

Among Friends

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Being Peace, Making Peace

Dear Friends,

I have been reflecting on our testimony of Integrity. It is most commonly associated with probity, upright behaviour, with honesty, openness and accountability. A very desirable moral attribute. But morality is not spirituality. So, what is the spiritual dimension of Integrity? There is another definition, which refers to “The state of being whole and undivided” (Wikipedia). This definition makes Integrity a divine attribute, and hints at a state of “being”, rather than “doing”. It also resonates with the biblical concept of Shalom, usually rendered as “peace”, but actually also meaning whole, complete. According to Strong’s Concordance 7965 Shalom means completeness, wholeness, health, peace, welfare, safety, soundness, tranquillity, prosperity, perfectness, fullness, rest, harmony, the absence of agitation or discord.

During our Peace and Service Consultation last November, which drew participants from most of the major Quaker organisations in Europe and the Middle



Dancing in the Spirit – Peace and Service Consultation 2012.

Photo: Marlies Tjallingii

East, we asked ourselves how we could Be the change we want to see in the world, as per the quote attributed to Gandhi. The Kabarak Call to Peace and Eco-justice that emanated from the World Conference of Friends last year challenges us to help restore the integrity of God’s creation – but how can we do this if we are not, individually and as communities, whole and complete? What makes a faith-based organisation different from a hard-working secular NGO?

Perhaps faith requires us to recognise, acknowledge and live with our own brokenness – to hold our condition to the Light, and open ourselves to the healing that comes when we stop trying to be in control, and surrender to the work of grace in our lives. We also need unconditional acceptance of ourselves, and of each other, compassionate sincerity in the communication of our needs, patient exploration of our own and other people’s motives and drives, willingness to acknowledge mistakes and seek forgiveness. Living with integrity is a commitment to align ourselves to the spirit of Truth and Love, whose promptings we seek to heed, and trust, as the leadings of God.

Marisa Johnson, Executive Secretary

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Galina Evgenievna Orlova

10.5.1937 – 23.12.2012

Patricia Cockrell writes:

For the first 50 years of her life, Galina Orlova lived the life of an unremarkable Soviet citizen. At university she took the compulsory courses in Marxism-Leninism and married a fellow student of Russian literature, Ernst Abramovich Krasnovskii. Together they were appointed to schools in Kamchatka, nine time-zones east of Moscow. They enjoyed their work and the natural surroundings but they missed the cultural life of the capital and were glad in due course to be able to return and take up teaching posts in Moscow, where in 1968 their son, Gleb, was born.

Galina was intrigued when she came across Quakers in a story by Nikolai Leskov. The footnote in the Soviet publication explained that this was a sect which had flourished briefly in England and was now largely obsolete. She was therefore surprised, when we met at her school in 1988, to discover that I was a Friend. Though we both had other duties, we found time between lessons to talk about many things but Galina was especially interested in Quakers. In my luggage in the following years of the school exchange were a few Quaker leaflets and books. She found these interesting but also frustrating, partly because her English was poor at that time, but also because each publication raised more questions. I advised her to join the small group worshipping in the manner of Friends in Moscow, since Quakerism is to be experienced and not learnt from a manual, but this too did not satisfy her recently awakened thirst for a spiritual life, though she was pleased to find some publications, notably Thomas Kelly and William Taber, in Russian.

Galina retired early from her teaching career and devoted herself to studying the faith and practice of Quakers, and for this she needed to improve her English. She was awarded a grant for a term at Woodbrooke, where she became convinced and was accepted into international membership of the Society. She spoke of her time at Woodbrooke as a golden opportunity for transformation. She attended meeting for worship and epilogue every day, and she maintained the habit of daily silent worship for the rest of her life.

When she became clerk of the newly recognised Moscow Monthly Meeting, Galina was keen to learn



Galina in her garden
Photo: Patricia Cockrell

about clerking practice and the sense of the meeting from Brian Morley's *Beyond Consensus*, and she wanted to make it available to other Russian Friends, so she and a group of Friends translated it into Russian.

Galina was appointed to the staff when Friends House Moscow opened on 1.1.1996, and she quickly established a ministry of hospitality to welcome all-comers and to nurture seekers and project partners. Galina travelled widely in support of many FHM projects. Especially important to her were those involving the victims of conflict in Chechnya, children with special needs and refugees. She was very glad to be involved with the Alternatives to Violence Project, translating material, training facilitators and serving on the AVP Council.

