



Friends World Committee
for Consultation
EUROPE & MIDDLE EAST SECTION

Europe & Middle East Section
P.O. Box 1157, Histon,
Cambridge CB24 9XQ,
United Kingdom
Tel: +44 (0)1223 479585
Email: emes@fwccemes.org
Exec Sec: Marisa Johnson

FWCC/EMES Annual Report 2013

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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.

Scottish Charity number: SC 036528

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 organisation 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.

In 2012 FWCC held the 6th World Conference of Friends at Kabarak University, Nakuru, Kenya, on the theme *Being Salt and Light: Friends living the Kingdom of God in a broken world*. Almost 900 Friends attended, from some 52 countries.

The next International Meeting of Representatives will take place in Arequipa, Peru, in January 2016.

Europe & Middle East Section

The FWCC Europe & Middle East Section (EMES) was established in 1938 and now consists of 12 Yearly Meetings, a couple of 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, and other activities, encourage mutual understanding, leading towards the greater involvement of Friends. Two booklets, *Meeting the Spirit* and *Friendly Advice on Quaker Ways*, have been produced and there is a newsletter, *Among Friends*,

published three times a year. 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

EMES Office: www.fwccemes.org	Marisa Johnson, P.O. Box 1157, Histon, Cambridge CB24 9XQ UK +44 1223 479585 e-mail: emes@fwccemes.org
FWCC World Office: www.fwccworld.org	173 Euston Road, London, NW1 2AX, UK. Tel: +44 207 663 1199 Fax: +44 207 663 1189 e-mail: world@friendsworldoffice.org
Europe & Middle East Young Friends www.emeyf.quaker.eu.org	Quaker House, 50 Square Ambiorix, B-1000 Brussels, Belgium. Tel: +32 2 2304935 Fax: +32 2 2306370 e-mail: emeyf@qcea.org
Quaker United Nations Office Geneva: www.quno.org	Maison Quaker, 13 Ave du Mervelet, CH-1209 Genève, Switzerland. Tel: +41 22 748 4800 Fax: +41 22 748 4819 e-mail: quno@quno.ch
Quaker Council for European Affairs: http://www.qcea.org/	Quaker House, 50 Square Ambiorix, B-1000 Brussels, Belgium. Tel: +32 2 2304935 Fax: +32 2 2306370 e-mail: info@qcea.org

Clerk's Report on the Work of the Trustees/Executive Committee for 2013

The Executive met three times during the year 2013: 7th-10th February in Cambridge (England), 2nd May in Kortenberg (Belgium) and 19th-22nd September in Dublin (Ireland). We intend to meet in Cambridge 13th-16th February 2014 and in Strasbourg (France) on 1st May.

FWCC EMES is a charity registered in Scotland. The members who served as Trustees of the Registered Charity for 2013 have been Rachel M Bewley-Bateman (Clerk), Neithard Petry (Treasurer), Roisin Brennan (EMEYF until May 2013), Lindsey Cook (German YM), Sue Glover Frykman (Sweden YM), Jeremy (Jez) Smith (Britain YM). Marisa Johnson (Executive Secretary and also a Trustee) has prepared and attended all the meetings. Julia Ryberg has attended as Ministry and Outreach Co-ordinator. Dag Hovda-Sture and Leo Vincent (Clerk, EMEYF and Quaker Youth Pilgrimage) attended our September meeting.

We were pleased to welcome Gretchen Castle, General Secretary of FWCC, to our February Executive committee, as well as to our annual meeting.

Finance: We continue to work on a small budget for our core activities and are grateful for the contributions of Yearly and Monthly Meetings who make this possible. Any

additional donations or increased contributions are much appreciated. Our Ministry and Outreach work has continued to be funded by a grant from the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust. During the year we carried out an evaluation of this Ministry and Outreach work before applying to the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust for future funding. We were delighted and very relieved to learn in November that this Trust recognises the importance of our Ministry and Outreach work in Europe and Middle East Section and will continue to grant-aid this work for the next three years. We are extremely thankful that we are thus enabled to continue our work.

Sheila Fletcher of Enigma Solutions has acted as independent examiner of our accounts. Full audited accounts for the year 2013 will be available separately for presentation by our Treasurer, Neithard Petry, at the Trustees/Executive Committee meeting in May, and to the Annual Meeting of Representatives 1st-4th May 2014 in Strasbourg.

