

**FWCC
FRIENDS
WORLD
COMMITTEE
FOR
CONSULTATION**



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FWCC/EMES Annual Report 2008

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Note: The formal annual report and accounts, prepared in accordance with UK charity requirements, are available as a separate document on request from the EMES office.

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What is FWCC?

The Friends World Committee for Consultation was established at the Second World Conference of Friends held at Swarthmore, Pennsylvania, in 1937. The concept of a world organization to express the sense of world fellowship of Friends arose as an important part of the evolution of the Religious Society of Friends in the first two decades of the twentieth century. This tentative development gained impetus from the 1920 Friends World Conference in London and the Young Friends Gathering in Jordans, England, held in the same year. No other organisation exists which links together Yearly Meetings around the world. Authority within the Religious Society of Friends lies at the Yearly Meeting and Monthly Meeting/church level, leaving these groups potentially in isolation. Hence the vision arose of an organisation to keep Friends connected and in touch with each other across the diverse spectrum of the Society

FWCC was established to be a channel of communication among Friends, helping us to explore and nurture our identity as Quakers so that we can discover and be faithful to our true place in the world as a people of God. The current mission statement is: answering God's call to universal love. FWCC brings Friends of varying traditions and cultural experiences together in worship, communications, and consultation, to express our common heritage and our Quaker message to the world.

Representatives appointed by affiliated yearly meetings and groups gather in plenary sessions every 3-5 years. Between plenary sessions, the Central Executive Committee which is broadly representative meets annually to continue FWCC's decision-making processes and to guide staff. The World Office in London is the centre of worldwide communications for Friends and supports the work of the Sections. It also represents Friends with outside international organisations such as the UN.

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, occasional International Family Gatherings, border meetings, seminars, peace and service consultations, the Quaker Youth Pilgrimage (in cooperation with the Section of the Americas), and other activities, encourage mutual understanding, leading towards greater involvement of Friends. Two booklets, Meeting the Spirit and

Friendly Advice on Quaker Ways, have been produced and there is a quarterly newsletter, Among Friends. A small Executive Committee, assisted by the Executive Secretary, ensures communication within the Section and with other Quaker bodies and individual Friends. Among many other different interests, the Section also focuses on justice, peace and service issues.

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

Some Quaker Addresses in Europe

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Report of the work of the Executive Committee for 2008

The Executive Committee will have held 3 meetings between Annual Meeting 2008 and Annual Meeting 2009, on 25th-28th September 2008, 5th-8th February 2009, and 9th April 2009.

The members who served as the Trustees of the Registered Charity have been: *Marit Kromberg (Clerk), Laurie Naumann (Treasurer), Anneke Spreij (EMEYF), Franco Perna (International Member), Fritz Renken (Switzerland YM), and Jane Rose (Finland YM)*. *Marisa Johnson (Executive Secretary, but also a Trustee)* has prepared and attended all meetings.

Improved networking and communication has been a high priority during the whole of 2008. This priority focuses on our aims and purposes as an organisation. The Executive Secretary's report describes the work in detail. The Ministry and Outreach Programme will be mentioned below, and the Coordinator's report supplements this administrative summary. The Executive Committee would like to thank the Executive Secretary and The Ministry and

Outreach Coordinator for their impressive contributions to this important year of change and development. We are also especially grateful to Bronwyn Harwood for her willingness to give advice and support to the Executive Secretary and the Executive Committee during the hand-over process and through the whole period.

Staffing

The Annual Meeting 2008 confirmed the appointment of Marisa Johnson as the new Executive Secretary of FWCC-EMES for three years from AM 2008-AM 2011. The first year has provided a very broad set of opportunities for induction into the European and Middle East network of Friends' organisations and activities. We also have a new contract with Julia Ryberg as Coordinator for the Ministry and Outreach Programme.

The appointment by the World Office of Kim Bond as personal assistant for the General Secretary enabled EMES to purchase help with six hours of administrative support per week from the same person. Other Friends have also provided voluntary support.

Section Finances

The Annual Meeting in 2008 accepted a budget for 2008 and a financial plan for the period 2009 – 2011, which rested on the assumption that it would be possible for the Treasurer and Executive Committee to raise the necessary funds. In July we were delighted to hear that the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust (JRCT) had made us a grant of £136,400 over two years to continue the work of the Ministry and Outreach Co-ordinator, as funding for part of the salary of the Executive Secretary and for administrative support, travel and gatherings, and website development.

The Annual Meeting also recommended that a Euro account be established as a matter of urgency. This was accomplished during the summer, and EMES now has a Euro account with the German Sozialbank in Köln.

The accounts for 2008 are closed with a deficit of approximately £2,000. The Accounts for 2008 with the report of the independent examiner will be available as a separate document.

Canadian Friend Elizabeth Rossinger left a bequest of about £125,000 to *The Quaker Youth Pilgrimages*. The funds are to be shared between EMES and Section of the Americas and will be accounted for as a restricted reserve. The exact use of the funds will be specified following discussions with the QYP Committee.

Work Plan

The Executive Secretary presented our first work plan at the Annual Meeting 2008. During the year we have gained experience with the format. At its September meeting the Executive Committee decided to bring the work plan closer into line with the Aims and Purposes of the FWCC-EMES Constitution. This has made us aware of the need to compare the FWCC-EMES Constitution with the revised (Triennial 2007) central FWCC Constitution and with those of other Sections. The result will be presented to the AM 2009.

Work is under way to launch our new website. The Executive Secretary has set up a number of google groups to enable Friends to share information and to encourage more frequent contact. In keeping with the priority given to improving networking and communication within the Section, the Executive Secretary herself may give less time to representing EMES on self-standing organisations. Other members of the Executive Committee or knowledgeable Friends may be asked to represent EMES in order to avoid increasing the workload of the Executive Secretary.

Bronwyn Harwood has been invited to become a Board Member of Friends House Moscow (FHM). She attended the meeting held in October 2008 and has sent a full report. Over recent years there has been a strengthening of the relationship between FHM and EMES, and in the light of this increased level of other connections between FHM and EMES, the two organisations agree that there is no longer a need for direct EMES representation on the Board.

Kees Nieuwerth represented EMES at the Annual General Meeting of *Church and Peace* from 23rd to 25th May 2008. We have, as usual, received a full and informative report from the meeting.

Visiting Friend Programme – Ministry and Outreach Programme

As mentioned above, the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust (JRCT) made us a grant over two years to support EMES' capacity to further develop the Ministry and Outreach Programme. The On-line learning project, *Quaker in Europe*, is being launched this spring. This part of the programme is being run in cooperation with Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre. The EMES Executive Secretary and the Woodbrooke Head of Education have prepared a draft Memorandum of Understanding between the two organisations for the provision of *Quaker E-learning and Community Building for Friends in Europe*. A Strategic Development Group has been formed to guide the Visiting Friends area of the programme. See also the Co-ordinator's full report of the M&O Programme.

Policies and Procedures

The work on our *Handbook of Policies and Procedures* is progressing and is among the main objectives in the work plan. A standard *Terms of Employment* template has been prepared based on the contract for the Executive Secretary. We have also adopted a format for an annual appraisal process for the Executive Secretary and we have agreed to bring *EMES Sick Leave Entitlement* into line with those of FWCC World Office and Britain Yearly Meeting. We would hope to develop a reserves policy to allow for a full year of controlled winding down. We still need to carry out a full risk assessment in order to fulfil our duty of care in respect of employees and free-lance contractors, and hope to present the outcome to the Annual Meeting in April 2009.

Review of the Amari Play Centre

A full report of the Review of the Amari Play Centre has been received from Lindsay Cook and Vanoush Khassis. Their recommendations outline many exciting possibilities to be explored. The report has been sent to the appropriate Quaker Service bodies within EMES. An overview of the replies received will be prepared for discernment at the Annual Meeting 2009.

Conclusion

While this has been a very positive year for EMES as an organisation, the world saw two major events which disturbed the peace within our own Section. The war in Georgia and the crisis in Gaza have been of deep concern to Friends within the Section. The World Office set up an on-line mechanism to enable Friends to donate funds to the newly established Friends House Georgia. The FWCC-EMES website and Googlegroups postings have kept Friends informed of developments in the Middle East. European Friends have also supported Kenyan Friends in relief and reconciliation work after the violence which erupted in the first weeks of 2008.

Sad as we have been to watch these crises, we have seen the importance of the work of networking and communication which has enabled Meetings, Groups and Quaker bodies in the Section to respond with both spiritual and material support.

Marit Kromberg
Clerk

Report from the Executive Secretary

Looking back on this first year of service as EMES Secretary I can hardly believe how much I have experienced. I often wonder at the audacity that, in my blissful ignorance of the true range and extent of the task, propelled me to put myself forward for consideration for the job back in the middle of 2007. A lifetime seems to have unfolded since then.

I am profoundly grateful to Bronwyn Harwood for the three months' handover we had together, without which I do not know how I could have taken over the reins. Bronwyn eased me with great consideration and loving care into my role, and gave freely of her time, experience and wisdom. We travelled together to Ramallah in February – a poignant journey for me, given my connection with the area through my service as an Ecumenical Accompanier in 2005/6. From our accommodation in the Friends' Girls School we focused our visit on the Amari Play Scheme, and the Friends International Centre, where the co-ordinator, Kathy Bergen, introduced us to the activities that take place regularly in support of peace and human rights. I was particularly glad to meet Jean Zaru again.

Over Easter 2008, for the first time in its history, the Europe and Middle East Section (EMES) of Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) met in a joint meeting with the Section's Young Friends (EMEYF). The gathering took place in Vienna, and attracted 125 participants from 25 countries – from Spain to the West, Finland in the North, Georgia in the East and Ramallah to the South, and many countries in-between, Friends came together to the heart of Europe on the 70th anniversary of the Section's creation. How different the mix of Friends and the challenges they face today, compared to those who came together to form the network in the shadow of an approaching war, working together to save the lives of children through the Kindertransport, also commemorated at the same time. The gathering was a wonderful opportunity for me to get to know a lot of Friends very early on in my period of service, a gift that has served me very well in getting to know the Section.

Much of this first year has been an extended induction for me, making links and getting to know Meetings and organisations: in April I visited QCEA in Brussels, and enjoyed the warm hospitality of Martina Weitsch and Liz Scurfield, whilst I learned more about their current work, and the achievement of QCEA over the past 25 years. I returned to Brussels in October twice, when

I had more time to get to know the Monthly Meeting. In late Spring I had the opportunity of meeting the board of QUNO Geneva when they met in London, and the Directors of the Quaker International Education Trust which looks after the Friends' School in Brummana, which I was to visit at the beginning of 2009 during a visit to Brummana Monthly Meeting.

The evaluation of the Ministry and Outreach pilot project was a major piece of work early on in the year, and this informed our application for further funding to the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust. The generous support of the Trust for the next two years will help us to build up our core functions through better communications tools and more administration time, and to develop the on-line resources in different languages and a well-equipped visiting Friends programme.

In May I attended the Netherlands Yearly Meeting, which was a very thought-provoking experience, focusing on how we can audit our own carbon foot print on the planet in creative and imaginative ways so that at the end of it we were left hopeful and energised, and not just with feelings of guilt and hopelessness. Later on I was glad to meet many Friends from Europe – and further afield, at Britain Yearly Meeting. I am planning to visit more Yearly Meetings in 2009, and hope to have been at least once at all of them by the end of my term of office in 2011.

Whilst in Maryland with my family in July, I had the opportunity to visit the office of the Section of the Americas in Philadelphia, where I was able to meet all the staff, and also to accompany Margaret Fraser to the opening session of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. I attended three different Meetings in Baltimore Yearly Meeting during my stay, all of them in the unprogrammed tradition.

The biggest event to affect the Section in the summer was the dreadful conflict in Georgia. Mikheil Elizbarashvili, the Clerk of the Recognised Worship Group in Tblisi, kept us in close touch with events, sending us messages and many photos of the devastation caused by the war and of the relief efforts. The few Friends in Georgia threw themselves into this work through their newly established Quaker House Georgia, with financial support channelled through FWCC World Office.