When illness forced her to resign in 2004, Galina served for some years as a member of the international board of FHM where her insights and contributions to the discernment process were highly valued. Her last few years were devoted to looking after her grandchild, Kirill, while managing with courage and humility the increasingly distressing symptoms of Parkinson's.

Having wrestled with the Spirit, Galina chose to let her life speak. For her all was interconnected, worship with action, wisdom with love.

Budapest-Vienna Border Meeting

Berne Weiss writes:

The Budapest/Vienna border meeting, held in Vienna the weekend of 19/20 January, was marked by much laughter, informal conversation and warm recollections of some Friends who were unable to join us.

Six Friends from Budapest joined Vienna Friends in their new meeting location, the office of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation.

Our theme for the meeting was Vision, Commitment and Action. Our initial hope and expectation that we would visit Hamsa Eichler was disappointed because of snow and icy road conditions, but we had a brief conversation with her, and held her in the light.

Cathy Butler asked us to consider the role of EMES: what is -- and might in the future -- contribute to our meetings, which led to a lively discussion. We saw EMES as an umbrella that covered a range of meetings across the region, reflecting the reality of the global family of Friends. We recognized the value of the personal connections that EMES facilitates, the value of the Internet course and the translations of Quaker materials that were made to conduct the course, and



Vienna 2013
Photo: Cathy Butler

the events that can occur around the visits of EMES speakers.

We introduced our theme in worship sharing both before and following meeting for worship on Saturday, and reflected on the various ways we have experienced vision, commitment and action in our lives. On Sunday, our reflections evolved into a more informal conversation about service, both offered and received.

Gently Lead: How to teach your children about God while finding out for yourself by Polly Berrien Berends

Jane Rose writes from Finland:

I rediscovered this book when looking for something to offer a new attendee at meeting who mentioned he had a family of young children.

It is a wonderful book for parents or grandparents of any age. It is a dipping into book written with a light touch even when matters are weighty or profound. Some of the sections are in the form of a dialogue between adult and child, others comprise a short poem and the rest are in the form of a narrative. The book deals with many important areas of life, such as death, love, disappointment, waiting for direction, dealing with difficult people, among others. The author says in her introduction that the book contains significant moments garnered from the whole mish-mash of their family life. She observes that it is notable how thin this

book is compared to others she has written and takes pains to stress that her family is not special or different or 'more spiritual' than any other.

I feel there is a parallel between these glimpses of the spiritual in the everyday world of a parent with growing children which Polly Berends has documented, and ministry in a Quaker meeting. We can take what we hear and reflect on what has been offered in terms of our own life and individual circumstances. Spirit to spirit. The whole book is full of offerings and its honesty is in its groundedness in the author's experiential spiritual journey and in her firm conviction that the spiritual dimension of parenthood (or grandparenthood or adulthood...) goes hand in hand with the concrete and the physical.

Bloomfield celebrates 200 years of caring for mentally ill and frail elderly

Fiona Murdoch, Ireland YM writes:

Over 100 people attended a special event held at Bloomfield, Stocking Lane, Dublin on 28 November 2012 to celebrate 200 years of Quakers caring for mentally ill and frail elderly people in Ireland.

Friends from throughout the country were joined at the special celebration by politicians, healthcare workers and members of the local community.

Since its foundation by Friends in 1812, Bloomfield has sought to provide person-centric mental health and nursing home care to elderly people and those with dementia. The original aim was to bring about a seminal change in the nature of care from restraint to ‘moral treatment’ and the Society proved to be pioneering in its care and treatment of both the elderly and mentally ill.

Bloomfield moved from its original Donnybrook site to its current location in Rathfarnham in 2005. In 2006 the Jewish Home of Ireland and in 2007 Kylemore Clinic (established by the Methodist Church in Ireland) were also incorporated into Bloomfield, with the stage-2 completion in 2009 bringing the total bed count to 152.

Olivia Mitchell TD planted an oak tree in the grounds to mark the 200th anniversary before Chairman of the Board, John McNeilly (Rathfarnham Preparative Meeting), assured guests that the original mission of the founding members of the Quaker community remained at the core of everything Bloomfield does today.

