia, Canada and the USA have collected exemplary stories from countries and cultures all over the world on themes found in all religions: kindness, peace, righteousness, reconciliation, forgiveness, love, equality, respect. Most of the stories on Non-violence and Reconciliation part of them taken from the Quaker context are about actual events. Several accounts are from the recent history of Chechnya. All narratives are illustrated by young people aged 6 – 20 from Chechnya, Russia, Germany and the United States. This trilingual story collection grew out of a wish to help young generation learn the ways of peace and non-violence and facilitate them live a philosophy of love and truth, as opposed to hate and deceit. A bulk of this publication was offered to the youth of Chechnya, their families, and their schools for peace study. May it help bring peace to our troubled world?

Misha Roshchin

Middle East Yearly Meeting, Ramallah Monthly Meeting

Extracts from a letter from the Clerk:

As the end of the year draws near and I reflect on the events of 2005, I am realizing how unpredictable life is.

The year began with a joyful occasion. In early March, we celebrated with a wonderfully moving re-dedication ceremony of the Ramallah Meetinghouse after many, many years of disrepair and disuse. Soon thereafter, our international steering committee met in Ramallah and created the beginnings of a new outreach project of the Meeting which is to be called the Friends International Center in Ramallah (FICR) (see ramallah.quaker.org). And just recently we have secured our first program coordinator. I am so pleased to announce that Kathy Bergen will be joining us after the new year.

Unfortunately, shortly after the re-dedication, I fell quite ill. I spent part of the summer with family in the United States. In spite of it all, I managed to keep up with correspondence and host a few meetings and continue with my ecumenical, non violent peacework, in addition to moving forward with the FICR. In August, I was awarded the Peace Prize from the Fellowship of Reconciliation in Sweden and in July an Award of Affirmation from Global Ministries of the Christian Church(Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ.

This Fall has been extremely busy with many visitors from around the globe, as well as colleagues in the local community. And in the meantime, the occupation in the West Bank becomes further entrenched and just getting together to hold a meeting (or visit the doctor) is often next to impossible due to the Wall and military checkpoints.

Yes, life is so unpredictable. We can be happy one day and sad the next, healthy one day, and sick the next, rich one day and poor the next. So who is there to hold on to?

Who is there to feel secure with? Who is there to trust at all times?

What does it mean to be Christian and to celebrate the birthday of the Prince of Peace at this moment in history? With the birth of Christ we are called to radical discipleship.

Jesus' program was a program of hope at its heart. May we all renew our commitments to join this program, and may we all find the strength to be messengers of hope in both word and deed.

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope” (Romans 15:13)

Jean Zaru

Middle East Yearly Meeting, Brummana Monthly Meeting

Note from Bronwyn Harwood. The lack of a report from Brummana this year does not indicate a lack of life or activity within the group. Since Autumn 2005 much care and attention has gone into the planning for the Middle East Yearly Meeting 2006 and Brummana Friends and the School look forward to welcoming visitors from across the Middle East and further afield to the meeting in September 2006 for which they have chosen the theme: Leading the Middle East to a lasting Peace. I am sure we can expect an interesting entry from Brummana Friends in next year's Annual Report.

Netherlands Yearly Meeting

At our Yearly Meeting - in the 'Woodbrookers-house' at Barchem again - we were happy to have Friends representing Britain Yearly Meeting, German Yearly Meeting, France Yearly Meeting and the Mennonite Peace Group in the Netherlands in our midst. We explored the theme of the World Gathering of Young Friends: "I am the vine and you are the branches: now what fruits shall we bear?" and "Let us then try what love will do?". The adults and children attending first of made drawings of trees and the fruits they bear...To this end each child chose some adults to work with. Where do we come from (the roots), what gives one stability (the stem), what moves us (the leaves) and what are the results (fruits)?

In the meeting for business we heard the report of our FWCC representatives about the re-opened meeting house in Ramallah and the active Visiting Friends programme of the Section.

Young Friends preparing for the World Gathering were interviewed on their hopes and anxieties for this gathering, each time allowing for sufficient worshipful silence between the contributions. This was a good way to prepare ourselves for what was to come at Lancaster.

As we continued with our Yearly meeting theme, we answered in small groups of two or three Friends the question 'what inspires you?' The written reports of this creative exercise were given to the Young Friends who are our delegates to the World Gathering.