Julia Ryberg and I travelled in September to visit Friends in Turku, Karis and Helsinki in Finland, Tallin in Estonia, Liepaja, Riga and Daugavpils in Latvia,

and Kaunas in Lithuania. This was a journey of discovery in many ways and at many levels. It was good to travel together and share our impressions and responses to the people and situations we met. We learned a lot, and hope that the visits were opportunities for Friends to look at their own needs. We trust that as well as the joy of sharing worship we were able to raise awareness of the resources that can be made available for the support and nurture of small Meetings.

Following our Executive Committee Meeting held in a farmhouse not far from Lake Garda in Italy towards the end of September (Franco Perna's last as a member of the Executive Committee), I visited the worship group in Bologna, with whom EMES had had very little contact in recent years. We were delighted to have representation from the group at the Peace and Service Consultation in October.

The Peace and Service Consultation was held at the Old Abbey in Kortenberg, Belgium. The Consultation event was well attended and created opportunities for mapping out and exploring Quaker service and witness in the Section. As follow-up to this event I set up a Google group for those who had taken part and for other Friends engaged in peace and service work, which is proving a useful link to continue to share and pool experience. The review of the Amari Play Centre, the only piece of Quaker service held collectively by the Section, was carried out with much care and professional expertise by Lindsey Cook and Vanoush Khassis. The conclusions and recommendations of the report will be the basis of discernment for representatives when they meet in Moyallon, Northern Ireland, in April 2009.

I was unfortunately prevented from attending the Asia West Pacific Triennial Meeting and the meeting of the Central Executive Committee in Bhopal in November. Marit Kromberg represented the Section. I did take advantage of the unexpected "free" time to catch up with much neglected administrative tasks, and to treat myself to a short break at Woodbrooke to attend a course led by Julia Ryberg on "Writing your own Credo, or statement of belief". This was a deeply nurturing experience, which restored me. I now look forward to the opportunity of meeting Friends from other Sections at the Annual Meeting of the Section of the Americas in Portland, Oregon, which will be followed by another meeting of the Central Executive Committee in March 09.

I am pleased that since the Autumn I have help with administrative tasks from Kim Bond, for six hours a week. Kim is employed by World Office for 14 hours per week. I am grateful for the help that I receive from other Friends. Anne Allchin, who is a member of Britain Yearly Meeting Quaker World Relations Committee, and belongs to my own Local Meeting, has been helping me again in putting together this Annual Report. Alastair Reid in Edinburgh continues to set Among Friends for me, as he did in Bronwyn's time. There always seems to be plenty of interesting material to put in each issue, and I particularly enjoy the task of editing the journal. John Eccles, also in Edinburgh, has continued to help me updating the existing website, which is soon to be replaced by a new website. I have found a very professional and helpful Friend, Gaby Scott, who developed the website for London Quakers, and I look forward to working with her and her colleagues on the news site for EMES. I hope that this will make the sharing of information and news easier and more appealing.

At the end of November we held a Visiting Friends Development Workshop at Svartbäcken which I am hopeful will bear much good fruit. I was particularly pleased to work in a team of two with Liz Sugden Seume, a young Friend from an evangelical Quaker background, on Unity and Diversity issues, and I hope that we have made some progress on this.

The Christmas holidays came to an abrupt end for me on 27th December, when Israel attacked Gaza. Since then I have found myself often immersed in advocacy and protest work locally, and processing and sharing information, comment and other resources as widely as possible within the network. The Google Groups which I had set up towards the end of the year came in very useful for this purpose. This has been a distressing time and I have been grateful for being able to share this concern so widely with Friends, although I have also been aware that a huge amount of time and energy was diverted from my routine work to this issue.

In writing this report I have been reflecting on what an extraordinary experience it has been to come to this wonderful and challenging job. I am amazed by the kindness and goodwill of the many interesting Friends that I have the privilege of meeting and working with. I am grateful for the support and guidance of the Executive Committee, and especially for the Clerk's ready availability and firm insistence that I take all my holidays. I am acutely conscious of the pastoral and spiritual needs of the many groups of Friends

scattered across such a huge geographical area, and feel very keenly my inadequacy both in terms of time and energy, but also in terms of “spiritual equipment” to do justice to the task – thank goodness Julia Ryberg is part of the team, and Janet Scott of Britain Yearly Meeting has agreed to mentor me!

*Marisa Johnson
Executive Secretary*

Ministry and Outreach Development

The evaluation process of the 15-month feasibility study, undertaken in the first half of 2008, pointed to the need to continue work in three areas: development of on-line resources, development of the Visiting Friends programme and further networking with other Quaker bodies. We applied again to the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust and are very thankful to have received funding for another two years of development work, starting in October 2008.

Until the autumn of 2008, the **on-line *Quaker in Europe* project** has been the main focus of the Ministry & Outreach programme. Woodbrooke’s Catchpool Fund sponsored a week for translators in July 2008, and this gave about 20 Friends, who are involved in the on-line project, an opportunity to work together on translations of the materials used in the on-line course (excerpts from materials published by EMES, FWCC and BYM), as well as to deepen fellowship and share the vision of the project. As this report is being written in February 2009, translations of the materials into 15 languages are well underway. The first language-specific courses will be running at the time of the Annual Gathering in Moyallon. Friends involved in the project have taken a 2-week on-line facilitation training to prepare them for leading the course in their own languages. The co-ordinator herself has taken an on-line course to learn more about how to create and facilitate on-line courses, thus enabling her to equip others to do the same. Whereas the project had been equally funded by EMES and Woodbrooke, Woodbrooke is now taking over a larger responsibility for the project. By the autumn of 2010, we hope the *Quaker in Europe* introductory course will have been run in the majority of the 15 languages and that it will have become an on-going part of what Woodbrooke and EMES offer Friends across Europe. There is considerable interest in the project among Friends in other parts of the world, and we are excited to be pioneering this new way of Quaker learning and fellowship.

As of autumn 2008, focus has shifted more to the development of the **Visiting Friends programme**. Following on the gathering of September 2007, which brought together 24 Friends with experience of travelling in the ministry and was on exploring issues and deepening fellowship, we have acknowledged that there are needs for a variety of travel: inter-visitation, learning, pastoral support, conflict management, etc. Another gathering in Sweden in November 2008 brought together a smaller group to begin to develop resources both for Friends who travel and for Friends who are visited. We worked on several aspects of the programme: structure, process and sustainability of the programme; unity and diversity among Friends in the Section; models and methods of travel; identifying, equipping and supporting Visiting Friends. The plan is to create a handbook with Advices & Queries, checklists and other resources that is available in hard copy and on-line. We also plan to have an on-going learning and support forum, available on-line and including a comprehensive body of resources, for Friends who travel in the ministry to groups and isolated individuals all over the Section. A small Strategic Development Group has been formed that will work until autumn of 2010 with the Ministry & Outreach Co-ordinator and EMES Executive Committee on further development of structures, policies, practise and resources. A larger pool of Friends is available to travel, and it will be important for Yearly Meetings and groups across the Section to help identify and encourage Friends who have skills, gifts and calling to travel. It will be the role of the Visiting Friends programme to help equip and support these Friends, and we will encourage travel within geographical, cultural and language areas. By the autumn of 2010, we plan that structures, policies and practise will be operative and that the programme will be an on-going feature of EMES. We are aware, however, that the present level of funding is for development of the programme, and that we will need to be prepared to run the programme on a smaller budget in future.

As a part of the Ministry & Outreach programme, EMES is committed to networking and deepening relationships with various Quaker bodies across the Section. A memorandum of understanding has been written between Woodbrooke and EMES about the on-line project. Members of Friends House Moscow are involved in both the on-line and Visiting Friends Programme. Friends within EMEYF and the International Membership Committee are included in the Visiting Friends development work. There is some interface between the EMES Ministry & Outreach programme and the mentorship project between Britain Yearly Meeting and Woodbrooke. There is increasing

communication with Evangelical Friends in Europe, both with groups who are affiliated with FWCC and those who are not.

It has been a constant source of joy and inspiration to see how this work is deepening and broadening Friendship across the Section, and I have faith that the work will continue to nurture and inspire established Friends groups while also being a welcoming and supportive programme for newcomers to the Quaker way.

*Julia Ryberg
Ministry and Outreach Co-ordinator*

Amari Play Centre, Ramallah

This report covers the period from 1 September 2008 – 31 January 2009.

The Amari Play Centre is located in the UNRWA School for Girls in the Amari Refugee Camp, Ramallah - Palestine. Since its establishment in 1974, the Centre serves the children of the Refugee camps by providing pre school education for 5 years olds.

Up to a maximum of 45 children can be accepted in the Centre each year. It operates 5 days a week from Sunday – Thursday from 7:30 – 13:00 from 1 September – 31 May, a total of nine months a year, with public holidays and a midyear holiday. Three members of staff, a main teacher and two assistant teachers are employed to run the Centre. In addition there is a supervisor who works sixteen hours a week and is responsible for providing administrative support and for coordinating the work of the Play Centre with EMES and has a responsibility for all correspondence in this regard.

The Centre provides pre-school education by providing Arabic and English alphabets learning, basic mathematics, basic concepts, and social interaction with other children, with teachers and with the environment and in addition to have some time to play.

Books and stationery are provided free of charge in addition to milk three times a week and sandwiches twice a week. For special occasions such as Eid El Fit, Eid Al Adha and Christmas the children receive small presents.

Story telling by the main teacher plays a big part in the day and is much enjoyed. It is the time when all the children are together listening to the same

story. In other subject areas, the children are divided into groups. Art work plays an important part in their day and the children's work is shown on boards or displayed in the Play Centre, or taken home to be shown to parents.

In spring, picnics are a fun time for the children, when they and the teachers go to places in and around Ramallah to spend a day in the fields playing and eating together. On these occasions a few mothers are invited to join us and help the teachers with the children.

Meetings with parents take place at the beginning of the year and on special occasions. These meetings play a major part in the interaction between parents and the team at the play centre. Parents are informed of their children's educational development and social development, and at the same time given the opportunity to give their comments which are taken into consideration for positive improvement. This process enables parents to be aware of their children's activities at the centre and feel involved.

Most of our purchases like cleaning material, stationery, bread and some food are bought from shops in the Refugee Camp which helps the local economy.

During the recent war on Gaza, the children were either directly or indirectly affected as many of them have grandparents, uncles or cousins in Gaza or else they saw little children of their age killed or injured on television. The children were given the opportunity to talk about what they saw on television and share the news of family members who were affected by the war. Some of the children could easily talk about the issues whilst others were unable to talk about it. However the children are expressing themselves through drawings.

We strive for a close relationship and good coordination with UNRWA school for Girls in the Refugee Camp, in terms of public holidays and summer holidays. We cooperate with the Camp Director on information and procedures regarding the children and their parents. We also have good relationships with our neighbours at the Centre. The community is very helpful and appreciates the service the Centre is providing. The Centre is one of two centres in the Amari Refugee Camp that provides early childhood education and is much in demand because we provide the best education and care for free.

Parents are always welcome and they come to check on their children and participate in the sessions sometimes.

*Muna Khleifi
Supervisor*

Church and Peace

The AGM of Church and Peace was held at the Woodbrookershouse at Barchem in the Netherlands from 23rd to 25th May 2008. The weather was fine and the setting as beautiful as usual.

Church and Peace brings together a number of church related peace movements across Europe including EMES, France YM, German YM, and Switzerland YM. The AGM was a mix of business and a discussion theme.

An important topic was the international conference planned for 11-14 June, 2010 in Bienenberg, Switzerland, where we will also be celebrating the sixtieth anniversary of Church and Peace. The draft version of a document that a working group is preparing entitled a 'peace declaration' (and which will be presented to the World Council of Churches during the Peace Convocation of the WCC to be held in 2011 at the closing (!) of the 'Decade to Overcome Violence') will be considered and the final version will then be sent to the WCC as our contribution.

This year's theme was the United Nations Resolution '**Responsibility to Protect**' (**R2P**) This resolution makes provision for outside intervention, if need be with military force, in situations of possible genocide, when a State is not able or willing to protect innocent citizens (e.g. in Darfur!). Naturally, Church and Peace is particularly concerned about the option to use military force.

A guest from the World Council of Churches' *Global Advocacy and Human Rights Programme*, Guillermo Kerber, presented the WCC's view on R2P at our AGM. At the Ninth Assembly at Porto Allegre, February 2006, the WCC adopted a statement entitled 'Vulnerable populations at risk: statement on the responsibility **to protect**' which supports the UN resolution.