CEO **Damien O’Dowd** then outlined how Bloomfield would respond to the needs of people with dementia and mental illness over the next few years.

Robin Goodbody (Monkstown Preparative Meeting) summarised the highlights of the 200-year history before Professor Michael Gill, Professor of Psychiatry at Trinity College Dublin, launched the newly-published book – ‘Bloomfield, A History 1812 – 2012’. The book, which literally arrived hot off the presses, is the result of great teamwork and painstaking research by Glynn Douglas (Monkstown Preparative Meeting), Robin Goodbody, Alice Mauger and John Davey.*

Prof **Michael Gill**, keynote speaker for the evening, spoke about “exciting advances” in genomic medicine and how this was being applied in psychiatry, with particular emphasis on alzheimer’s, schizophrenia, autism

and epilepsy.

He said Trinity was delighted to be associated with Bloomfield: “I have visited Bloomfield on quite a few occasions and I’ve been really amazed by what has been happening here. Bloomfield is an important resource for the College for teaching medical and healthcare students and for offering research opportunities and we look forward to continuing our relationship into the future.”

Damien O’Dowd, CEO of Bloomfield Health Services, said: “The marking of 200 years of providing treatment and care by Bloomfield is a significant achievement for the organisation and is a tribute to the steadfastness of the original mission to provide person-centred quality care to those with mental health needs and to frail elderly. The change in society over that period of time has been immense but our mission and the focus of our service provision has remained strong.

“Today at Bloomfield our commitment to our patients and residents, and the treatment and care provided to them, continues to be our focal point and the core of our mission. As we look towards the future, our continued desire to meet the expanding needs of our older generation is to provide a greater scope of services to include families and supported by the most progressive education and research.”

John McNeilly, Chairman, said Bloomfield was constantly balancing its desire to provide leading edge person-centred care while meeting the constantly changing and developing standards from the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) and the Mental Health Commission (MHC).

“Bloomfield’s strategic plan for years 2013 through 2015 is suggesting a slight change of direction, with a re-balancing of our nursing home and approved centre beds to allow for the development of new services around day care provision, respite, acute services and the provision of rapid assessment clinics,” said John. “To reflect the new services being offered, Bloomfield Care Centre will now be known as Bloomfield Health Services incorporating Bloomfield Hospital and New Lodge Nursing Home.”

“Bloomfield Health Services has partnered with Trinity College Dublin, giving students the chance to spend time in Bloomfield, to develop hands-on experience



Bloomfield Photo:Fiona Murdoch

and learning opportunities with our residents, all under the strict monitoring and tutelage of our medical and nursing teams. Bloomfield has also partnered with the Alzheimer's Society of Ireland, with the commencement of a 'Tuesday Club' and 'Alzheimer's Café' within our facility.

"Bloomfield has engaged more closely with our surrounding community by starting a series of public lectures, with topics ranging from "Diagnosis of Dementia: Where to From Here?", "Keeping it All Together" and "Relaxation for Everyday Living". Attendance has been very encouraging and the feedback has been very positive. A repeat series is being considered for the Spring/Autumn of next year. We are also engaging with local medical professionals, mainly aimed at GPs and members of health care teams in our area, offering an educational lecture from our consultant psychiatrist and other guest speakers."

After the speeches everyone enjoyed a splendid meal provided by Compass Group and Olivia Mitchell TD cut a specially-commissioned cake, supplied by Superquinn.

Kathleen Lynch TD, Minister for Disability, Equality,

Mental Health and Older People, had hoped to attend the celebration but due to work commitments in the Dáil was unable to attend on the evening. She did, however, send a message of congratulations in which she recognised the commitment and dedication of Bloomfield to people with mental health problems and older people.

"The delivery of mental health care services has come a long way since Bloomfield first opened its doors back in 1812 and Bloomfield itself has been very much part of that change," she said. "Even today, we see that this important service is continuing to develop and adapt for the benefit of all their clients and family members."

Congratulations to the Board of Bloomfield, especially Chairman John McNeilly and *Patricia Garland-Moloney* (Rathfarnham Preparative Meeting), for organising such a wonderful celebration!