We were happy to support Kees Nieuwerth's proposal to offer a workshop at the World Council of Churches (WCC) General Assembly in October 2013.

Staffing: We are very pleased that our Executive Secretary, Marisa Johnson, was able to complete the Equipping for Ministry course at Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre and found it so rewarding. She kept us informed regularly of her progress so that we could understand something of this experience. Marisa and Julia continue to work closely together on ministry and outreach. Unfortunately Julia broke her leg in November, but her on-line skills and determination to learn and grow from this experience, to find God in all things, have enabled her to continue her ministry. Staff and executive committee members have represented EMES at Yearly Meetings, gatherings and other events during the year. The Executive's Monthly on-line Meeting for Worship continues and we find this an important opportunity for reflection and inspiration.

Conference of European Churches:

We welcomed Guy Liagre, General Secretary of the Conference of European Churches (CEC) to our annual Meeting 2013. He informed us about the historical journey and contemporary life and multifaceted work of CEC. He reminded us of the importance of building bridges, living in hope and renewing visions. In group work, we considered what we as Quakers have to contribute to the ecumenical/inter-faith contexts in which we live.

Quaker Youth Pilgrimage:

We have welcomed the opportunity for EMES to send representatives to the Quaker Youth Pilgrimage to be held in South America in July/August 2014. We appreciate very much the vision, time and energy contributed by those who have enabled these pilgrimages to take place in the past and of those who enable this work to continue. We have reviewed our role and responsibilities and are concerned to support this important work.

We look forward to developing the theme “**Confident Quaker Voices**” at our Annual Meeting 2014. We also look forward to FWCC Central Executive Committee meeting in Northern Ireland in June 2014.

Rachel M Bewley-Bateman, Clerk.

Report from the Executive Secretary

2013 was a very important year in which we took stock of the progress that has been made with Ministry and Outreach since 2007, and undertook a major consultation exercise which comprised face-to-face and skype conversations with all Meetings and Worship Group, a residential at Svartbäcken, and workshops at the Annual Meeting in Kortenberg. We asked the following questions:

1. Has EMES nurtured your Meeting or group, and if so, how?
2. Has EMES helped to connect your Meeting or group, and if so, how?
3. Has EMES helped your Meeting's/group's networking processes? If so, how?
4. Has EMES helped your Meeting/group to engage ecumenically, and if so, how?
5. Has EMES helped your Meeting/group to have an impact at a local or national level? If so, how?

The consultations encouraged us to maintain the bulk of our activities to provide opportunities for connection, networking and interaction among Meetings and Quaker organisations in the Section and gave us a number of suggestions, which will be incorporated in our work plan for the next three years. We drew on this consultation exercise to prepare our bid for further funding which we submitted to the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust at the end of the summer. We learnt in November that a further grant had been agreed, and felt deeply upheld by the confidence and support that came with this decision.

Travel to Indiana and Ohio on FWCC Central Executive Committee business during March yielded many new and thought-provoking experiences. In particular, attending the Section of the Americas meeting, which looked at the theme of *Letting living waters flow*.

In April I visited Ramallah again, as Kathy Bergen prepared to leave her post as Co-ordinator of the Friends International Center, and local Friends, supported by representatives of the international steering committee, looked at how to shape the future.

I greatly enjoyed joining Friends in the Netherlands for their Yearly Meeting in May, and taking part in Britain Yearly Meeting a fortnight later. There were many visitors from other Yearly Meetings, so this was a very good opportunity to meet and greet Friends. Nordic Yearly Meeting at the end of June was also a wonderful opportunity to

spend time with Friends from four Yearly Meetings, and other visitors that had come to Southern Sweden for the event.

I continue to attend as regularly as I am able Quaker World Relations Committee and Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations of Britain Yearly Meeting.

I attended both Quaker Council for European Affairs Council Meetings in 2013, and the QCEA/Quaker Peace and Social Witness Conference on the theme *Europe and Economic Justice – guaranteeing a fair share*, which was informative and very challenging. The conference was followed immediately by our Peace and Service Consultation, which this year was shorter, in order to enable people who had travelled to Brussels for the conference to participate. The highlight of our programme was a workshop on *Imagining a World Without War* led by Berne Weiss of Budapest Worship Group, who had developed it as an Eva Koch scholar in 2012. The minutes from the Consultation inspired the Executive Committee so much that Berne has been asked to come and run an expanded workshop at the Annual Meeting in Strasbourg in May 2014.