I had been invited to present a response, which I titled: " R2P: *a* Peace Church Perspective". I drew on statements of Friends throughout the ages and tried to illustrate that the Peace Testimony of and for the Quakers, as one of the three so-called 'historical' Peace Churches, is not merely a tradition, but a

'living' tradition. I also drew on more recent statements of e.g. QUNO, FCNL and AFSC responding to R2P. From these it became clear that Friends are inclined to support the campaign for a Responsibility to Protect, but have real and important reservations regarding the inclusion of the use of armed force and the consequences of that inclusion. I concluded that there was a need to:

- Focus on transforming the international economic and institutional system
- Keep the goal of abolishing war (and genocide) foremost.
- Continue to witness against war and militarism by seeking to diminish militarism and dependence on military solutions that dominates global thinking about problem solving: whether in responses to terrorism, or weapons proliferation, or genocide.
- Redouble our efforts to ban all kinds of weapon systems and the banning of the sale of and trade in armaments

So I do hope my (F) friends in the WCC will forgive me that I hold on to what I consider *our perspective*: that the Peace of Christ is *both a gift and a task*, involving

- long term work to build the Peaceable Kingdom : transforming the global economic and institutional system as the best way to prevent conflicts
- dedicating ourselves to relief work and conflict resolution during open hostilities, and
- Committing ourselves to peace building and reconciliation work after a violent conflict has erupted.

*Kees Nieuwerth
Emes Representative to Church and Peace*

Quaker Youth Pilgrimage

The committee this year consisted of Caroline Evens, Jenny Foot, Nigel Hampton, Rachel Miller, Kristin Skarsholt and Fran Woolgrove.

The committee has held four weekend meetings this year.

The focus of our work was the 2008 Pilgrimage. In spite of our attempts to find leaders early we were unable to do so, and the leader team was not in place until late spring which gave little time for the four leaders to become a team. We appointed one European leader, Jasmine Perinpanayagam, who

worked with three leaders from the Section of the Americas. There were six pilgrims from EMES and 19 from the Section of the Americas. We hope there can be a more equal representation in the next pilgrimage.

The Pilgrimage took place from 18th July – 15th August 2008 with the theme ‘A Journey through Conflict to Peace’. After home stays in Glasgow the pilgrims travelled to Yealand Conyers to explore the ‘1652 Country’ and for three days of facilitated community building exercises. Their next stop was Dublin, where they were involved in a service project before travelling on to Moyallon Quaker Centre in N. Ireland from where they were able to visit Quaker House, Quaker Cottage, Stormont and Maghaberry Prison Visitor Centre among other activities. The pilgrimage ended with two days at Wiston Lodge near Biggar, outside Glasgow.

We feel that the pilgrimage went well, and was very successful. As well as the planning beforehand, there was always at least one committee member present throughout the pilgrimage. Two committee members were at Glasgow Airport for the pilgrims’ arrival and departure. Committee members also ran the leaders’ retreat, helped with catering, drove minibuses, and were constantly on call. The benefit of this continued presence was greater than the practical tasks performed, as the committee was able to provide practical and emotional support and information as required.

It has been busy and stressful at times, but we worked well as a team and supported each other. We have let each other know when we are struggling and there has always been a helping hand there for us. We have also had a lot of fun!

The next pilgrimage will take place on the West Coast of the United States in 2010 and we are already thinking about recruiting pilgrims and leaders.

We are grateful to EMES for their interest and ongoing financial support. We are pleased to hear about the legacy which has been left to the two QYP committees and will be discussing the best use for this at our first meeting in 2009.

The QYP Committee

Reports from Yearly Meetings, Monthly Meetings and Groups

Austria Quarterly Meeting

2008 was a busy year for Friends in Austria. We held a joint meeting with Friends from Hungary and Slovakia (with "Fire and Water" as our theme) in the Danube town of Komárom. A few days earlier we learned from scholar Bálint Keserü that in the late 17th century two men had been arrested in Hungarian Komárom on their way to join the religious emigration to America.

We were host to 128 participants for the joint FWCC/EMES and FWCC/EMEYF gathering in Vienna at Easter. The date coincided with memorial services of Hitler's annexation of Austria 70 years ago.

Several Friends from England came for the placing of a sculpture at the Vienna train station in memory of Kindertransporte and attended our meeting. British Friends rescued 1200 children from Austria, with 650 more left on their lists. In August, Friend Michael Luick-Thrams told us of his work to document aspects of European migration to Midwest US under Hitler.

Our Open House evenings were dedicated (1) to a historical overview by Friend Kurt Schmid of Friends' diplomats luncheons in Vienna; (2) to the Alpine Peace Crossing of 2007 held in commemoration of the 1947 exodus of 5000 holocaust survivors across a high Alpine pass; (3) to a personal report by Gerlinde and Pete Hämmerle on picking olives in Palestine; and (4) to a presentation by Cuban painter Juan Vasqués Martín of his art.

In September we held our traditional joint meeting with Friends from Bavaria at Diakoniewerk Weikersdorf. EMES helped us by delegating Friend Judith Roads to mediate in a conflict within our meeting.

In October we lost Ernst Schwarcz (85), our much-liked life-long peace activist and Friend. Our room at Stadiongasse 5 closed at year's end. No replacement has been found yet by our handful of Friends. The contrasts between activism and Quaker traditions, in 2008 have challenged our ability to be united.

Ewald Eichler

Belgium and Luxembourg Monthly Meeting

During the course of 2008 we have welcomed one new Friend into membership, but accepted one resignation and one transfer to another MM. Our list of Attenders continues to grow. Meeting for Worship in Brussels on Sunday mornings is usually attended by between 10 and 25 Friends and Attenders, but we sometimes have over 30 people present especially when QCEA organises a special event. The Antwerp and Luxembourg groups continue to be small. In both Antwerp and Luxembourg, Meetings for Worship are held by arrangement, as regular Meetings are difficult to maintain.

Our website is now on-line again but still needs some development. We hope it will be helpful and informative for those who visit it. Quite a number of visitors and new Attenders come to us via the website.

The Children's Meeting continues to thrive, with a fluctuating but growing number of children attending each month. From early 2008 we have had two groups for younger children and a small but keen teenage group. We have about 20 children and young people on our list.

We continued our support of the Quaker Council for European Affairs in Brussels, and the Protestant Social Centre in Antwerp. Our financial situation continues to be rather poor and we are once again asking Friends to contribute more just to keep our small group functioning.

In April we held our second Residential Weekend in Kortenberg Abbey just outside Brussels. This was a great success and was attended by between 20 and 28 Friends (depending on the session). We shall organize our third residential during the weekend 18-20 September 2009, also in Kortenberg and hope that it will be just as successful. This third residential weekend will also be an experiment in that we are also organizing it as Border Meeting 2009 (including Friends from the Netherlands, Germany, France & Switzerland). This will enable members of our own Meeting, who have very little experience of other Quakers, to meet a wide range of those in the surrounding Yearly Meetings. The theme is likely to be on interfaith issues, perhaps using the booklet by Pierre Lacout, 'God is Silence'. We had our third annual Study Day in November on the theme of 'Beliefs and Attitudes in the World Family of Friends' & where we see ourselves in relation to this. This subject followed on from the reaction that many Friends here had to the reports that came back from the Triennial in Ireland in 2007 when the views of 'other sorts' of Quakers caused shock and dismay among many in our own Meeting.

'Life of the Meeting Committee' – with approximately the same remit as Elders and Overseers – continues to help our Meeting to diversify and grow and supports the clerks in a lot of their work. As we end 2008 we have just gone through the process of nominating and appointing Friends for a wide range of positions in our Meeting and this should allow us to enter the new triennial period (2009-2011) with a high level of involvement in our Meeting's life and growth. May the future be bright!

Phil Gaskell

Clerk

Britain Yearly Meeting

It is not easy to write a concise report which tells of the full range of activities and experiences of members of Britain Yearly Meeting, this small church with a radical history, expressing its faith through worship and action. According to the membership statistics published in the "Tabular Statement", we started 2008 with 14,907 members, 8,133 recognised attenders and 2,228 children not in membership. These 25,000+ Friends, from 475 different meetings, might each write something quite different if faced with this task.

We have been trying hard to keep communications between the centre and all the individual Friends and small meetings as good as they can be. We are fortunate in having *The Friend*, *Quaker Monthly* and *Quaker News* which all help to inform us about what is going on in our Society, and this year improvements to the website (www.quaker.org.uk) have been a real benefit to those of us with access to the internet. Meeting for Sufferings, the representative body of Britain Yearly Meeting, with members from every Area Meeting and Central Committee, met 5 times during the year and has been considering how its members can best fulfil this role of communication.

One major piece of work, "*A Framework for Action 2009-2014, Together in worship and witness*" is a good example of the ways in which we have all worked together. A small working group consulted widely with individual Friends and local meetings, brought draft papers to Meeting for Sufferings and Yearly Meeting, and have now produced the final document, agreed by Meeting for Sufferings in September, which aims to "guide and unite Quakers in Britain and their central organisation, Britain Yearly Meeting, in their life and work at every level". The framework identifies 7 priorities for our work, all based on our testimonies, and taking into account what we can hope to

achieve with our current resources. They are; strengthening the spiritual roots in our meetings and in ourselves; speaking out in the world; peace; sustainability; strengthening local communities; crime, community and justice; and using our resources well. Many Area and Local Meetings held special events to look at the issues - one Meeting devoted a Sunday to exploration and discernment, producing a patchwork depicting our interlocking concerns and reporting the outcome without answering the questionnaire, a very Quaker response!

At area meeting level, and in our worshipping groups, there has been a variety of experience. Some meetings are thriving, attracting new members and able to offer spiritual hospitality for enquirers and seekers. Other meetings feel that they are failing – unable to find Friends to take on the responsibilities of clerkship, or eldership, or oversight. This variety of experience was evident in a significant Quaker Life conference in April, *Supporting Faith and Practice in local Meetings*. It was felt to be the right time to hold such a conference because in Britain Yearly Meeting, for the first time since the early days of the Quaker movement, convinced Friends with no previous Quaker background now outnumber those raised by Quaker parents. So old assumptions about how we obtain understanding of our spiritual roots and peculiar ways of being and doing are now less useful. A joint project between Quaker Life and Woodbrooke is developing learning materials to take those who have recently joined us forward to a deeper understanding of our faith and practice.

There is so much to celebrate this year. In our local meetings we rejoice in the work done on our behalf by the staff at working with other agencies and groups. It isn't possible to describe the full range of work, but it includes the ongoing programme of Ecumenical Accompaniment in Israel and Palestine; supporting peace-workers in Britain and elsewhere; the publication of *Journeyings in the Spirit*, materials for those working with children and young people; campaigning against the use of torture; and the work of the Quaker Housing Trust and the network of Quaker Prison Ministers. As Gillian Ashmore, our Recording Clerk says in the Annual Review 2008, “We achieve what we do only because so many Friends give their time and commitment, building on what others have achieved and moving forward. We are grateful to all those who support with prayer, with their skills and with money Friends House and the committees which support them, in the work done in the regions too and by individual Friends.

Mary Waldmeyer

Czech Republic, Prague Worship Group

2008 was a year of big changes for the Prague Worship Group. The year started with our clerk Ben Vail leaving us. Ben moved to another city with his family and we thank him and wish him well for the future. Attendance of meetings was down, so it seemed for a while that our group would cease to exist. Pavel took over the clerking of the group of five who remained and we decided to change the frequency of meetings to just once a month until the group recovered. As we were few, the fee for the meeting place was quite a burden for us. From time to time we were visited by new Friends, Arne and Olina, who had plans to move to Prague. Thanks to them and a friend of theirs we found a more suitable location for our meeting. Since February we have been coming to the family centre Nova Trojka in Prague 3 which is much bigger, cheaper and best of all, very suitable for children. Both the children and us, we really enjoy it and we are very grateful to the centre's management for giving us the possibility to meet here. Although we are an unprogrammed meeting we now have a strong ritual of sharing tomato soup and pasta after meeting thanks to the little kitchen of the centre!