**'Bloomfield, A History 1812 – 2012' is a beautifully-presented book which captures the life of Bloomfield over the years. A small number of copies are available for purchase at €20 from Bloomfield reception. A review of the book will appear in the next issue of The Friendly Word.*

Iraq at the Beginning of 2013

Jim Fine, Ramallah Friends Meeting writes:

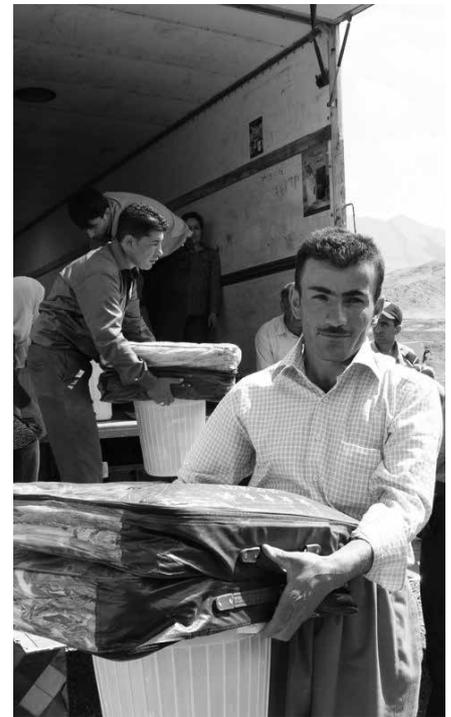
From our vantage point in the Kurdish region of northern Iraq, where we have been living for more than two years, Iraq appears to be facing many of the same challenges and opportunities that the “Arab Spring” has brought elsewhere in the region. But nearly ten years after the U.S.-led invasion prospects are still complicated in Iraq by continuing deadly violence in parts of the country.

My wife, Deborah, and I are working for Mennonite Central Committee of Akron, Pennsylvania and Winnipeg, Manitoba. We are living in the predominantly Christian town of Ankawa, adjacent to the large and growing city of Erbil, the capital of Iraqi Kurdistan. Most of my time is spent coordinating MCC relief, development, and peacebuilding work with Iraqi partner organizations. Deb is teaching English to young men studying for the Chaldean Catholic priesthood at St. Peter’s Seminary in Ankawa and mentoring young teachers at a new Chaldean K-12 school here that aspires to become an International Baccalaureate school.

Our work with MCC provides us with a close-up view of two important developments in post-war Iraq: the campaign by a host of new Iraqi non-governmental organizations to create a strong and independent civil society sector in Iraq to underpin democracy; and the effort by church leaders to stem Christian emigration and preserve an element of religious pluralism in Iraq.

Iraqis have established literally hundreds of non-governmental organizations, mostly since 2003. Many of the NGO’s are local in scope, but some are regional or national. They work with human rights, women’s rights, freedom of expression, youth, health, education, people who are handicapped, agriculture, the environment, and in many other areas. Iraqi NGO leaders have worked together to promote democratic freedoms in Iraq, first in 2007 by mounting a successful campaign to change Iraq’s draft constitution to make it harder for the government to suspend civil liberties. Then, NGO’s worked for over three years to persuade the national parliament in Baghdad and the Kurdish regional parliament in Erbil to pass laws regulating NGO’s that have been seen by others in the region

as the most progressive in the Middle East. UN, European, U.S., and other aid agencies have provided critical support to Iraqi NGO’s, but the impetus for action to build an open and democratic society after more than thirty years of war, sanctions, and authoritarian rule is Iraqi. Much of the spirit of the Arab Spring is at work in Iraqi NGO’s.



MCC-REACH Border IDP

Photo: Jim Fine

MCC’s support for Iraqi civil society includes relief distribution, agricultural development, and inter-religious and inter-ethnic community work, all carried out through Iraqi NGO’s. (See our MCC Iraq blog at mcciraq.wordpress.com for more information.). Last February, we also co-sponsored an Iraqi NGO delegation visit to Washington, DC to bring Iraqi civil society views to law makers, peace groups, and others in the U.S. One of the delegation members, Hanna Edwar, a long-time human rights and democracy activist who heads the large Iraqi al-Amal (Iraqi Hope) organization, told audiences, “Now we have solidarity. Working together, NGO’s offer an alternative to the politicians’ vision of division by ethnicity and race.”