In December I also took part in a consultation exercise on Quaker work in the Middle East, organised by QPSW and held at Woodbrooke. It was an intense and very fruitful exchange, which may well lead to better co-ordination in the Quaker presence and witness in the region.

I often call in at the World Office in London, where Kim Bond is based. Kim continues to provide administrative support to our Section, and I appreciate her work very much.

International Membership Matters.

Julia Ryberg and Arne Springorum interviewed Matias Linder at Svartbäcken for membership in March, and later the International Membership Application Committee conferred membership.

We were very saddened to receive news of three deaths of International Members– Ivars Abelis, Latvia, on 5th July, aged 55, Ramon Sanchez from Gran Canaria on 16th July 2013 and Gerard Negelspach of Barcelona Monthly Meeting.

“Cheerfully”, the resource for International Members available from the World Office, is being revised.

Publication of Issues of Among Friends.

Among Friends was published and distributed in March, July and October 2013.

Marisa Johnson, Executive Secretary

Ministry & Outreach Development

Two themes run through the year of Ministry & Outreach work. One is the Consultation process that has been described in the Executive Secretary's report. A major piece of work for that was the *Meeting for Consultation*, held 1-3 March at Svartbäcken, Sweden. About 15 Friends from across the Section explored how EMES in general and the Ministry & Outreach programme in particular have served Friends in the past three years, what needs remain and how they might be met as the M&O project develops. An interview for International Membership was held on the same occasion.

The other theme is synergy with my work with Woodbrooke. A Woodbrooke-on-the-Road was delivered in Brussels as a joint event with EMES. I have been exploring the use of technology with a small group of Friends from around the world, and experience of *Quaker in Europe* and the FWCC *Salt and Light* groups has informed that process. In November, I co-led with a Czech Friend a Woodbrooke event for European Friends in dispersed Meetings and isolated contexts. This was a fine opportunity to make new acquaintances and strengthen existing bonds of Friendship, as we explored the joys and challenges of following the Quaker way in various contexts. Woodbrooke's 6-week online retreat has attracted a number of European Friends.

A highlight of the Annual Gathering at Kortenbergh was an online Meeting for Worship, globally attended, with Young Friends gathered at Lancaster. It was moving when two Friends in China were able to make contact with each other because of that online event.

Two other pieces of work were delivering the public lecture at Ireland YM on the theme *Reclaiming the Christian Message* and attending the Experiment with Light (EwL) conference at Woodbrooke in September, which has resulted in an international EwL group that meets monthly by Skype.

It is exciting that there is increased Quaker activity in Portugal, Italy, Poland and Spain. There is still some energy around the *Quaker in Europe* course and the *Companion* programme. We look forward to further developing resources to serve Friends individually and corporately across the Section.

Julia Ryberg, Ministry and Outreach Co-ordinator

Amari Play Centre, Ramallah

The Amari Play Centre is located in the UNRWA School for Girls in the Amari Refugee Camp in Ramallah, Palestine. Since its establishment in 1974, the Amari Play Centre has served the children of the refugee camps by providing preschool education for 5 year olds. Forty children are currently enrolled, all of whom live in the Amari Refugee Camp. All the activities at the Play Centre are communicated to the Camp leader and advertised in the UNRWA Camp Leader's office.

Aided by the UPA (United Palestinian Appeal) we were able to pay for the cost of curriculum books and all educational material for the 2012-2013 school year. In addition, the provision of meals and hot milk on a regular basis for the children is a key issue that we aim to continue with in order to contribute to the well-being of the children.

During the spring, 2 picnics were organised for the children: one to the Family Centre and another to the Happy Child Centre. For both picnics we had to hire a bus and this was paid for from the budget.

Thursday is the day when most of the parents come to check on their children and talk to the teachers. The Play Centre is open from Sunday to Thursday each week and operated from the beginning of September to the end of May each year. Certificates are given to each child enrolled at the Play Centre, which allows them to register for Grade 1 in the UNRWA schools located in the Amari Refugee Camp.

One main teacher and 2 assistant teachers take care of 40 children on a daily basis. Parents view the Play Centre as one of the important institutions in the camp that cares for the community, and especially the children, who form 40% of the camp population.