So over the year our group started to recover. After the summer holiday two Friends, Eugen and Roman, who were not able to attend before, returned and Arne, Olina and their four children finally moved to Prague. Arne offered to take over the clerking of the group, while Pavel remained as the contact person, maintaining our website and being involved in the on-line project Quaker in Europe. We started an adult education class studying Quaker topics and enjoy getting to know each other better. For next year we plan to offer a regular Sunday school for our children. This past Sunday we had 7 children at the meeting, they almost outnumbered the adults. A couple of times a year our group is visited by Friends from abroad and by local people interested in Quakers. We are now meeting twice a month and have enough space to accommodate more visitors and attenders.

If you are interested in joining us while visiting Prague, please look us up at www.kvakeri.cz.

Arne Springorum

Denmark Yearly Meeting

The first English Quaker visiting Denmark was the twenty year old John Hall who in 1657 met King Frederik III but was later put in prison. In 1875 a group

of six Danes applied for membership of the Society of Friends and the first Danish Yearly Meeting was held in 1879. However, historically the total number of adult members has never exceeded 60-70 people.

The present number of registered Danish Quakers is 30, of whom almost half are over 70 years of age, and fewer than half of those listed as members are active participants. However 40-50 friends of Friends are regularly informed of our activities through a newsletter (5 issues in 2008). In Copenhagen a meeting for worship is held every Sunday.

In 2008 two retreats were arranged in other parts of the country to allow isolated Friends to meet with those from the Copenhagen Area. We always send representatives to the Norwegian and Swedish Yearly Meetings and are looking forward to Nordic Yearly Meeting Gathering in 2009.

*Mogens Clause
Clerk*

Finland Yearly Meeting

In November 2008 Finland Yearly Meeting held a weekend for worshipful discussion about whom we are and how we want to develop as a community; what concerns are important to us, and how we can support these. Eighteen Finland Friends took part: from the four Meetings within FYM, members of different YMs and attenders, contributing in Finnish, English and Swedish, hailing from different countries and from an age range encompassing Friends in their 20s, 30s, 40s, 50s, 60s & 70s. The uniting spirit of the weekend continues to inspire and guide us.

Throughout Finland our Meetings are growing in numbers and enthusiasm. In 2009, Helsinki Friends will begin holding a fortnightly, mid-week Meeting for Worship in the early evening. They will also explore options for finding a larger place to hold their weekly Sunday Meetings for Worship, to allow more room for the Meeting as it grows and to provide a space for children.

Tampere Friends were featured in a local newspaper in the autumn and the increase in attendance resulting from this has encouraged them to try increasing their Meetings for Worship from once per month in 2008 to twice per month in 2009.

Turku/Åbo Friends, who had been holding Meeting for Worship fortnightly in 2007, started holding Meetings, every Sunday afternoon, in early 2008. The meeting place alternates between the homes of six Friends and these weekly Meetings for Worship continue to be well attended.

Oulu Friends meet by arrangement as often as they can and Friends in Kokkola hope to start holding Meetings for Worship in 2009. There are also many isolated Friends in Finland who live several hundred kilometres from any local Meeting, as well as several Friends who are no longer able to attend Meetings through ill health. A project was undertaken during 2008 to improve contact between all Friends in Finland, involving a great deal of work but yielding greatly rewarding, positive results.

FYM was very pleased to welcome four new members this year. Our newsletter is sent by email and mail to our 24 members plus about fifty other active Friends and attenders in Finland. The newsletter, which is now bi-monthly and tri-lingual (in Finnish, English and Swedish), has had a new editor since June, who is pleased to be receiving ever increasing contributions.

Our Meetings for Worship for Business have been held in Helsinki, Tampere and Turku, to optimise the opportunity for all to attend. Friends are becoming better acquainted with Quaker business practice and there is renewed energy and enthusiasm to serve the Meeting. We gave thanks to the three members of our clerking team, who all stepped down at the end of 2008 after many years. We are pleased that our new Clerk, who is a Young Friend, will be attending Woodbrooke's course for European Clerks in February, along with one of the new members who will be serving on our new executive board.

In June we held our annual gathering in a lovely new venue, Frantsila Herb Farm, near Tampere. We included activities for the children and this is something we hope to develop further in the coming year. We were fortunate to have Diana and John Lampen, of Stourbridge Meeting, to lead us in sessions on living the Quaker testimonies, practicing Quaker discernment and deepening our worship together. We were also pleased to have Jane Shewell and David Penn from BYM with us.

Friends in Finland have found great joy and strength in visits by Friends from abroad this year, especially hosting Harold Weaver (New England YM) and EMES visiting Friends Marisa Johnson and Julia Ryberg. We hope that the

triennial Nordic Yearly Meeting Gathering in 2009 will be well attended by Friends from Finland, as our Meeting continues to be enriched by contacts from both outside and from within.

Anne Herbert

France Yearly Meeting

The national nominations committee of France Yearly Meeting was very busy at the end of 2007: finding a new clerk for France Yearly Meeting and a new clerk for the Quaker international Centre in Paris. Jeanne-Henriette Louis had left the Quaker Centre, was replaced by Roger Andrianaly, and was nominated as Clerk for FYM.

At the same time, the Centre Quaker de Congénies was born in 2007, with Françoise Tomlin as its first clerk. An overall heavy structure (3 associations) for so few members, but this is still very meaningful. It only takes faith to accept this. Libby Perkins now lives in Congénies as a very active member of Centre Quaker and Maison Quaker de Congénies. She writes a yearly Newsletter about both.

We have 7 points of contact: Paris, Midi-Pyrénées, Strasbourg, Franche-Comté, Bretagne, Normandie, Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur. In Paris and Congénies, there are weekly Meetings for worship. In other places, Meetings take place once every month, on average.

Of course, geographical dispersion is the main handicap. La *Lettre des Amis* and emails try to create some links, and our faithful visitor, Judith Roads, courageously works to support isolated members and interested people.

In terms of outreach, we were blessed to be visited in May 2008 by Chuck Fager, head of Quaker House, near Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Chuck was invited to France by the ACAT, action for the abolition of torture. He gave a talk at the Quaker Centre in Paris, and the Quaker Centre in Congénies. He gave other talks throughout France. This certainly put Friends into the French picture of humanitarian concern.

We now have 2 websites: one for France Yearly Meeting, <http://quaker.chez-alice.fr>, and one for Congénies, <http://www.maison-quaker-congenies.org>

We gave our first colloquium in Congénies in mid-October 2008 on the theme: the origins of the French Quaker movement. A report on this event can be found in the December issue of la Lettre des Amis. It was well attended (about 30 people) and very lively. A second colloquium is planned in Congénies on 16-18 October 2009, co-organized by Edouard Dommen, Jeanne-Henriette Louis, and Françoise Tomlin.

In terms of outreach, the most spectacular event in 2007 was the contribution to the Peace initiative Salon, where Friends held a booth, as usual. We were blessed with the visit of Nancy Irving, who contributed to the panel on Child Soldiers, and we organized 2 other panels with the help of British Friends: David Forbes and Kate Barton, among others.

Maarten Bronkhorst and a friend of his visited Eurosatory in June, interviewing the arms salesman and women with much diplomacy. It all went well, and they hope they planted a seed of doubt in their hearts.

We have welcomed some good news: in 2009 and 2010, future French Teachers of English will work on the following national syllabus: "the British debate about the abolition of slavery: 1787-1840". This time, Quakers are mentioned in a national syllabus...it will make a difference for future pupils in French Lycées (grammar schools).

The other good news is that a French publishing house ,Editions Ampelos, offered to do a reprint of *Chronique de la vie quaker française* by Henry van Etten, which was practically out of print, with hardly any expense to us (at least for the publishing side of the operation).

These are signs of hope that the Secretary of France Yearly Meeting particularly relishes.

Jeanne-Henriette Louis
Clerk

Georgia Worship Group

The year 2008 was hard for our country, Georgia. There was a conflict in South Ossetia between Georgia and Russia, which started in August and as a result our cities were bombed or occupied for a short time and we received many thousands of refugees from South Ossetia and villages around. Many of them lost their homes (they were destroyed by bombings or where burned). They all came to Tbilisi and Eastern part of Georgia. The Georgian government accommodated them in different state buildings like schools,

kindergartens, policlinics, research institutes etc. These buildings became shelters (collective centres) for refugees.

During two days Tbilisi was bombed (radar system and military airport Vaziani) at nights and that was most scary period for us, since most of the Georgian Quakers live in Tbilisi. We prayed in silence for peace and many Friends all over the world held us and our country in Light. That helped.

Later we contacted FWCC-EMES and Quakers from different European countries and asked them to help the refugees in Georgia. FWCC and Friends from different European countries responded, raised and sent the money to help the refugees. The work that Harry Albright, Nancy Irwing, Marisa Johnson, Julia Ryberg, Seán McCrum and many other Friends have done, fundraising and donating to help the refugees, is remarkable. We, the Georgian Quakers, are not registered in Georgia as a Religious Organization, but in 2008 we registered as an NGO "Friends House, Georgia." That gives us the opportunity to be officially recognized in Georgia and act as an official organization, helping refugees and implementing other charity projects. The funds that we received from FWCC and Quakers from European countries we used to provide for refugees: food, mattresses, blankets, hygiene, diapers, food for children, medication etc. With those funds we also have a long term medical programme, psychological rehabilitation programme for refugees and soup kitchen for 10 people in one of the collective centres. In total, we have helped to approximately 2000 refugees.

All Georgian Friends were and are involved in the relief work for refugees. We know that our Country and Nation needs our help and we try to do our best. There were also good news in 2008. We met many European Quakers, took part in the international on-line project, published a few little books about Quakers and many people in Georgia learned about Quakers. We had wonderful guests, Friends from the UK and USA in January 2009. Any Friend who wants to visit us is always welcome. This Year our Clerk attended a Clerks' course in Woodbrooke, learned there a lot about clerking and shared that helpful information with us. We hope that 2009 will be a happy and peaceful year for all of us.

Many thanks and Greetings to Friends worldwide.

Georgian Friends Worship Group

German Yearly Meeting

One duty of a Yearly Meeting representative to EMES is to put together this annual report. Paradoxically, 6 years of serving in EMES and writing the reports have helped me (Janet Kreysa) not only to feel at home in EMES but also to have a deeper knowledge of my own YM, and to value still more my membership in it.

A wide range of regional meetings, interest groups, seminars and border meetings have concentrated on many interconnected aspects of Quaker life. For instance a seminar in Erfurt provided much inspiration by examining the life and works of Meister Eckhardt and their relevance for today. The family-gathering in Hirschluch acted out scenes from the life of John Woolman. John Woolman himself would have felt at home at the Peace Committee's open meeting examining the links between energy consumption, climate-change and conflict (sub-titled "Drive your car as long as you can"). They struggled with the practical question of whether the gathering should eat cheaper food from the discount store, or more expensive organic food. Friends in the South-West held a vigil protesting against the German military presence in Afghanistan. A joint meeting of Friends from the North-West and the East looked at Civil Courage.

Friends in Germany have long valued the contribution made to the Yearly Meeting by Austrian Friends. But perhaps we have paid too little heed to the political, historical and geographical factors that affect this unique relationship. Many of us were dismayed in summer to read the minute of Austria Monthly Meeting declaring their intention to leave our joint Yearly Meeting. We now rejoice that they have decided to stay. And we hope that all the prayerful thought that has been given to this question will lead to an increased willingness to listen to each other, appreciating the needs and strengths of each individual Friend, wherever he or she lives.

German Yearly Meeting (including Austria) has just 273 members. Two gatherings have sought more clarity about what membership entails: What values should members hold? Why should we have a formal membership at all? What do we say to newcomers seeking membership? What do we do about "lost sheep", about members who drift away, or those who establish alternative groups?

Attention this year has been focussed on the “Quäkerhaus” in Bad Pyrmont, celebrating the 75th anniversary of the “rebirth” of the building as a home for German Yearly Meeting. At a public meeting for worship in July, representatives of the town of Bad Pyrmont and the State of Lower Saxony (Hanover) expressed pride and satisfaction that Friends continue to be there. The meeting house was designed to accommodate gatherings of up to 300 (sedate?) people, but the building was bursting at the seams at Yearly Meeting in November with the activities of 230 Friends, including 50 lively youngsters. Our Friend Lutz Caspers gave the annual “Richard Cary Lecture” on his “uneven and occasionally endangered journey through life so far”. His account gave rise to a wealth of ministry in the meetings for worship and the group sessions. There were many parallel discussions, including what turned out to be an eye-opener to “post-war” Friends as Gisela Faust told of her childhood in Berlin in the 1930s; of threatened Jewish children being welcomed to join in Young Friends’ activities, of the “Kinder Transporte”, and of the courage of individual Friends at that time.