MCC is also supporting church efforts to slow the exodus of Christians from the country by building institutions that can provide employment and services that will encourage people to stay. Large-scale emigration of Christians from Iraq began after the 1990-1991 Persian Gulf War, when the government eased foreign travel restrictions and many saw little hope for the future in the legacy of war and dictatorship

and the continuation of punishing economic sanctions. By the time of the 2003 war the Christian population had dropped from approximately 1.5 million in the late 1980's to somewhere around 1 million. Post-2003 violence and uncertainty have driven more to leave so that today there are probably fewer than 500,000 Christians in Iraq (though all of these figures are estimates, since there has not been a full census in Iraq since 1987).

Many Christians from Baghdad and the cities of Mosul and Kirkuk who have not left Iraq have sought refuge in the Kurdish-controlled north, where there is almost no political violence. The Kurdish Regional Government, moreover, has welcomed Christians and provided land and funding for new churches, convents and other buildings. MCC works closely with the Chaldean Catholic Church, the largest in Iraq, whose Archbishop Bashar Warda of Erbil is leading efforts to build new institutions in northern Iraq. K-12 schools, a hospital, a commercial center, and a university are all in the bishop's plan. His priority, he says is to create a climate where Iraqi Christians know they can stay in Iraq, where they can find jobs and make a better life for their children. Reflecting a similar outlook, Fr. Fadi Leon, the Rector of St. Peter's Seminary, which itself relocated from Baghdad to Ankawa in 2006 at the height of the sectarian violence, recently told MCC visitors, "We are doing something for today, even though no one knows what will happen tomorrow, but we have hope for the next 100 years."

Our friends and neighbors echo Fr. Fadi's sense of uncertainty for the future. It is probably the dominant



Duhok Conference Photo: Jim Fine

note of life here. Yet 2012 passed in Iraq with few surprises. Iraqi Kurdistan remains safe and is seeing rapid economic growth. Bombings and shootings continue elsewhere in the country, especially in Baghdad, Kirkuk, and Mosul. But the violence has not escalated since the withdrawal of U.S. troops a year ago, as some feared. Neither have any of Iraq's fundamental problems been solved. Electricity and other services are still woefully inadequate. Disputes between the Kurdish region and the central government over territory and oil persist and from time to time threaten to turn violent. Sectarian tensions remain high. Corruption and ineffective governance hinder development. Iraq is struggling, like other countries in the region, to create a government and institutions that its disparate population groups can accept and which can enable them to live together in peace. It is a privilege to be here helping Iraqis in small ways to "do something for today" that carries hope for the future.

We and one or two like-minded sojourners hold meeting for worship in our home every other Saturday. Visitors to Ankawa and Erbil are welcome to arrange to join us by emailing me at jsfine47@gmail.com.



ZSVP Bee Project Photo: Jim Fine

Memories of Pier Cesare Bori

International Member, Bologna (Italy) Worship Group

Franco Perna writes:

I met Pier Cesare in the 1980s in my role as Secretary of FWCC-EMES, whilst I was living in Luxembourg. Pier Cesare had recently started a group in Bologna, known as “Friends of Quakers”, together with some colleagues and students from the university faculty where he worked.

Given my lack of academic and intellectual credentials, I cannot say much on Pier Cesare as teacher and writer; I hope that other people may be able to do that. However, I wish to remember an interesting article first published in L'Espresso (23.2.1996) Hit by a thunderbolt on the Quaker way, which describes Pier Cesare as Priest, acclaimed university professor, refined essayist, portrait of a man who recognises himself in Pico della Mirandola. Fascinated by the believes of the Society of Friends.

My memories of Pier Cesare are of a dear personal friend, always ready to help you if needed, without seeking any recognition for it. For example, he facilitated encounters that I suggested, and partly organised, to raise awareness in Italy also of Quaker work and thought. I would also add that, in difficult times in my own life, even though I was living abroad, I could rely on Pier Cesare's moral and spiritual support, and of that of his wife Elena. I am deeply grateful for this to them both.

On the day of the funeral, on 7th November, I arrived at the appointed place near the basilica. I was in a hurry, because I was a bit late. I ran into a huge crowd of people I did not know. I felt I needed to check that I was in the right place, that they were there also to say a last goodbye to Professor Bori. I will always cherish the memory of Pier Cesare's simplicity and readiness to serve, as well as his intellectual and spiritual openness towards everyone.