The presence of Friends from other Yearly Meetings as well as the sharing of the epistles we had received from Friends all over the world made us aware gain that we are part of a large worldwide family of Friends. We hope our own epistle will have a similar response.

During the autumn Netherlands Yearly Meeting held yet another meeting which explored ways to strengthen the life of our Yearly Meeting. Many proposals were explored. Amongst them outreach, more publications in Dutch, presentations at schools, worship sharing groups to share our faith experience, revising the Dutch equivalent of Quaker Faith and Practice, improving the website (www.vriendenkring.info), twinning with other Yearly Meetings of Quaker groups, publishing posters.....Working groups were

formed to implement some of these. Finances from our budget were made available to do this....

Now let us see what fruit we may bear.....

Kees Nieuwerth

Norway Yearly Meeting

Norway Yearly Meeting continues to enjoy a stable membership. Stavanger monthly meeting, however, has lost members due to members moving away and deaths among older Friends. The quarterly Tidsskriftet Kvekeren continues to be published regularly. The periodical is sent to approximately 400 subscribers. Visits to our Internet pages are continuously increasing. This is also the case during the summer when the schools are not in session, suggesting that those accessing our pages are not only school children or students with papers due.

The membership in Stavanger is critically reduced. Kristiansand monthly meeting has a good number of attenders, but very few of them become members or take on responsibilities.

All over Quaker Norway, Friends are heavily burdened by their jobs and don't have much energy left for voluntary service work. NYM has for this reason established an administrative secretary, although it continues to be important that those with volunteer positions have the capacity to guide and lead the secretary's work.

As a follow-up to the conference on universalism in 2004 we held a well attended Woodbrooke on the Road weekend on Christ in the Quaker Faith, with Tim Peat, autumn 2005. During the same weekend, the youth group gathered to learn the alternatives to violence programme (AVP) with Quaker trainers from Sweden.

NYM has an active youth group and a large children's group. In October 2005 we held a weekend gathering for all ages in the mountains. This annual social event focuses on being together, worship and experiencing nature and draws from 20 - 40 participants. Significant numbers of children and youths also attend the yearly meeting and are an integrated part of the four days of activities.

Judy Rangnes

Spain: Barcelona Monthly Meeting

This has been another year of change for Barcelona MM; overall a very positive one as we finally seem to have found a home for our Meeting on the third Sunday of the month. We celebrated at our final encounter before Christmas with the presence of our eldest, rather infirm, founding member and a newborn who arrived for tea afterwards.

This year we met in Malaga in spring with the members and attenders there and with Harvey Gillman who led the weekend. We are hoping that this year will see us in

Madrid with the Madrid Quakers. There is a general feeling of enthusiasm and hope in the Meeting – it has been a somewhat peripatetic last two years but despite that there are more participants than ever and we quite often receive visitors. Our new address is CETR, (Religious Traditions Study Centre) Rocafort 234, bajos, Barcelona and we meet on the third Sunday at 1130. Contact caroline.wilson@esade.edu for further information. We send other Meetings our very best regards.

Caroline Wilson

Spain: Madrid Worship Group

We received news of Madrid Friends in a Christmas newsletter. Here is an extract: Another year has gone by very quickly and we again want to share with you the small news Madrid Group has. In our last newsletter at Christmas 2004 we sounded very optimistic with all the Friends all over the world that had visited us. However, we started 2005 alone, that is Josefina and Carmen.

On March first weekend, Carmen travelled to Málaga to take part in a Quaker gathering to study the Quaker Testimonies with Friends from Barcelona and a small group from Málaga that wanted to know more about Friends. Harvey Gillman, from B.Y.M., led the group. Elizabeth Morris, EMES Visiting Friend, also attended. We planned then to have a similar gathering in Madrid. It might be next May.

Barbara Hollerbach, from Barcelona Meeting attended our Meeting on December 4th. We exchanged news about our Groups and possibilities of visiting. We enjoyed having her among us.

Since last October Ana Castañeda y David Ruiz, from Junta Ciudad Victoria, México, have been attending our Meeting. They took part in the World Gathering of Young Friends in Lancaster. They shared their experiences and we learnt from them. They will stay in Madrid until they finish their masters in 2007. We are enriched with their presence and contributions. Besides, next January, Vincent and Akiko McCarthy, member of Philadelphia Y.M. will arrive in Madrid and they will stay until May.