Muna Khleifi, Supervisor

Church and Peace

In May 2013 Church and Peace held its annual meeting at Selbitz in Germany. This year it was combined with an international conference. The theme was: "Seek the welfare of the city: the prophetic mandate of the church". The conference/annual meeting was well-attended. A report on the conference was published in *Among Friends*.

This year saw a change of General Secretary. Davorka Lovrekovic, a member of German Yearly Meeting replaced Marie-Noelle von der Recke, the Mennonite General Secretary of C&P. In the course of 2013 Davorka travelled a lot, getting to know the various branches of C&P. She attended the Assembly of the Conference of European Churches in Budapest in July. She also gave a presentation on C& P to Friends gathered at the Border Meeting at Kortenbergh in September.

Towards the end of the year I represented C&P (as well as International Fellowship of Reconciliation and EMES) at the Assembly of the World Council of Churches at Busan (South Korea), where I gave a workshop and actively participated in discussions on Just Peace and the Statement on the Way to Just Peace adopted by the Assembly. A full report was published on the Quaker Peace and Service site of the EMES website.

Kees Nieuwerth

Quaker Youth Pilgrimage

The focus of the EMES Quaker Youth Pilgrimage this year has been to support the Section of Americas with the planning and delivery of the next pilgrimage in 2014, which will be held in Latin America (Peru and Bolivia) for the first time.

We have been fortunate to receive wonderful applications from pilgrims and appointed two great leaders who we hope will all share a once in a lifetime experience. They leave on the 21st July 2014 and will return on the 22nd August. Through their time together and their encounters with local Friends they will experience the diversity of Friends' traditions, and strengthen their relationship with God. The pilgrimage will begin in Southwestern Peru and end east of the Andes in Santa Cruz, Bolivia. There will be about 30 pilgrims with 5 to 6 leaders who will share the added tasks of interpretation and translation.

Our committee is also looking forward to 2016 and considering where the next pilgrimage may be held. We are considering Africa as an option, but are also looking at holding a pilgrimage in our Section should Africa not be possible. We are all excited about the future prospects of the pilgrimage and always appreciate the support and input from Friends from our Section.

Leo Vincent, Clerk, Quaker Youth Pilgrimage Committee

Reports from Yearly Meetings, Monthly Meetings and Groups

Belgium and Luxembourg Yearly Meeting

On 10 March 2013, Belgium and Luxembourg Monthly Meeting minuted as follows:

In December 2012 we discussed changing the name of our Meeting to one that is more easily understandable and better reflects who we are (Minute 12/41 refers). Since then, no objections have been received.

We now agree, with effect from 11 March 2013, to change our name from 'Belgium and Luxembourg Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends' to 'Quakers in Belgium and Luxembourg (Belgium and Luxembourg Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends)', the first part to be used in non-Quaker and the second part (here in brackets) in Quaker contexts. ...

Belgium and Luxembourg Yearly Meeting (BLYM) continues to grow and evolve. A handful of attenders were again welcomed into membership in 2013. However, three members transferred their membership out: to Sweden YM, Britain YM and the FWCC international membership list. A steady stream of new enquirers and attenders continues, both in Brussels and in Luxembourg. The meeting website, and announcements in various listings, facilitate this.

Meeting for Worship is held in Brussels every Sunday and Wednesday; every first Sunday in Brussels, there is a 'bring-and-share' lunch, a time for re-connecting and discussing. Once or twice a month, 'Stepping Stones' sessions are held after Meeting for Worship; these are brief periods of sharing about themes of interest, aimed at both newcomers and longstanding members.

In Luxembourg a group – constituted now entirely of attenders – meets approximately every month.

Children's Meetings are held every first Sunday at Quaker House, Brussels; a childminding service is provided every Sunday during the hours of Meeting for Worship, to encourage parents of young children to come to Meeting. This has met with some success.

The annual weekend Residential Meeting – as always an 'all-age' affair – was held at Kortenbergh Abbey in May 2013 and was well-attended. The event centred on reflections and discussions led by Geoffrey Durham on 'Speaking our Truth'. For the first time ever, the new Yearly Meeting published an Epistle. This took up a challenge we had heard: how can we learn to "sing higher and louder" in order to be heard above the background chatter of the society we live in? Meeting felt called to "take the risk of

being more deeply centred, more potent, and more effective witnesses to the truth”. We resolved to focus our energies on three things: nurturing our Meeting, showing solidarity with vulnerable people in our local community, and working for peace and justice. These priorities have since been given practical shape in our budget and activity plan.