The idea of joint activities including all age groups is taking root. During Yearly Meeting an impressive human chain of Friends of all sizes transported spa water from the mineral spring all the way up the hill to the Meeting House, where it was auctioned to help fund a well in East Africa. Our yearly meeting is blessed with several Friends with excellent senses of humour, and the Auction for Quäker-Hilfe was not only extremely funny, it was a good way for several of us to part with our cash. The afternoon group sessions were planned for all-age activities. And in the evenings younger Friends ran the popular “Wunderbar,” serving us all with exotic non- alcoholic drinks. Our new website (www.rgdf.de) was launched, along with some interesting groups, such as “Quaeker im Wirtschaftsleben” (Quakers in business & economic life). We eagerly await new innovations as Kerstin Mangels takes on the job of developing and coordinating programmes to meet the needs of Youthful Friends of all ages in our religious society.

*Janet Kreysa, Christopher Hatton, and Björn Rohde-Liebenau
Representatives*

Hungary, Budapest Worship Group

2008 has seen a deepening sense of our Meetings for Worship, an increase in group cohesion and a lot of activities, both inreach and outreach. We try to

meet twice a month, the regular meeting for Worship being on the 2nd Sunday of each month.

The year started with an Austro-Hungarian Border Meeting in Komárom, Hungary, in mid-January. With the presence of our Slovak and British Friends, and due to the choice of venue, the event had a bridge-building character. In addition to Meeting for Worship, we focussed on the theme of Fire and Light in the form of Worship Sharing. At the end of the schedule we enjoyed an informal time in an outdoor hot bath and then walked across the bridge to explore the Slovak side of the town.

In March five of us took part in the big EMES gathering in Vienna, where we met a great number of old and new Friends and Young Friends and were happily immersed in the European family of Friends. It was in Vienna that Euranis Neile from Bournemouth Meeting considered coming to Budapest for dental treatment. She then came in the autumn and was most impressed by Vera Várady's loving care. It was in Vienna that our Éva Katona got invited to a retreat in Winchester, where she met an expatriate Serbian Quaker, Ema Videnovic. Back in Belgrade, Ema was happy to accept our invitation and attend our Meeting for Worship in Novi Sad. We had managed to connect Friends from Belgrade and Novi Sad. Also, for the first time in the history of our meeting, there had been a request from the Budapest Group to hold a parallel Meeting for Worship during the same weekend for those who could not go to Novi Sad. All in all, 16 people worshipped in two venues on 11/12 October.

A major step forward is that two of us have been enabled to take part in the „Quaker-in-Europe” translation course in Woodbrooke and are now translating the core material into Hungarian.

We are slowly maturing as a group and this is reflected in people's outer commitment. Three women have applied lately for formal membership of the Religious Society of Friends. Vera Várady is a member already, Judit Borzsák and Éva Katona have just been interviewed by Bob Harwood and Zsuzsa Eastland. When Bronwyn and Bob spent a few days in Budapest in late October, we were all welcome to a delicious meal by Vera and the celebration is not over yet.

We have a new website designed and managed by Ákos Lencsés. The address is: <http://www.kveker.eoldal.hu>

A new door for outreach opened when we were invited to talk about Quaker spirituality in a Roma school and community in the north-east of Hungary in September. A further visit is scheduled for December.

The Budapest Worship Group is gradually growing and there are three or four new attenders. Judit Borzsák and Zsuzsa Eastland are looking forward to facilitating the Quaker-in Europe course in Hungarian in January 2009.

*Zsuzsa Eastland
Clerk*

Ireland Yearly Meeting

Ireland Yearly Meeting was held at The High School, Rathgar, Dublin, from 27 to 30 March 2008. The theme of our Yearly Meeting was 'Renewing the Spirit'. This was important following years of travail over the production of our new book 'Quaker Life and Practice'. Over the course of four days, 27 – 30 March 2008, we heard accounts of Friends' work in Ireland. Through our ecumenical involvement progress is being made with our concern about the portrayal of violent death as entertainment on television.

The public lecture 'Serving Palestine: A Spiritual and Personal Journey of Hope' was given by Joyce Ajlouny, Director of Ramallah Friends' School. Her inspirational words brought home to us how much a small Quaker community can achieve and also the realities of living in Palestine.

On a wider perspective, two Friends gave a presentation on 'Caring for Creation: what canst thou do?' It is hoped to raise the consciousness of Irish Friends about sustainability and the natural environment. An all Ireland meeting was held on how Friends can respond to the challenges of Peak Oil and Global Climate Change. At this meeting we informed ourselves of the situation, identified the problems and outlined some practical actions that Friends can take towards solutions. As a result, a newsletter called EcoQuakers Ireland has been started to keep Irish Friends informed about these issues.

One of the outcomes of the discussion surrounding our new book of Christian Experience called, Quaker Life and Practice - A book of the Christian Experience of the Religious Society of Friends in Ireland, has been many discussions about what Friends in Ireland believe. In order to continue this

dialogue, our Yearly Meeting's Committee has set up a steering group to help increase understanding within the Society. They have created a questionnaire which has been forwarded to all Meetings for Friends to answer. The responses will be collated and put together in a document which will be available to be used as a starting place for discussions. With questions such as 'Why do bad things happen?', 'Where do you go when you die?' and 'What do you understand by conversion/convincement?', F(f)riends in Ireland will have lots of food for thought.

After hosting the FWCC triennial in Dublin in 2007, this time it was the turn of the Quaker Youth Pilgrimage to visit us in Ireland. They spent time in Dublin and also at the Moyallon Centre. As always, the Meetings they visit benefit from meeting Friends from other backgrounds.

We in Ireland Yearly Meeting are looking forward to welcoming European Friends at Easter time to stay at our Moyallon Centre which is built in the grounds of one of our oldest Meeting Houses.

*Alan Pym
Clerk*

Italy: Bologna Worship Group

The Bologna Worship group has been meeting regularly for some 15 years. A group of International Members and some attenders have maintained a faithful witness to Quaker testimonies. One of the Members, Pier Cesare Bori, leads weekly encounters of students through a group called "Una Via" which reads and meditates on sacred texts of different traditions. A similar encounter is then taken to a local prison, where many of the inmates are not Italian nationals, and represent many different cultures and faiths, particularly Islam.

Pier Cesare Bori and Fabien Nji Lang attended the Peace and Service Consultation in Kortenberg in October 08.

Latvia Recognised Worship Group

There are Friends holding Meetings for Worship in Liepaja, Riga and Daugavpils in Latvia. In September 2008 the Secretary and Ministry and Outreach Co-ordinator visited all six International Members and shared worship with them in different towns and settings, meeting some of their families, and two new attenders in Riga.

Lithuania

A group of four Friends, not in membership, have been holding occasional Meetings for Worship for over 10 years in Kaunas. The Secretary and Ministry and Outreach Co-ordinator visited them, stayed at the home of Aušrina Aleknavičiute. In spite of language difficulties, the encounter was warm and friendly, and we held two Meetings for Worship together.

Since the visit we have been in touch with a Friend in Vilnius, Algis Davidavicius, who is hoping to establish a Worship group in the capital.

Middle East Yearly Meeting, Brummana Monthly Meeting

Searching for Hope

Lebanon continues to struggle to re-emerge after it was harshly hit by sorrowful events post 2005. The challenges are enormous and the future does not seem bright given the recent war on Gaza and its implications. Until a just solution is implemented by the big western nations, this holy land of the Middle East will remain a fertile ground for horror and terror.

The challenges that face our Quaker presence here are huge. The dishonesty and double standards that seem to govern international relations are hard to accept and our mission remains weakened by war and its machines. As world awareness as to what happened in Gaza has faded and while the west has gone back to regular life, this Middle East is trying to cope with the harsh realities associated with the huge losses Gaza has endured.

Our Quaker witness in the Middle East is different than that anywhere else. While many things are taken for granted elsewhere, we still manoeuvre to survive, struggle to provide basics and do our best to escape a war or impending death.

The situation being so complex, our monthly meeting activity continues to revolve around our 140 year old Quaker school in Brummana, on the hills of Mount Lebanon. We try to make it an oasis of education, love, trust and fairness; nurturing notions of peace, justice, equality and humanity to our mostly Pan Arab students. Through our Quaker beliefs we try to show our students and staff a way forward in a troubled world where going an extra mile

will help to make a difference. We are hoping to add a Quaker Library and Research Center to our Meeting House where we can increase our outreach. We welcome Quaker visitors from around the world who would like to help us in our outreach. We have always tried to bridge between cultures and find it effective as we see our old scholars who are all over the globe carrying the banner of bridging as disciples of peace in their own ways.

*Tony Manasseh
Clerk*

Middle East Yearly Meeting, Ramallah Monthly Meeting

Ramallah Friends Meeting is small, and yet it participates fully in the life of the Christian and broader Palestinian community.

In 2008 Palestinians commemorated the 60th year of the Nakba, the Palestinian catastrophe which because it was left unresolved has grown into the largest and longest standing displaced population in the world. Ironically, during this period we also marked 60 years since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted. Furthermore, our people moved into the 41st year of Israeli occupation.

Our Meeting is actively engaged in building a culture of peace and nonviolence in a context of severe oppression, military occupation, and violations of all of our basic human rights. As I write this, the attacks on Gaza are ongoing. Our history is painful, and our future is unknown. However, we have been inspired by the support of many grassroots groups all over the world who demonstrated against the attacks. This solidarity is a reality of mutual encouragement.

During the year, we had many visitors who joined us for fellowship and worship. Their presence brought hope, solidarity and new and faithful friends to our Meeting.

Visitors hailed from the UK, the USA, Germany, New Zealand, Australia, Palestine, the Netherlands, as well as organizations such as the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme to Palestine and Israel (EAPPI), workcamps, and various women International peace witness groups.

I am excited to report that we have a newly revived Sunday School with between 4-8 children. Our expenses are met from both local and international Friends. Although our funds are small, our ministry is wide.

We are blessed with a beautiful peace garden; a bit of serenity in the midst of so much sadness. And with the publication of my book, "Occupied with Nonviolence: A Palestinian Woman Speaks", an increasing number of people are reading and being moved by the unique perspective of Palestinian Quaker witness.

And this year we received a lovely Middle East Dialogue quilt that is now gracing the walls of the Meetinghouse. It was an outgrowth of several projects and dialogue forums at Harvard University and hangs as "a visual expression of hope and a message from people of many diverse communities."

Our responsibility together is to transfer and mutually inspire each other with the energies of our faith and our hope. We cannot accept to be reconciled to hopelessness. Yes we can be more than victims or survivors in a big open-air prison, in "Absurdistan". We can resist systems of oppression; we can renew our world and ourselves with life affirming power.

I invite you to visit our website at www.ramallahquakers.org for photos and more details.

Friends, a text from Second Corinthians 4:8, sums up how our feelings as we end 2008 and enter a new year:

"We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair, persecuted, but not forsaken, struck down but not destroyed."

Your visits, your partnership in supporting our Meeting, its life and ministry, your service and fellowship, your accompaniment are all signs of hope for us in our journey together towards peace with justice and freedom.

*Jean Zaru
Clerk*

Netherlands Yearly Meeting

Dutch Friends held their yearly meeting in May on 'sustainability- where is *your* limit?' We played a newly designed "footprint game" and we calculated how much carbon dioxide we produce. If we concentrate on our spiritual rather than material growth, we need not decrease our happiness while aiming for a reduced claim on resources. Possibly even the opposite. This conclusion keeps coming back during current 'financial crisis', and the effects of global warming. After all it's about a fair share for everyone. Our actions should be guided by love and not by fear. The problems of the world can only be solved by sharing at a global level: sharing everything freely, including our insights and solutions; as an inclusive way of loving creation. As a tangible step forward, we called on each other to donate over and above our present contributions 1% of our annual incomes to the Dutch Quaker Service Fund to support sustainable development.

In the autumn, Friends in the Netherlands hosted the annual border meeting with Friends from Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg, France and the UK. We reflected on the question: How can I as a Quaker contribute to the intercultural dialogue? Very impressive was the contribution from Omar Nahas, who particularly went into the possibilities of dialogue with Muslims. While using the same words, he showed us how different interpretations can lead to either open dialogue or convinced aversion. Anita Wuyts talked about her longstanding work with the Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA) on human rights and her involvement in the intercultural dialogue in Antwerp. To illustrate our own intercultural variety, we used various active work forms including games and a 'cultural evening'.