Ciao Pier Cesare !

The Editor adds:

In Among Friends Issue 111, in July 2008, we published an article by Pier Cesare Bori on the work he led in local prisons. Below are some extracts from the article:

Witness in an Italian Prison

I started teaching in the prison in Bologna in the Autumn of 1998, not only as an opportunity for service and to express solidarity, but also because I wanted to test the validity of an ethical approach in the context of cultural diversity. I wanted to work in particular with foreigners: there are many different nationalities in Italian jails. Almost from the beginning I was helped by my students (I teach moral Philosophy at Bologna University). We formed a group that we called “A Way”. Our activities, with both men and women, are described below.

We gather in silence to begin the meeting on Fridays, for about 15 minutes out of $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour. Then we read a text, taken from different traditions, from Friends' writings, but also Sufi and Buddhist, followed by a quick round of reactions to the reading.

With Arabic-speaking inmates (mainly from Morocco, some from Tunisia) we work together translating a classical text from Arabic into Italian (I have studied the language myself, and some of my students have started learning because of this work!). At present we are translating Hayy ibn Yaqdhân by Ibn Tufayl, a text beloved of Quakers from the time it was first translated around 1670, because of its idea of the inner light. Recently, I have started to practice a short period of silence with this group as well.

We help inmates who are students with their studies; we accompany those who have temporary leave of absence from the prison, and welcome them in our meetings at the university; we contribute to the prison library.

To evaluate results is always difficult when one is working on the soul. To open the mind to the understanding of a great text, to introduce someone to the joy, subtle but real, of being gathered in silence, to give a glimpse of the dignity and beauty of a life that puts knowledge first, this is truly the only real experience that we can offer these inmates in the short time we spend together.

News from Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre

Building our international connections

Following the FWCC World Conference of Friends in Kenya last year, there is a sense of untapped global energy arising from the experience of making international connections. Woodbrooke is currently considering how to build on and continue the exciting international learning work initiated through the online Salt and Light project.

There is much that we do not know, or do not understand, about each other's spiritual work and forms of worship across the world. The tutor team at Woodbrooke would like to develop courses for Friends internationally to explore various Quaker traditions and learn from each other's insights and inspirations.

Global reach requires appropriate technology. As a first step towards designing international learning packages, Julia Ryberg, Woodbrooke's European Project Co-ordinator, will be working with a small group of Friends around the world to investigate which technologies are most appropriate, in different contexts, for communication and learning. She will be exploring the reach and effectiveness of systems such as text messaging, email, web-based learning and mobile apps.

Over the coming year, Julia's project will ask Friends in different traditions around the world to use different technologies to discuss what defines their Quakerism. We hope to share and compare: what is that we do agree on? Are there areas that we simply can't agree on? If so, what can we do about that?

The aim of the project is to learn more about the worldwide family of Friends, but also to learn about effective forms of global reach. We hope to discover topics of interest for future Woodbrooke courses offered to Friends worldwide; but also to uncover which technologies are appropriate for different types of learning and different communities of Friends.

If Friends outside the UK would be interested in working with Julia on this project – particularly Friends from outside the liberal unprogrammed tradition – then please contact Julia Ryberg (julia.ryberg@woodbrooke.org.uk) or Diana Jeater, Senior Programme Leader (diana.jeater@woodbrooke.org.uk).

A new, improved Quaker in Europe online course

The Quaker in Europe introductory online course has run in many European languages since 2008. A revised version is now available, in response to feedback we received during a review last year. The course has now been shorted from 10 to 7 weeks and participants can benefit from the addition of new texts.

At present the revised course exists only in English. As groups want to undertake the course in various languages, the additional texts will need to be translated. All the texts of the course can be used in various other contexts, as well. Would you like to learn more about Quaker in Europe? Would you like to help with translations into your language? Please contact Julia Ryberg, European Project Co-ordinator, at julia.ryberg@woodbrooke.org.uk.

Woodbrooke on-the-Road across Europe

We have begun 2013 with a wide range of Woodbrooke on-the-Road events planned across Europe. At the end of January, Jaana Erkkilä and Roger Hill joined Switzerland Yearly Meeting to hold a retreat on 'Grounding our Spiritual Diversity in Prayer and Meditation'. Two eldership and oversight courses are planned in Belgium in February and March with Helen Rowlands and Julia Ryberg. The first will explore grounding and experience in Ministry and Oversight. The second event aims to deepen understanding within Belgium and Luxembourg MM of Ministry and Quaker Practice. Woodbrooke's tutors also hope to travel to Germany and Switzerland in May to deliver workshops with Friends across the respective Yearly Meetings.