Ana and David sent this Christmas message:

Estando lejos de nuestro país encontramos en esta ciudad una junta que llena nuestras necesidades espirituales. Damos gracias a Dios por los Amigos en el mundo y en especial por Josefina y Carmen a quienes puso en nuestro camino.

Being away from our country we find in this city a meeting that fills our spiritual needs. We thank God for Friends all over the world and especially for Josefina and Carmen whom God put on our way.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.” Gálatas 6, 18.

Josefina Fernandez y Carmen Alcalde

Sweden Yearly Meeting

We flourish. In 2005 we got four new members, a large number for a yearly meeting of about 100 Friends. Our meetings for worship attract new attenders, many of them under 30 years of age and some of them have declared that they will apply for membership.

Most of the people that find us, find us at our web pages. The statistics for the last six months show a steady increase in the number of visitors.

The “Frequently Asked Questions” page seems to be especially interesting to the visitors. The last chapter of our new book of discipline was approved by Swedish Friends in November. That chapter concerns the decision making process, a subject we have paid special attention to during the last couple of years. Not only have we read and discussed the drafts of the chapter made by the Faith and Practice committee, the clerks have been careful always to remind Friends how the meetings for business are to be held, and the Overseers have arranged days on this theme. All this can be seen as a part of the work on Swedish Quaker identity that has been central in our YM for ten years now.

Another project connected to the identity issue is the book about the history of Swedish Friends. It is expected to be finished this Spring or Summer (2006) and we look much forward to it.

Our YM theme 2005 was “Our Journeys Through Light and Darkness” and the meeting was held in tenderness and fellowship.

The Quaker group in Stockholm has a concern for a refugee family from Bosnia. Much to our joy they recently got asylum in Sweden.

Wilhelm Dahllöf and Karin Ern

Switzerland Yearly Meeting

The annual January retreat at Montmirail continues to be spiritually enriching for the ensuing year. Heinrich Brückner, an East German Quaker, considered with us the theme of simplicity, pointing to the differences between our traditional approach and one imposed by circumstances beyond our control.

Following the 2004 presentation of a History of Swiss Friends, we have undertaken to have a look at Swiss Quaker Identity. A questionnaire was sent out which not only generated a good rate of return but also reached people who for various reasons have had little or no contact to the Yearly Meeting. Much care has gone into respondents’ comments beyond the answers, providing a helpful and encouraging basis for analysis and evaluation this year. Hosting the FWCC/EMES Annual Meeting in March turned out to be inspiring and instructive for us particularly since the venue, the Bienenberg Bible School, was provided by the Mennonites who, incidentally, have been instrumental in founding ‘Church and Peace,’ the network of peace churches which we have decided

to join, and which is dedicated to working with a growing number of communities and churches both established and new .

Remembering and living our spiritual heritage involves the question as to whether our testimonies are the essence of Quakerism. This was the theme of our annual gathering, with Ben Pink Dandelion as speaker and resource person. He reminded us of the legacy of John Wilhelm Rowntree and Rufus Jones and the part Switzerland had played in their friendship still reflected in ‘the kind of Quakerism we are most used to in Europe.’ We came away assured that the testimonies are indeed the essence, calling on us always to try to find a worshipful balance between keeping traditions and tackling reforms. Also, why not declare further testimonies as the way opens?

Our Service Committee reported on projects in Kenya: Tailor Training and Kakamega Commercial College, and Palestine: Play Centre and Friends School, Ramallah.

It was a pleasure to welcome Nancy Irving, FWCC General Secretary, who spoke to us of the far-flung Quaker community and what keeps us all together on the world scale.”

Fritz Renken

Quaker Youth Pilgrimage

Following the appointment of a new committee in January 2005 the group has quickly got together and has taken forward the preparations for the 2006 Quaker Youth pilgrimage. There are currently five committee members Richard Waldmeyer (Clerk), Caroline Evens (treasurer), Nigel Hampton, Fran Woolgrove and Hanna Nohe.

The committee has met 4 times between May 2005 and February 2006 in Ireland, Scotland and in Northern England.

The Section of the Americas QYP extended an invitation to the EMES QYP committee to attend their October 2005 meeting. Caroline Evens attended as a representative of the EMES QYP committee with her travelling costs paid in part by a grant from the Pollard & Dickson Trust. The committee is grateful to the American Section for the invitation and for their generous hospitality. This visit has provided a valuable insight for the European committee and it is hoped to build on this to enable the two committees to liaise more fully in the future. The European committee is looking at finding ways to stimulate and streamline this communication. There has been increased contact through dialogue by means of an email group and we have made arrangements for the two sections to be in touch at times of each other’s committee Meetings.