In later autumn, 'open meetings' took place in various cities. In one town there was a Quaker meeting for the first time. This initiative, copied from British 'Quaker week' for the second time, led to a couple of new attenders. A press release resulted in various radio interviews and coverage in (regional) papers. Probably the most inspiring aspect was the amount of energy Friends received for and through talking about their beliefs.

*Martine Kuipers and Martin Touwen
Representatives*

Norway Yearly Meeting

In 2008 the Yearly Meeting of Friends in Norway celebrated the 190th anniversary of its beginning, when Friends' teaching was brought to these shores by Norwegian navy men who were introduced to Quakerism as prisoners in England during the Napoleonic wars.

The theme for our 2008 annual gathering was “A Quaker Perspective on Environment”, a subject that we will continue to work with in 2009 and beyond. Starting with a reference to this “heavenly-earth” from a popular folksong, Friends were challenged to look for our deep spiritual roots in creation, and to sense the Presence in all its parts. We shared with each other the powerlessness and fear that we feel in face of increasingly desperate signs of environmental imbalance and impending cataclysm. We were also led to recognise that it is in this very sense of threat and inadequacy that engagement and commitment can set roots, and it is these roots we must nurture. We were reminded of the work of one of the guiding lights in the Norwegian environmental movement, the philosopher Arne Naess, a friend of Friends who passed away in the first weeks of 2009 but leaves us with the call to embrace “deep ecology” where our existence bonds with the whole of creation. We discussed how Quaker witness to the principles of spirit-led seeking and consensus-building can be powerful tools for a society (now global) trying to come to terms with its own folly and needing to grasp a new vision for Earth and its humankind. We recalled the text of the *Call to Action* produced by Britain Yearly Meeting in 2001 were again inspired by the formulation there of aspects of our quandary and its model for exploring openings for action. In all of this we are impelled by the example of courage and determination in early Friends when addressing apparently insurmountable obstacles to a cause they found just.

As part of the effort to increase our engagement with the wider society, Norwegian Friends have taken several concrete steps toward establishing a Quaker centre in Oslo, realising a long-held dream. The purpose of such a centre would be to strengthen the Society of Friends in Norway both internally and in its external relations on critical social and spiritual issues. An important brick fell in place with the move to a new locale in Oslo for Friends' meeting space and offices, with room now to allow for activities and gatherings that a Quaker centre might promote. In its June gathering the Yearly Meeting set up a working group that met through the fall and will report to Ministry and

Counsel committee in February 2009, following which there will be held an open seminar to elicit input from members. It is hoped that the yearly meeting will be able to take decisions in 2009 regarding practical, organisational and programmatic aspects of the new Oslo Quaker Centre.

We look forward in 2009 to a joint gathering of Scandinavian yearly meetings (Norway, Denmark, Sweden and Finland) in Kungälv, Sweden from 25-28 June. This is an occasional event – but might become a regular practice in the future.

The Yearly Meeting is working on a response to a change of the military service law to require service of women equal to men. We do not see this as a strengthening of equality but rather an increased militarization of our society. We would request the government to make parallel changes to increase funding for alternative service from our taxes.

We would inform Friends of the passing of Nils Stakland, and give thanks for his long ministry among us, and we share the joy of having welcomed six new members.

*Marit Zeiffert
Representative*

Russia, Moscow Monthly Meeting

Our Quaker group has existed for over 15 years. Our monthly meeting is a small one, and the only existing one in Russia and the former Soviet Union. We have silent worship each Sunday in the centre of Moscow. The information about this is available on our website www.quakers.ru

The conflict in South Ossetia and Georgia last August and later was a big concern for us. On August 17, we had a Meeting where we collected money for a school destroyed in South Ossetia.

In the last year a couple of Friends from Oregon, USA, Judy and Johan Maurer, arrived in Moscow and usually attend our silent worships on Sundays and share their deep spiritual experience with us.

Since 1996 we have had the status of Monthly Meeting under the auspices of FWCC/ EMES. Consequently, we have an interesting history in a relatively short space of time. At the beginning we were much larger than now and some

of our dramatic episodes although occurring infrequently are kept in the records. Sadly some good habits are gone now. First of all, we no longer have our traditional and sizable Summer Gathering (for 30 – 40 participants) every year. There used to be a number of Friends invited from Georgia, Latvia, Lithuania, Ukraine, Byelorussia and other Commonwealth of Independent States area (CIS for short or as it is more familiar to many people outside Russia - the Former Soviet Union Republics) and also from UK, USA, Japan, Germany, France, Italy and other countries in the past. Now we are a tiny group facing various problems. It seems to me, this is a sort of transition period for the Meeting. However, we try to be positive and dynamic. Our group is slowly growing. This year three new members have been accepted (one of them from Minsk, Byelorussia). Last year we received donations from Hammersmith Meeting, St Albans Friends Meeting and Westminster Meeting in UK for renting our premises as the finances of our Meeting are too small at the moment. Thanks to this great generosity we have been able to gather together in the same premises up till now.

Moscow MM has a regular Meeting for Worship at 5 PM every Sunday in a rented cosy room belonging to the charitable organisation of the Moscow Blind People Society. Usually once a month we have Meeting for Worship for Business.. During 2008 we have had a number of visitors from UK, USA, mainly Young Friends. We are proud and happy to report that American-Russian Quaker family Tom and Lena Anthony (both members of Moscow MM) had triplets in 2008. Sorry to say, the firstborn died soon afterwards. It has been the conviction of the Society of Friends (Quakers) from the beginning of the records that all war is contrary to the teachings of Christ Jesus. In His Sermon on the Mount, He persuaded us to love our enemies, to bless those who curse us, and to do well to those who hate us. When Peter seized a sword and struck at the servant of the high priest, Christ Jesus said to him, “Put up thy sword again into its place; for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword” (Matt.26:52). As we believe that all war is immoral crime, we endeavour to work vigorously for peace, to eradicate the economic as well as political causes of war. Therefore, the position of Friends is predictable. That is why Moscow Friends adopted a special minute over our business meeting on August, 17: “We, Moscow Quakers, call all believers in South Ossetia, Georgia and Russia to pray about reconciliation and surmounting of mutual enmity”. Peace can only be built up when nations seek to solve their problems in a spirit of love, non-violence and reconciliation. These days when discourse concerning so-called national interests and the State security is prevailing, we

would encourage our Friends throughout the world to bear in mind that the true refuge and foundation is only peace. As Quakers have been at all times opposed to war, we ought to work for peace consistently through our Peace Testimony.

This is a pressing problem of today as we can learn through the fully-fledged war in the Middle East now. We are very concerned about the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza and are planning to adopt a minute on the issue at our business meeting next Sunday. It is very sad to see the tragedy of the Palestinian people these days.

*Mikhail Roshchin
Clerk*

Russia, Friends House Moscow (Dom Druzei)

General

DD continues to service Russian speaking seekers across the world through its website and forum sites. It is involved in the development of the Woodbrooke/EMES on line study programme and is active within FWCC's Visiting Friends Programme and its development.

Outreach work

We began work on a series on short video films about Quakerism to sit on Youtube (in Russian). The translations into Russian of BYM's "Quaker Faith and Practice" and EMES's 'Friendly Advices' move steadily towards completion. Together with AVP Moscow, DD attended the annual week long "Life City" spiritual gathering that took place in July outside Moscow.

Alternatives to Violence

AVP has been active in Russia since 1994 and is a main thread in DD's work. AVP Russia is governed by its own council which meets monthly at Dom Druzei. AVP works with army conscripts and in the wider community. It is active in three main centres – Moscow, Lipetsk (Central Russia) and Dzerzhinsk (Nizhny Novgorod region). AVP Russia also works with colleagues in Odessa (Ukraine). In 2008 DD received its first institutional grant: for a 5 month project holding AVP workshops with Conscript Soldiers in two army units. Dom Druzei paid the flight costs for two AVP Russia representatives to attend the September AVP World Conference in Kenya.

The Molly Bown Fund provided support for the following five projects with children and young people:

1. Reconciliation Procedures in Schools. (one year grant).

Permanent conflict resolution centres were established in three schools in Moscow, in one school in the city of Kazan and with the social services organization "Trust" in the municipal centre in Kazan.

2. Educational Support for Children of Refugees. (Year 1 of 3 years grant)

The project deals with issues of lower achievement due to inadequate schooling among migrant children and with the consequences of post traumatic stress disorders.

3. Helping Children at 'Nash Dom' orphanage. (Year 1 of 3 years grant):

In the first year, individual meetings and interviews were held with twenty-two children from orphanage No. 8. The children took part in common events with 60 orphans from Big Change (guided tours, conferences, hikes, visits to theatres). 1176 hours of class activities were held.

4. "Big Change". (Year 1 of 3 years grant)

Supporting four orphaned children from Orphanage № 23.who needed to complete the eighth and ninth form in order to pass state exams and receive their certificates. In fact, 835 classes were held for the entire Year 9 group, of which 475 were paid for by funds from Dom Druzei.

5. Rehabilitation for Children with Special Needs: Krug (Year 1 of 3 years grant).

More than 150 children, teenagers and young adults regularly attend activities at Krug. In 2008 500 families received psychological and educational assistance, and 150 specialists attended seminars to learn about the cultural achievements of disabled people. The list of regular activities within the program is too extensive to detail!

New Molly Bown supported projects for 2009:

6. Moscow Children's Cancer Hospital: support for the precise diagnosis of children with cancer from across the CIS.

7. New project in Dzerzhinsk, run by Family and Law to integrate fostered children into their new families.

Other projects

1. Video Activist and “Alternativshchik” Newsletter

We bought a DVD projector and screen to loan to German Alyotkin in Kazan who began a new youth project showing films on contemporary social issues. 9 issues of the “Alternativshchik Newsletter (for Russian Conscientious Objectors) were issued over the period dealing with problems of peace building, non violence and political questions like those arising from the Russian Georgian war. The project continues to develop with the number of participants increasing and with funding now coming from other larger organisations.

2. A “Light Club” was established for upper-level students from schools in Dzerzhinsk to help them socialise and develop family values. The project included lectures for teenagers and their parents, workshops, role-playing for students, and a workshop for head teachers. A brochure, *The ABC of Family Happiness*, was published and distributed among the participants.

We held our Annual Board in October in Jurmula, Latvia which provided an opportunity to worship with Latvian Friends and all the benefits that arise from being fully residential together for four days.

Most of our time was spent in reviewing strategies and structure. We set up a working group to develop a new “Friends of Friends House Moscow” Group to widen much needed support. Watch this space!

Approving a new budget for 2009 required a leap of faith as the money has yet to be raised! This will include continuing provision for AVP work, extending the school based conflict resolution programme for a further year (see Molly Brown Project 1 above) and a new project with Big Change (see Molly Brown Project 4 above) that has the potential to radically extend their work.

The big challenge for 2009 will be to respond to the consequences left behind by the five day war between Georgia and Russia and our role in supporting the wider Family of Friends in their concerns in this area.

FHM Staff

Spain, Barcelona Monthly Meeting

Barcelona MM has continued to sustain itself in 2008, although at times there is only a core attendance of 4 or 5 people. People travel quite far to come to Meeting and this can sometimes affect attendance. On other occasions there are more; recently there were 16 of us. We now meet twice a month instead of once, and are lucky to be able to still count on the use of the ecumenical chapel at Esade business school. As always we have also been enriched by visitors throughout the year. It seems to be a constant that we are enriched for periods of time by Quakers and attenders from other Meetings, who for varied reasons, work and otherwise, spend months or more living in Barcelona. This participation is very valued by us, and it has also led us to finding a babysitter, as there are several children/babies around.

In November, after Meeting, we very much enjoyed sharing a talk with Rosa Serra about her doctoral work on Quaker assistance during the Spanish Civil War period, and we hope that we may have more sessions of sharing like this on occasion.

The Life, the Spirit, of our Meeting is quiet sometimes, and sometimes we worry: “is it that we are doing something wrong that we remain so small?” Then it comes through, again and again, in growth we had not anticipated, in people who appear and share themselves, their worshipping life with us. It bursts through, again and again, in large and small ways. It never fails.