For information about holding a Woodbrooke on-the-Road event, please call +44(0)121 4725171 or email off-site@woodbrooke.org.uk.

Thinking of attending a course at Woodbrooke? Catchpool Fund bursaries are readily available if financial help is needed. Contact Julia Ryberg, European Project Co-ordinator, for information on the Catchpool Fund at julia.ryberg@woodbrooke.org.uk or +46 (0) 175-715 30. See www.woodbrooke.org.uk for general information and to request a course brochure.

News from Quaker Council for European Affairs

Alexandra Bosbeer writes:

Sustainability is a key issue for us at the Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA). One of the ways in which we make Quaker views known is by participating in consultations conducted by the European Commission, on Rio+20, and on funding for energy projects, for example. The European Commission is currently conducting a consultation on unconventional fossil fuels, such as shale gas which is extracted from rocks by a process known as fracking. This involves pumping a mixture of chemicals into shale deposits, causing the rock to fracture and release natural gas. Sasha has written about the negative environmental impact of fracking in the latest edition of *Around Europe*, QCEA's bi-monthly publication.

QCEA engages in advocacy in the broad areas of peace, human rights, criminal justice and economic justice as well as sustainability. For example, next November, you are invited to participate in a conference in Brussels on "Europe, Economics and Justice: Can we do better with less?", organized by QCEA and QPSW (Quaker Peace & Social Witness). Growing militarisation of the EU is another thread under the peace theme, in response to concerns of European Quakers. The EU's role in Palestine and Israel continues to be a key part of the work. We are particularly concerned that companies or public bodies which have an active presence in the illegal Israeli settlements in Palestine may receive funding for research projects under Horizon 2020, the EU's Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, 2014-2020.

Where human rights are concerned, QCEA relates not only to the institutions of the European Union with its 27 Member States but also to the Council of Europe, which has 47 Member States and has responsibility for human rights and cultural matters. QCEA works together with other non-governmental organisations

(NGOs) in the Human Rights and Democracy Network, the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO), and a smaller network of NGOs which coordinates action in relation to the illegal Israeli settlements in Palestine. QCEA also communicates regularly with staff in other Quaker offices: the Quaker United Nations Offices in Geneva and New York; QPSW in London; and Friends Committee on National Legislation in Washington DC.

We are grateful to those Yearly Meetings whose additional funding has enabled us to employ a third programme assistant from January this year. Imogen Parker has joined Bethany Squire and Chris Venables, who came to Brussels in September. We could not do the essential work of representing Quaker concerns at the European level without your support.

All QCEA staff welcome opportunities to give presentations to Quaker groups about our work. If you want to be kept informed about the issues that QCEA is tackling, you can subscribe to "Around Europe" for €15 or £10 per year, if received by e-mail, or €22 or £16 per year, if you wish to receive paper copies. If you would like to support QCEA financially you can become an associate or a supporter. Take a look at the QCEA website at www.qcea.org for details. There you can also read the QCEA blog, or you can sign up to receive blogposts by e-mail, if you wish. If you want to play an active role, by writing to your MEP (Member of the European Parliament) or sending your own response to a Commission consultation for example, please sign up to receive our occasional action alerts. QCEA also has a presence on Facebook and Twitter, so there are all sorts of ways in which you can follow what we're doing. Thank you to those of you who are already taking an interest in our work, supporting QCEA financially, and holding us in the Light.

What does the Spirit require of us?

Leo Vincent, Clerk, European and Middle East Young Friends (EMEYF) writes:

At the end of 2012 we put aside our usual business and routines to instead focus on what the *Spirit was calling us to do* - what does our community need to look like, what should it feel like? and what is our Faith calling us to do in terms of witness?

Europe & Middle East Young Friends (EMEYF) does not have all of the answers to the above questions but we have begun a *period of discernment* that we hope will help to revitalise our community and indeed the whole Religious Society of Friends.