Planning for the 2006 pilgrimage to take place 13 July- 10 August is well advanced. The pilgrimage will journey between Ohio, Indiana and Illinois. This follows the decision of the two Committees to organise the Pilgrimage alternately in North America and in Europe.

The European part of the pilgrimage will start in Croydon on 13 July 2006 and will fly to Cincinnati to join with the American group. The pilgrimage will start with homestays and then travel around the mid west visiting places of Quaker interest. It is hoped that some of the time will be spent at Illinois Yearly Meeting. The theme of the pilgrimage is Quaker Service in Action through the ages.

The Committee is currently selecting two leaders: One leader is to be Nigel Hampton (Ireland Yearly Meeting) from this Committee and another Friend will shortly be appointed.

The fourteen places have been filled by pilgrims from Germany, England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland. Selection was a difficult task as the standard of applications was high. We have a waiting list.

The cost of the pilgrimage has been set at 1550 GBP. There is some concern that North American interest in pilgrim participation is low, however this is likely to lead to extra places for Europeans pilgrims.

The committee has continued its consideration of child protection procedures and also the need for insurance of public liability for the Committee members.

The committee was heartened by seeing the group photographs of so many previous pilgrims and leaders who were present at the World Gathering of Young Friends at Lancaster in August 2005. We feel the Pilgrimage offers so much in helping the spiritual journeys of Young Friends who then may go on to enrich the wider life of the Society of Friends.

Richard Waldmeyer

Europe and Middle East Young Friends

The highlight of this year was the World Gathering of Young Friends, which took place in Lancaster, in England. Many Young Friends involved in EMEYF took part in the organisation and preparation of the event, and participated in the gathering itself. There is a very strong sense that the Gathering was a beginning, not an end. Many friendships have been made, many people have been inspired, and this inspiration has spread from them to others as well. We hope that this will be a major encouragement for a generation of Friends.

Spring Gathering was held in Ermelo, in the Netherlands, and again there was a link with the World Gathering. We were able to explore the World Gathering's theme, Building and Breaking Walls, and join together in preparation for this gathering. A very varied and creative programme was thoroughly enjoyed by all participants, and included art workshops, yoga, building a strong community within the group, walking

in the countryside, and discussions on Palestine. There was a strong input from Dutch Friends, including a Meeting for Worship for Song and Dance, to which members of the Yearly Meeting were invited. We are very grateful to Dutch Yearly Meeting for their financial and practical help in organising the gathering.

At our Annual Meeting in Brussels we were delighted to have a link with the World Gathering of Young Friends. Some Friends who had participated in the gathering shared their heartfelt feelings about the gathering, and also organised a workshop where we all had a chance to experience some of the activities of the gathering for ourselves. We heard of the emotional ups and downs that people experienced, the highlights and discoveries, and the fun and laughter. Young Friends also shared some of the exercises that were undertaken during the event, which gave us all an insight into our personal experiences of Quakerism, sharing our cultures and our faith.

The year ended with a New Year Gathering on the theme 'Imagine Peace', organised by Austrian Friends to celebrate the peace work of Bertha von Suttner. A number of Young Friends were able to attend, and together explored positive experiences of peace using a variety of art forms. Participants created both a song and some art pieces in a creative and challenging approach to the theme, and found it an interesting way to spend New Year.

Rachel Bryers

Programmes of EMES

Amary Play Centre, Ramallah

The Play Centre is located in the UNRWA School for girls. It consists of one big room eight meters by six meters, in addition there is a small room enough to accommodate maximum fifteen children for story telling sessions.

There is an agreement between FWCC/EMES and UNRWA that UNRWA offers us the premises and we take care of the play centre, teachers and running cost of it except for water consumptions which is also paid by UNRWA. The Play Centre is serving the community in Amary Refugee Camp. Children enrolled are residents of the Camp.

The budget of the play centre is fully dependent on donations from the USA, Europe and Asia. This budget allows us to pay for the teachers' salary and the other running costs of the centre. Utilities cost of electricity, cooking gas and heating oil are kept to the minimum.