Caroline Wilson

Sweden Yearly Meeting

2009 has been another year of loss. Six members have died, aged between 57 and 97. Almost as many new members have joined us, and we are busy handing over the Quaker traditions to a new generation. Some of it happens in study circles and organised informal talks, some of it in weekend courses, like the Woodbrooke-on-the-road weekend on Quaker business at Svartbäcken, our retreat centre.

The theme of our Yearly Meeting was Tradition and Renewal. This inspired Stockholm Friends to start a series of talks before Thursday evening Meeting for Worship where we get to know both each other and the Quaker traditions.

All age worship and All age summer camps continue to be important. Kväkarhjälpen is looking for suitable partners for contacts with the Swedish relief agency. Our Quaker journal (Kväkartidskrift) states important Quaker issues. "A Guide to True Peace" has been translated into Swedish by Wilhelm Dahllöf and was published in 2008.

We are learning to do some of the things done by Julia Ryberg when she had more time for us.

*Kerstin Backman and Lars Longueville
Representatives*

Switzerland Yearly Meeting

The past year has brought a look at the future of our Yearly Meeting, In planning, through personal reflection, group discussions, and in consideration of a background of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges, three areas of concern were identified: shared spirituality and transfer of knowledge from older to younger Friends, inreach based on individual members' needs and contributions, and outreach through service and activities in creating increased awareness of the Quaker presence in Switzerland.

Our February retreat at Montmirail yielded thoughts related to the everyday give-and-take between individual and community in a productive tension marked by family, workplace, neighbourhood, and friendships. Contacts and self-realisation gain in mutual interplay. Our experience of life among others can be rewarding as we make the effort individually to contribute through sensitivity, courage, and love, so as to open doors to the power of the inner light in those around us as in ourselves.

The theme of our annual gathering was "integration of all generations." Two speakers shared with us their experiences on how to create a vibrant ageless Quaker community, and how to benefit from the new Quaker project for on-line study and outreach being developed in close cooperation with Woodbrooke, FWCC, and EMES. A group of young Friends had prepared a

creative project in a worship setting so that we were able to put multigenerational work into action.

Another major concern was the adoption of our statement on the responsibility to protect the community in international conflict situations. Linked to such protection in the sense of "the virtue of that life and power that takes away the occasion of all wars" are the responsibilities to prevent and to reconstruct, along with international police intervention pursuant to corresponding law and order provisions and the development of non-violent techniques. We urge that in situations of potential clashes, conflict-solving actions be undertaken by governments or NGOs much sooner than is unfortunately the case at present. Signifying our agreement on these points with the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, our statement has been sent to QCEA and to the Assistant Secretary of the UN.

Quakers took part in the annual Easter March in Bern, which dates back to the 1960's when marchers met to protest against the nuclear arms race. This year's march marked the fifth consecutive year in protest of the "international war against terrorism."

Our project to put together our own Faith and Practice: "Swiss Quaker Life, Belief, and Thought" has progressed. Sources were found among individual Friends as well as in our archives. The raw material for this anthology, essentially written by Swiss Friends, with an introduction and history in three languages, has been assembled, and a publisher found.

As hosts, we are taking first steps in organising the 2011 FWCC-EMES annual meeting.

We hold in the Light three of our members who have died, and one November baby embarking on life's journey.

Fritz Renken

Europe and Middle East Young Friends

It is my pleasure to write about Europe and the Middle East Young Friends (EMEYF) at the time I hand over my responsibilities as Clerk to Calum Shaw. Things have moved on a lot since my first attendance at the Annual Meeting in

Brussels in 2001. EMEYF has always been a close family to its young members – and as many of those who were in the combined EMES/EMEYF gathering in Vienna 2008 will confirm – it has always been a tender memory of its ‘still young – more mature’ previous members.

I am one of the few members with a Middle Eastern connection, though representing Britain in most of my activities. The world around EMEYF has mirrored its activity over the last few years – oscillating between static stasis and boiling point. The ‘There is nothing new under the sun’ Biblical reference was seen in the stable context of the life of a faithful charitable youth organization trying to change the world as they try to change their own (and God this world is crying for change). When I first joined EMEYF there was trouble in the Middle East as the second Intifada set off and the hope for a just and profound peace was getting slimmer when troops rammed into the Aqsa Mosque at the beginning of the decade. There were still troubles when I was nominated as a Clerk, with the war in Lebanon in summer of 2006. As I welcome Calum into Office, there is more smoke, tears and blood as Gazans continue to bury their dear ones and clear rubble off their schools following the recent violence. During the same period, violence took off again in the Balkans and in Georgia and more peaceful agreements were reached in North Ireland. Everyone is yearning for a change, for a saviour, to build a fairer and a more peaceful world. Perhaps this very yearning was behind the election of America’s first president of a black origin – not so much for the change in colour but rather for the change in policy and approach he promised to introduce.

In contrast to this there is the boiling enthusiasm of new projects, new extensions and new connections. EMEYF has celebrated the fellowship of its pan European family by holding its Spring Gathering in challenging venues: reaching out to Friends in Spain, Russia and most excitingly in the Middle East as 30 participants of all the ages and colours of the EMES/EMEYF family prepare for Spring Gathering 2009 in Damascus, Syria. EMEYF also used the last Spring Gathering to reach out to its greater sister family of EMES as we held a combined inspirational and rewarding Spring Gathering in Austria last Easter. There is so much energy that a second Summer Gathering has pushed to become a regular event; happening every 3 years following a successful gathering in the Balkans in 2007 and in Norway in 2008. A new opening is also on the way with a new EMEYF collaboration supporting and co-

sponsoring German Young Friends' well established joint gathering with young people in Belarus.

Such enthusiasm and activity is reflected in the necessary outreach, planning, management and organization as EMEYF is seeking to regulate its ad hoc income generated by the generosity of its European donors across the section. A news letter is planned, and more involvement with Friends within the section through the Among Friends medium aim at raising the awareness of our family in the Europe and the Middle East of the existence and availability of EMEYF for their concerns and their Young Friends.

It is not easy to be young; it is not easy to be human. As the High Pacific Salmon, Young Friends in Europe and the Middle East will have their currents to swim against, waterfalls in the course of their spiritual collective and individual journeys and some will have to face the hungry bears of materialistic challenges or tackle the fierce eagles of idealism. But like these schools of striving fish there will always be some who will keep swimming forward, despite all, to keep the flame of youth fulfilled. Quaker-Universal values inspire candle lighting! Always! – Together, we will live, and together we will continue what we are here for; to share with one another and to build a good world passing on every little droplet of this beauty all around us to Hasan (my little one) and all his peers and those to follow, as we received it all, so beautiful and so intact from those who are and those who have been.

Visit us at <http://emeyf.quaker.eu.org/index.html> or at our face book group. You can also join our mail list at:

<http://lists.quaker.eu.org/mailman/listinfo/emeyf-list>

and if you missed this year's Spring Gathering in Damascus please do not miss coming to visit us next at our Annual Meeting in Quaker House Brussels 6-8 November 2009 or the next Spring Gathering – Easter 2010 at Moyallon Centre – North Ireland.

Fi Aman Allah (In the Grace of God) I leave you with love,

*Ali Ghanem
Clerk*

Quaker Committee for European Affairs QCEA

2008 – Moving forward on criminal justice, peace-building and sustainable energy

2008 has been a very active year at QCEA. We have been working on a wide range of issues – too many to reflect all of them here. Our own full Annual Report and *Around Europe* (both on our website¹) give a fuller picture. Here, we focus on some of the highlights.

Criminal Justice

We have been working on criminal justice issues since 2004 and the *Women in Prison* project has become a real success story: the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe has been working on this issue throughout the year and QCEA contributed the background paper for their report; the final decision (which we hope will be to adopt the report and its recommendations) will be taken in January 2009; the European Parliament adopted a report, based largely on our findings and recommendations, on the issue in March 2008. The World Health Organisation-Europe also took the matter up in 2008 and will be adopting a statement on women's health in prison. This was the subject of a conference in Kiev in November at which Liz Scurfield, Joint Representative, presented a paper.

We will be expanding the focus of this area of work during 2009, with the publication of a report on alternatives to custody and further research in related areas.

Peacebuilding

During 2007 and 2008, much of our focus in this area has been an examination of the European Union's commitment to mainstream conflict prevention in development assistance. A first report on the subject and 6 country case studies were published in 2008 and a further paper, looking at larger scale infrastructure projects and conflict sensitivity will be published in early 2009.

Another element to this strand of work has been detailed advocacy with the European Investment Bank (EIB) on including conflict sensitivity into their project assessment process. Much progress has been made and the second draft of the EIB Statement of Environmental and Social Principles and Standards

¹ The annual report will appear after its approval by QCEA Council in March 2009

now makes some useful reference to this; discussions about including a section in the social and environmental handbook are ongoing.

Following on from Martina's trip to the Balkans at the invitation of the QPSW workers there in 2006, we have worked on examining the EU Enlargement Process in the region and its impact on peacebuilding and peacebuilders. The study involved both desk-top research and a 5-week long field trip undertaken by one of our Programme Assistants; he had the opportunity of meeting with a large number of people and conducting over 50 interviews, all of which contributed to the completion of a detailed report due to be published in early 2009.

Energy Security

In 2008 we started our new project under the title *Building Sustainable Energy Security* with the recruitment of Neil Endicott as Policy Officer. The project has clearly caught the spirit of where Friends are at in Europe and there is a great deal of interest. This was evident in the high levels of attendance at several meetings which Neil spoke to during National Quaker Week in the UK and in the high level of attendance at our very successful conference in December 2008. We now have a dedicated web-page for this project and news and information will be posted there regularly. The link is:
<http://www.quaker.org/qcea/energysecurity/index.html>

Looking forward

2009 is our 30th anniversary; we will be celebrating this in some appropriate way but we will be marking it, too, with a review of the policy and advocacy messages which QCEA has pursued over the last 30 years in order to move forward on those which still need further work.

2009 will also see the publication of a new edition of 'A Quaker Vision for Europe'.

2009, more publicly relevant than our anniversary, is the year of European Parliament Elections; QCEA has begun engagement with this process. We have established a new page on our website which contains information, briefings and (will contain) action points in the run-up to June 2009; after the elections, we will undertake some analysis both of the results and of the level of engagement across the European Union.

In 2008, we participated in a public consultation on the EU Budget Review. This review will take shape more specifically (with a European Commission Communication) in 2009, and QCEA will continue to be fully engaged in that process.

Liz Scurfield and Martina Weitsch

Quaker United Nations Office and Committee (Geneva)

The work of the Quaker UN Office continued in active and productive directions in 2008. This brief report can but provide a bit of a spotlight on some of the highlights of our programmes during this past year and take note briefly of other developments.

Programme highlights

Disarmament and Peace: The past year has seen a considerable shift in the work of this programme. We have continued our work on security-related matters, largely around issues of small arms, through our collaborative *Geneva Forum* programme with the Graduate Institute and the UN Institute for Disarmament Research (see www.geneva-forum.org for details). We have also taken on an active role as the interface with civil society for the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development (GD) (see www.genevadeclaration.org). We have been actively engaged in bringing civil society programming evidence to the attention of the GD countries (now 105) at major meetings in Nairobi, Bangkok, Geneva, and Sarajevo, among other roles. QUNO also co-founded in 2008 the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform (see www.gpplatform.ch), a joint initiative with the Geneva Centre for Security Policy and the Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding. This “platform” is now playing an important role in building links among the many organizations in Geneva working on peacebuilding concerns. Useful collaborative work around peacebuilding between the Quaker Offices in New York and Geneva continued in 2008.

Human Rights and Refugees: This programme also is multi-faceted. A major emphasis currently is the emphasis on “Women in Prison and Children of Imprisoned Mothers”, which has helped through a whole range of research and advocacy initiatives to get this previously unrecognized problem area onto international agendas. In this work, there has been important collaborative

work with the Quaker Council on European Affairs. QUNO continues to be actively involved in the work of the Human Rights Council, with the QUNO analysis of each session of the Council being a much sought-after resource for governments and NGOs. The Programme also continued its important focus on the right of conscientious objection to military service. The Programme has also worked closely with the Canadian Friends Service Committee on indigenous concerns.