In our Annual Meeting we heard the need to become more active - *more evangelical in terms of witness and outreach* - and to *embrace our faith and spiritual journeys at the core of our community*. Our community is so much more than organising a few nice gatherings a year!

We are going to revisit the discernment of the past - looking again at whether the decisions made in their own time are right for our community in our time. What is still our leading? What needs laying down? What can be improved? What new and vital actions can we embrace?

What can we do to reclaim our radical faith?

We have found ourselves greeting new members at each gathering whilst many local meetings seem to struggle to attract Young Adult Friends. *What can we do to help?* What of our community can be replicated in local and area meetings?

Of our faith: do we encompass the wide variety of traditions across the section? We are feeling led to explore and embrace many different ways we can worship and experience faith. Our faith is as living as each one of us and we look forward to experimenting with our worship and connecting with other groups. *Is it possible that despite our differences we can come together in worshipful unity and find within us what makes us Quake?*

EMEYF is like any other Quaker meeting - only we cross more geographical boundaries! We too are looking at how we might do outreach better. We would like to learn from other groups and meetings and share our experiences.

On in-reach: we are looking at how to strengthen our community between our meetings - a vibrant new website? A Quaker-couch-surfing service? EMEYF sponsored new local meetings? Skype meeting for worship?

But we are also not changing for change's sake. We are mindful of our community's history and each gathering is a reminder of how much has changed across our section since our beginnings 30 years ago. We too, as individuals, are a product of a lifestyle which is only dreamt of by our parents. We need to honour our history but also make it a living part of our community. Our Quaker history should not be a weight but an inspiration and we should never forget we are making history each and every day. And when the time is right for change then *we should not be afraid to change* - this is how our Religious Society will survive.

We left our Annual Meeting with inspiration and an energy to reconnect with our faith and our faith communities in a new and more vibrant way which is more *reflective of the living revelation from which our Spiritual Community is borne*.

If you would like to find out more please email me at leo@cornerstones-slochteren.org or email our secretary for more information about EMEYF events emeyf@qcea.org

Diary Dates 2013

More dates for 2013 and beyond are available on the website: www.fwccemes.org. Please send items for inclusion in the diary to Marisa Johnson at emes@fwccemes.org.

6–12 April 2013: EMEYF Spring Gathering

See: <http://www.fwccemes.org/calendar/emeyf-spring-gathering-2013>

20–April 2013: Inauguration of Quaker Service Memorial See: <http://www.fwccemes.org/calendar/inauguration-of-quaker-service-memorial>

2–5 May 2013: EMES Annual Meeting of Representatives in Kortenberg, Belgium

10–12 May 2013: Netherlands Yearly Meeting
Contact Hadewijch Touwen: secretariaat@dequakers.nl

17–20 May 2013: Switzerland Yearly Meeting
Contact: Rorie Nazareth rorie_nazareth@bluewin.ch

17–20 May 2013: Central European Gathering
See: <http://www.fwccemes.org/calendar/central-european-gathering-2013>

24–27 May 2013: Britain Yearly Meeting
Contact Karl Gibbs: karlg@quaker.org.uk

27–30 June 2013: Nordic Yearly Meetings
See: <http://www.fwccemes.org/calendar/nordic-yearly-meeting-2013>

24–28 July 2013: Ireland Yearly Meeting

Contact Rosemary Castagner: office@quakers-in-ireland.ie

25–28 July 2013: France Yearly Meeting

Contact Sylvette Thompson: assembleedefrance@gmail.com

Europe, Economics and Justice: Can we do better with less?

A conference organised jointly by QCEA and Quaker Peace & Social Witness

15-17 November 2013 in Brussels

What are the causes and consequences of the European economic crisis? What alternatives are there to austerity? How can we, as Quakers, contribute to the building of a just and sustainable economy which meets human needs without destroying the planet? These questions will be addressed with the help of keynote speakers and workshop facilitators. Please come and join us as an interested individual, or as a representative of your Area Meeting or worship group. The conference fee, including meals and accommodation from Friday evening until Sunday afternoon, is £160 or €185 (£145 or €170 for QCEA supporters or associates). (Brussels locals: contact us for the price of the conference and meals.)

Contact office@qcea.org for further information or keep up to date via <http://www.qcea.org/home/events/conferences/>

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

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Deadline for Among Friends 127: 1 June 2013