This year, there are forty-eight children of five years of age at the Play Centre benefiting from the services the Play Centre provides. The services are pre-school education system in addition to quality playing and fun. Starting last year, we are collecting 100 shekels from each child as fee. This amount is equal to \$22. Most of the families are able to pay this amount. This year just four children did not pay the fee because they

cannot afford it. The revenue we collect pays for the cost of the school books , other stationery expenses and part of the running cost of the Play Centre. We offer milk twice a week to the children, and whenever possible we provide sandwiches.

The Play Centre operates six days a week from 07:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Staff

There is the supervisor of the Play Centre, one main teacher and two assistant teachers. The supervisor visits the centre two hours a day, three times a week, and supervises the teachers and gives story telling sessions.

From the time, the Play Centre was established until last year we had only one main teacher and one assistant teacher. Because of the big number of children, we found it necessary to recruit one more assistant teacher this year and this decision will be evaluated end of May before we decide if we will keep two assistant teachers next year. Our decision on keeping with two assistant teachers is totally depending on the size of the funding and the budget.

Achievements:

1. Connected a separate electricity meter for the Play Centre. This decision was taken because when the Play Centre was connected with UNRWA school for girls, it proved that it was not reliable and so many times the Play Centre was kept without electricity for weeks.
2. The shelter is already installed and the situation is much better now. The children can spend quality time outside in the hot weather and the rain, because they are protected from both weathers.
3. A sign carrying the name of the Play Centre with the sponsors is also put at the fence of the Play Centre.

To be achieved:

1. To buy two wooden benches and two tables for outside art activities.
2. To put curtains on the two windows of the Play Centre.
3. To paint the walls of the outside area of the Play Centre. Nice drawings and paint to cover the walls. The children together with volunteers can do that. This is very important in order to create a kindergarten environment.

Note: we declined the idea of having a TV and a VCR for video showing. The reason is that the time spent at the play centre is not long enough. Children go home at 12:30. Also we tried to save money in order to pay for the second assistant teacher.

It is very important that the Play Centre stays and provides services. Especially now with the current situation that the area is going through, our services should continue. The quality of time the children spend is very essential for their social development. They learn values like: cooperation, forgiveness, sharing, caring and they also develop

their self esteem which help them think of their future career. We do not provide academic services only, but more important positive social values. We continue to be dependent on the financial support of Friends around the world

Financial status of the Play Centre:

The Play Centre bank accounts both in the USA and Switzerland, have received donations and contributions in 2005 as follows:

Bank Account Name	2005 Donations	Closing Balance	Remarks
FUM	10,699.88	27,323.02	Information received from Terri Johns
EMES	8,300 Swiss Francs	43,650.86 Swiss Francs	Information Received from Bronwyn Harwood

Donations received locally either in cash or by a cheque note

Name of Institution	Amount (US\$)
Personal donation (to buy lap top but instead it was agreed we could use it to pay for salaries)	500
Wooster Friends Meeting	100
Ramallah Meeting	145
United Society, Women of Sandy Spring	300

Note

In alternate quarters funds are transferred from FUM and EMES Accounts to cover salaries and other running costs. In addition funds held in the Swiss bank account are accumulated to cover staff pensions/severance pay. In 2006 we plan to investigate holding these set-aside funds in a separate savings account. It is essential that we do not have to draw on these funds as they are necessary for us to fulfil the legal obligation to staff.

It is considered safer to keep the bulk of the savings outside Palestine and to use the Jordan bank as a current account with a small surplus for urgent contingencies.

Full financial statements are available from the EMES office on request .

Muna Khleifi, Supervisor

Quaker United Nation Committee, Geneva

Instead of a standard report on the work of Quaker Office at the United Nations (QUNO) Geneva (“we met two times and discussed many interesting topics” ...) I’ll take the liberty of making a few comments on the ministerial of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Hong Kong in December 2005: I had the unique chance to extend a business trip to China and attend (not at QUNO’s cost ...) the WTO meeting

as an observer member of the QUNO delegation, seeing QUNO in action for the first time in eight years.

Looking at the outcome of that marathon ministerial, one could just report very briefly that nothing was decided, apart from further meetings.

However, this in itself is interesting enough: In previous years outcomes tended to favour the powerful and rich nations. This time, the poorer countries, partly under the leadership of India and Brazil, were better organized to voice their interests (and objections), while on the other hand Europe and the US have not yet realized that in order to maintain growth in global trade (which they claim would benefit all) they, too, have to give in, rather than just demand.