Global Economic Issues: This Programme focused in 2008 on issues related to so-called “trade in services.” QUNO’s role has been to work with the less-developed-country group and the Africa group of states to refine and prepare their positions for seeking a fairer deal in international trade negotiations at the World Trade Organisation. This consists of the commissioning of useful background papers and dialogues undertaken at Quaker House and elsewhere.

QUNO-Geneva has been investigating in various ways the challenge given to both Offices by the FWCC Triennial in 2007 concerning climate change and the environment. In Geneva, we expect this to advance in 2009 with the addition of Caroline Dommen to the staff. QUNO programmes also produced a range of useful publications in 2008, all of which can be found on the QUNO web-site www.quno.org. We also held again our very popular summer school in July.

Staff and Committee Developments

Lessie Doré served on an interim and part-time basis in charge of the Global Economic Issues (GEI) programme throughout 2008. She successfully kept the GEI programme running following the resignation of Martin Watson in late 2007. In October Caroline Dommen was chosen as the new GEI Representative. She has a long history of work in Geneva on trade, human rights, and environmental issues and will be an important addition to our staff. She will take up her new role in mid-February. QUNO also welcomed René Lejeune as our new finance officer, replacing Eva Tanner. René brings a wealth of experience to what is a central feature of our daily concerns, the management of QUNO’s finances. QUNO’s wonderful 2007/2008 Programme Assistants, Yvette Issar and Siobhan Sparkes McNamara, left us at the end of July and were replaced by two equally wonderful young people for 2008/2009, Adam Drury and Jennifer Rosenberg.

The Quaker UN Committee met twice in 2008. The new FWCC EMES representative on the Committee, Neithard Petry, moved quickly into his new role as a Committee member and he is also serving as our Treasurer, adding further strong guidance and advice on QUNO's finances.

Outreach

QUNO staff and members of the Quaker UN Committee have undertaken a range of speaking engagements to Quaker Meetings in the past year, as well as [participating](#) in a number of larger Quaker gatherings. David Atwood was pleased to represent QUNO at the FWCC Asia/West Pacific Section Triennial Meeting in Bhopal, India, in November. Adam Drury participated in the EMES Annual Peace and Service consultation in Brussels in October. The joint web-site of the two Offices (www.quno.org) continues to be an important reference source for many around the world on Quaker work at the United Nations. The web-site features the range of publications from QUNO in 2008.

Finance

QUNO remains grateful for all the financial support which came to us in 2008 from many different sources, including a number of Yearly Meetings in Europe. This support is vital to our being able to continue to offer a dynamic programme of work and continue to offer Friends an important presence and witness at the United Nations in Geneva.

*David Atwood
Director*

Quaker United Nations Office in New York

I am your FWCC-EMES Representative to the QUNC-NY. I began serving as a representative in 2005, and have agreed to continue until 2011. The role of QUNC is to join with the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) staff in “testing and weighing the priorities of proposals sent through Quaker channels for Quaker work at the UN... Program priorities are seasoned, discerned and chosen by QUNC-NY.²” The QUNC consists of four Quakers appointed by FWCC, plus the FWCC General Secretary, and five American based Quakers appointed by the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC).

² Guidelines for the Quaker United Nations Committee-New York , page 2

The QUNO New York is fully staffed for the first time in several years. Although QUNO employment regulations require only the Director to be a Quaker, the current team consists of five Quakers.

Andrew Tomlinson has been the QUNO Director for nearly one year. During this time, he and the program staff have initiated a strategic planning process to examine the roots of QUNO work, its strengths, and unique contributions. This process is also redefining QUNO's future program work. The process has included numerous stakeholders, including members of the QUNC. QUNC will approve the final QUNO Strategic Plan at its next meeting in March 2009, and forward this Minute for final approval by the AFSC Executive Committee for International Programs (IPEC).

QUNO-NY is fully funded by AFSC. While AFSC has continued to generously support QUNO's work, its funds are not immune to the current financial meltdown.

The Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust initially funded the expenses of FWCC-QUNC appointees. The expenses are now covered directly by FWCC World Office. We should be aware that FWCC may also experience financial difficulties under the current meltdown.

The recommended priorities for work in 2009-2010 are:

1. Building Sustainable Peace

QUNO will work to ensure that the wider UN community's engagement with countries in, and emerging from violent conflict is fully inclusive of civil society, coordinated both horizontally and vertically (including with respect to funding mechanisms), and pays particular attention to both armed violence and development, and reconciliation and justice.

2. Bridge-Building and Engagement

Recognizing the potential for a lack of communication to lead to violent conflict, QUNO will work to support the UN in fulfilling its role in building bridges and facilitating engagement between parties to potential conflicts.

3. Responsibility to Protect (R2P)

QUNO will work with members of the international community to develop and promote the use of preventive, non-violent tools for preventing and responding to cases of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

4. Quaker Liaison & Outreach

QUNO will support Quaker service agencies in their UN work and assist in the coordination of Quaker activities at the UN (Liaison). QUNO will actively manage communications and relationships with current and potential stakeholders and partners, Quaker, UN & other (Outreach).

Lindsey Fielder Cook

Quaker Voluntary Action

“An unfolding experience...this time together was precious...involving change of attitudes and perspective.” Volunteer at the Congénies Working Retreat April 2008.

Introduction

2008 was a year of solid progress. Our main focus was on development of our Working Retreats programme but we also moved forward in building partnership with others. We continued to explore adoption of new initiatives.

Working Retreats

These retreats involve six to about fourteen people – young and the not so young – coming together from far and near to do practical work and engage in spiritual reflection over a period of a few days. QVA organises, runs and monitors these events.

In the spring we adopted the aim of ‘establishing the Working Retreats model as a mechanism for spiritual development and service for use by the Quaker community which is tried, tested, well known and widely supported.’ In line with this, five retreats were held in 2008 at four venues. This included, in April, a retreat at Congénies in France – our first outside the UK. Across the programme we found that most participants – nearly all in fact – felt the retreat experience had been rich and moving for them. They particularly stressed, in feedback, the value of being part of a joyous spiritual community – one that brought fun, fulfilment and insight.

Congénies was particularly well attended – drawing Friends from at least four countries. We feel moved to extend the programme across Europe and the Middle East – where it may help to bring widely scattered Quakers together.

Partnership

In 2008 we sought to develop partnerships with others in the Quaker community. Within the UK we have had discussions with Quaker Retreat Group, Quaker Life and Young Friends to this end – leading, we hope, to joined up working in 2009.

Beyond the UK, QVA participated in the EMES service consultation in October and there established links for running a geographically broader Working Retreats programme. Partly as a consequence of this we have arranged to run retreats at Laren in Holland (April 27 to May 4 2009), Svartbacken, Sweden (July 11 - 18) and at Ramallah in Palestine (October 23 - 31)

New initiatives

Part of the QVA mission is to develop ‘new ways of volunteering that meet the challenges of our time.’ Development of the Working Retreats approach is part of this – but elsewhere progress has been slow in 2008.

- A new ‘head-hunting’ initiative to search out people with special skills and experience for important Quaker work for short periods has made little headway as our first pilot project, in Zimbabwe, was unable to proceed because of difficulties beyond our control.

- The Quakers Forensic Psychiatry initiative which seeks to extend Quaker ministry in secure forensic units and hospitals has not extended beyond Rampton High Security Hospital – where, however, a Quaker Meeting is now well established.

Overall

Taken overall, 2008 has been a year of moving forward. QVA has spent within its income – although finances remain tight. We are, however, in need of new trustees.

Martin Smith

Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre

Woodbrooke's longstanding commitment to work outside the UK has continued to be developed largely through the support of the Catchpool Fund. The confirmation of the appointment of Julia Ryberg to the post of European Project Coordinator until September 2010 has consolidated links with EMES and FWCC. Julia has worked closely with the Programmes Team at Woodbrooke to introduce and support new developments and has developed the first group of Friends to work on an on-line course on Quakerism. This study group is considering the use of various materials in several languages. Visits have taken place to Poland, Austria, Sweden and Russia. 8 individual Friends were enabled to attend Woodbrooke courses and the translators' course attracted 24 participants from 15 countries. Attendance at the EMES Vienna gathering was much appreciated by Woodbrooke staff and by the Clerk to Woodbrooke trustees.

The Anglo-Scandinavian weekend 3-6 July was well attended by Friends either from or connected with Britain, Denmark, Sweden, Finland and Norway. Old friendships were renewed and new ones made. Most of the new members of Sweden YM were present, as well as a young Danish attender who has subsequently become a member of that Yearly Meeting.

Some of the participants stayed on for the Translators Gathering 7-11 July, an opportunity for the participants in the on-line project to meet and do some practical work on translations. Thanks to clear guidelines, upholding of many Friends and the fine input of Rex Ambler, Renato Lings, Helen Rowlands and the timely visits by Marisa Johnson and Bronwyn Harwood, the Spirit moved within the group. The result was good work on translating, deep sharing, renewed commitment and enthusiasm for the project from all of the participants. It was one of the most challenging pieces of work I have ever done, and well worth the effort.

During 2008, the present trustees of the Catchpool Fund began to look at the longer-term needs of this fund, as family members and others drew to the end of a long and valuable term of service. They realised that the close links with Woodbrooke provided an opportunity to transfer the responsibility in an

orderly way to the existing body of trustees of Woodbrooke. This will be done during 2009. The Fund will retain its own identity, but can be administered more efficiently by being brought into line with Woodbrooke's overall management. Woodbrooke trustees are clear that they will continue to support the present aims and ambitions of the Fund, recognising how valuable these have been to individuals and organisations throughout the growing European network of Quakers.

Yearly Meetings in 2009

Yearly Meeting	When	Contact
Netherlands	22-24 May	secretariaat@dequakers.nl
Switzerland (Aeschi)	30 May-5 June	jbi@swissonline.ch
Nordic Yearly Meeting (Kungälv, near Gothenburg)	26-29 June	kveker@kveker.org
Ireland (Dublin)	22-26 May	office@quakers-in-ireland.ie
Britain (York)	25 July-1 st August	Gillian Ashmore, Recording Clerk, Friends House, 173 Euston Road London NW1 2AX
France	20-25 August	jeanne.louis@wanadoo.fr
German (Bonn)	14-17 October	pyrmont@quaeker.org

Some other events in 2009

Grenztreffen Switzerland/Germany/France	6-8 March	zeitschrift@quaeker.org
EMEYF Spring Gathering in Damascus	10-17 April	www.emeyf.quaker.eu.org
Central European Gathering in Vienna	29 May – 1 June	jalka@konfliktkultur.at
Peace and Service Consultation in Kortenberg, Belgium	6-8 November	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 using the bank details below.

In Sterling: By international transfer to:

Unity Trust Bank plc, Nine Brindleyplace, Birmingham, B1 2HB, UK

IBAN: GB11 CPBK 0800 5150 0732 10

BIC: CPBKGB22

It is also **essential** that you quote the following details

Account Name: FWCC-EMES

Account Number: 20180696

Sort Code: 08-60-01

Holders of UK bank accounts can also send cheques or CAF vouchers in pound sterling made out to 'FWCC-EMES'.

Holders of UK bank accounts can also send cheques or CAF vouchers in pounds sterling for the 'FWCC-EMES Amari Play Centre' to the EMES office.

In Euros: Sozialbank Account

IBAN: DE35 3702 0500 0001 0795 00 in Germany just 1079500)

BIC: BFSWDE33XXX (in Germany just 370 205 00)

Name: Sozialbank

Location: Cologne (Köln), Wörthstr. 15-17, 50668 Köln

In the name of: Friends World Committee for Consultation Europe & Middle East

CONTRIBUTING TO THE AMARI CAMP PLAY CENTRE, RAMALLAH

There is a separate, FWCC-EMES Amari Play Centre account. Contributions for the play centre should be made as follows:

By international transfer to:

CAF Bank Ltd, 25 Kings Hill, West Malling, Kent, ME19 4JQ, UK

IBAN: GB48 MIDL 4005 3072 1385 49

BIC: MIDLGB2141W

It is also **essential** that you quote the following details

Account Name: FWCC-EMES Amari Play Centre

Account Number: 00091841

Sort Code: 40-52-40

Please note that EMES does not hold accounts for other Quaker work in the Section

Please contact the FWCC EMES Office or the Treasurer, Neithard Petry, for further information or to inform us of bank transfers you are making.

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