Key issues still on the table are the subsidies for less than 30.000 cotton farmers in the US, which threaten the livelihood of millions of small cotton growers in sub Saharan Africa in particular. Subsidies for EU farmers, which result in agricultural exports at dumping prices, unfairly undercutting Third World farmers, which should have a natural advantage on commodities like sugar.

The industrialized countries on the other hand demand open markets for their banks and insurance companies, their electricity and water suppliers - the so called utilities, which are a highly sensitive topic when it comes to the issue of universal (affordable) access.

And there is the topic of migration under the heading of GATS - General Agreement in Trade in Services: While 'the North' takes it as a given, that its managers and consultants can travel all over the world in pursuit of profits - most of the labour migration from 'the South' (or East) takes place illegally: Construction workers from the former Eastern Block countries into Western Europe, agricultural workers from Mexico into the US, ... There are those who question whether an agreement on this type of 'service provision in the shape of a person' should be encouraged via the negotiation of an agreement, pointing out that existing programmes (e.g. in the US) have been badly administered, resulting in the abuse of workers. On the other hand, a number of national delegations of developing countries in Geneva, with whom QUNO works closely, have expressed a strong interest in a legal framework: Rules, even if badly implemented, are still better than the 'law of the jungle'.

So what did QUNO do in Hong Kong: Three legal experts were there to help developing countries assess draft proposals and put their demands in to 'treaty language'. With thousands of negotiators talking at all levels, the Quaker input probably was not key in the non-outcome of the ministerial. But the fact that the Indian delegation asked QUNO to arrange a meeting where it could explain its position to Non Governmental Organizations present in Hong Kong shows that QUNO is seen as an honest broker, a friend for the less privileged. And: Just before the Hong Kong meeting the right of poor countries to affordable generic medicine, an area of previous QUNO involvement, finally was officially recognized.

More detailed reports on Hong Kong and on the other work areas of QUNO (Human Rights, migrants, women in prison, small arms, disarmament, ...) are available on www.quno.org, which also has a free electronic alert system for all new QUNO publications.

Martin Kunz

Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre

Woodbrooke has again been fortunate during 2005 to host a number of international visitors, from Europe and further afield. Friends School Tokyo organises a study tour for its 15/16-year-old pupils each August, when the group spends a week at Woodbrooke learning about Quakerism, experiencing life in a Quaker organisation and participating in Birmingham's opportunities for multi-faith activities. The girls then go on to '1652 country' in the North of England, meeting Quakers in various locations and exploring the roots of the school's ethos. It has proved an excellent link with the small number of Japanese Friends, and in April 2005, a group of adult Friends came for a similar tour for the first time.

We were also particularly pleased to help with preparation for the World Gathering of Young Friends in the summer. We hosted a group from around the world who spent a week learning about each other's Quaker practices, and developing their skills in facilitation and listening ready to meet the challenges of the Gathering itself. All the feedback suggested that this preparation time had been well spent, and that the group had valued the support which Woodbrooke provided.

The Catchpool Fund, through the work of its project coordinator Susan Seymour, has enabled good relations to continue between meetings and individuals in continental Europe and Woodbrooke. We have welcomed Friends from Russia, Sweden and Italy, and sent tutors to contribute to gatherings of Friends. We have also produced multi-language material about Woodbrooke and created a new course for translators, to look at the ways we speak about our religious and Quaker experience, which will run for the first time this year.

As we move into 2006 we will welcome the first student on our new programme for training Quaker Prison Ministers, and look forward to presenting courses on Spiritual Hospitality and Spiritual Friendship. Our course participants can now benefit from the newly refurbished library, which was opened in autumn last year. Thanks to the generosity of individual donors and trusts, readers have a far more comfortable and accessible library space, which is also better equipped for preservation of our ancient Quaker texts. During the refurbishment process in the library, 8 tonnes of books were moved and a couple of buried treasures were unearthed... a selection of books which had been lost for 90 years. It was possible to tell when they had last seen the light of day because of a postcard being used as a bookmark, which was dated 'January 1914'.

A copy of Calvin's Institutes had received severe damage from bookworms and proved an interesting exhibit at the opening ceremony, which also featured a speech from Rowena Loverance of the British Museum.

Although it is still early in the year, exciting things have already been happening at Woodbrooke. We recently received a visit from a group of Korean nuns who had decided to include Woodbrooke on the itinerary of their pilgrimage to Holy Lands, alongside appointments to visit the Dalai Lama, the Queen, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Pope.

We look forward, as always, to welcoming and working with all our Friends throughout the EMES area.

Jennifer Barraclough

Diary 2006

Yearly Meeting	When	Contact
Ireland	20 - 23 April.	C Rosemary H Castangner, Quaker House Dublin, Stocking Lane, Rathfarnham, Dublin 16, Ireland. quakers@gofree.indigo.ie
Netherlands	2 - 14 May	Hadewijch Touwen, Quakersecretariaat, Postbus 989, NL-4600 AZ Bergen op Zoom, The Netherlands. secretariat@quaker.dds.nl
Britain	26 - 29 May	Michael Hutchinson, michaelh@quaker.org.uk Friends House, Euston Road, London, NW1 2BJ, UK.
Switzerland	2 – 5 June	Derek Brett, Maison Quaker, 13 Ave du Mervelet, CH-1209 Genève, Switzerland. dubrett@talk21.com
Nordic (Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden)	29 June - 2 July	Marit Kromberg, Venneses Samfunn Kverkerne, Skovveien 20, 0257 Oslos, Norway kveker@kveker.org
France	29 August – 1 September	Axel Jenson, Poutet d'en Bas, 09350 Castex, France. axena.jenson@wanadoo.fr
Middle East	7 - 10 September	Sabah Baz, PO Box 4, Brummana, Lebanon. baz@inco.com.lb
German	12 - 15 October	Quäkerbüro, Planckstraße 20, D-10117 Berlin, Germany. buero@quaecker.org

Some other events in 2006

28 April – 1 May, **Woodbrooke on the Road in Liepaja**, Latvia. “Coming Home to Friends.” Further information from Inese Ansule: nesel72001@yahoo.com

28 April – 1 May, **Central European Quaker Gathering**, Český Šternberk, Czech Republic, on the theme “Simplicity”. Contact Pavel Marusinec, pavel.marusinec@cuzk.cz, for registration forms to be returned by 15 March.

2 – 4 June, **France International Salon for Peace Initiatives**, Paris. French Friends are coordinating international Quaker involvement on behalf of FWCC. Contact: Jeanne Henriette LOUIS, jeannehenriette@ifrance.com

6 – 8 June, **France Eurosatory**. For further information about the planned Quaker presence at the International Arms Fair contact Joy Liengaard joyazima@wanadoo.fr

13 July – 11 August, **Quaker Youth Pilgrimage in Ohio and Indiana, USA** for young people aged 16 to 18.

15 - 17 September, **Border Meeting, Strasbourg**. The annual Border meeting for Friends from France, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg. Contact: Mike Zipser, 20, Rue du Général Rapp, F-67000 Strasbourg, France, Tel.: 0033-388-240958 eMail: nancy.krieger@wanadoo.fr

17 - 19 November, **EMEYF Annual Meeting**, Bad Pyrmont, Germany. Contact emeyf@qcea.org

17 - 19 November, **EMES Peace and Service Consultation**, Brussels. Contact Bronwyn Harwood, emes@fwcc.quaker.org

CONTRIBUTING TO FWCC EMES

The work of FWCC EMES depends on contributions from the Yearly Meetings in the Section and from individual donations. Contributions for the general work can be made into any of the following accounts:

Bank	Account name	Account number
Bank of Scotland 426 Morningside Road Edinburgh EH10 5QF Scotland	Treasurer's (current account)	IBAN GB02 BOFS 8002 7700 2135 20 GBP
Current account		
BEKB (CH-2501) Biel Switzerland	CHF Savings account <i>Allgemeine Rechnung</i> (or general account)	IBAN CH47 7901 0042 4003 1816 9 CHF
General account		
PlusGiro (<i>internet bank</i>) S-105 71 Stockholm Sweden	Current account <i>PlusGirokonto</i>	IBAN SE92 9500 0099 6034 0466 9644
Current account	SEK with a Euro 'pocket'	EUR & SEK

Contributions towards the work of the Amari Camp Play Centre should be paid into the separate account:

EMES-Ramallah Friends' Playcentre	CHF Savings account <i>EMES-Ramallah Friends' Playcentre</i>	IBAN CH10 7901 0042 4104 4291 9 CHF
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Please contact the FWCC/EMES Treasurer, Laurie Naumann, for further information or to inform him of bank transfers you are making.

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NOTE the formal annual report and accounts are available as a separate document on request from the EMES Office.