Happily, the Meeting has no deaths to record in 2013, and I am glad to note that a Meeting for Worship for the Celebration of a Marriage was held on 14 December.

Paul Holdsworth, Clerk

Britain Yearly Meeting

2013 continued Britain Yearly Meeting’s three years of preparation of ‘What it means to be a Quaker today’, in readiness for Yearly Meeting Gathering in 2014: our 2013 Yearly Meeting theme was ‘Trust: trusting in the spirit and trusting in the discernment of our governing bodies’: BYM Trustees offered a well-received video of their work (see <http://www.quaker.org.uk/film2012>).

The Long term Framework Group continues to look at BYM’s priorities for 2015-2020. The joint Woodbrooke/BYM Vibrancy in Meetings project is well underway, aiming to enliven and engage Friends, enabling us to strengthen our voice to speak out through witnessing more effectively and coherently on issues of concern, based on our faith principles.

Continued advocacy and ‘speaking truth to power’ characterised much activity in 2013. Following considerable advocacy, BYM has welcomed the legal agreement on same sex marriage; Paul Parker, Recording Clerk commented: ‘this gives true recognition to the value of all human relationships. Quakers see God in everyone and that led us to work for this change in the law so that all couples, of the same and opposite sex, may marry within our worshipping communities in England and Wales.’ The Recording Clerk issued a statement on BYM’s behalf on Syria on 30th August 2013, prior to the Parliamentary vote about taking military action.

In addition to boycotting goods produced in illegal Israeli settlements in occupied Palestine, Quaker Peace and Social Witness (QPSW) is calling on companies to disinvest in trade there, and for better labelling of goods so that consumers can make an informed judgement. Led by the Minute 36 Commitment Group, Meeting for Sufferings asked BYM Trustees to disinvest from fossil fuel extraction, proposing investment in renewable energy and energy-saving schemes, as part of our commitment to ending dependency on fossil fuels. There has been considerable discussion of our response to welfare cuts and social inequality, and QPSW is drafting a statement for use by Friends, reiterating the faith basis of this work: much background and practical advice emerged from a QPSW/Woodbrooke conference, ‘Gathering for action: welfare cuts and

inequality' (www.quaker.org.uk/inequality_and_welfare_cuts). Meeting for Sufferings has endorsed the World Council of Churches' document, 'Economy of Life: Justice and Peace for all' (www.oikoumene.org).

Amongst the resources produced in 2013 are a Teach Peace pack for primary schools (<http://www.quaker.org.uk/teach-peace-pack>), a website on Your Faith, Your Finance (www.yourfaithyourfinance.org) produced in partnership with the Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility and more Quaker publications available for download online – as well as Gerald Hewitson's Swarthmore Lecture, *Journey Into Life: Inheriting the story of early Friends* (2013 Swarthmore Lecture). Quaker Social Action launched their research report: 'The Q-Bit: at the Heart of a Quaker Organisation' (<http://www.quakersocialaction.com/About-QSA/Quaker-identity>). We remain exercised as to how to influence the centenary of the First World War towards learning for peace.

Visitors to Friends House in London may have noticed the major refurbishment underway to the Large Meeting House, which is due for completion in 2014.

The tabular statement 2013 (recording numbers as of 31 December 2012) showed 71 Area Meetings, 478 Local Meetings, and a membership of 13,906 (compared with 14,080 in the previous year). 355 people were admitted to membership.

Lee Taylor, on behalf of Britain Yearly Meeting's Representatives

Czech Republic, Prague Meeting

Early in January we gathered for our bi-monthly meeting in Prague and again we were 4 fathers and 5 children (just to avoid confusion, two had children with them, the other two had them at home or already grown). We sang as we usually do, including a new song that Pavel wrote based on a poem by Emma Ruzica Videnovic from Serbia, whom we met at the last Central European Gathering and then settled for silence. The absence of chairs and the presence of a carpet in one of the playing/activities rooms of the Nova Trojka centre where we have been meeting for the past 5 years in Prague had us lying on the floor with children silently taking the cushions from the shelves and cuddling to their fathers. Before the children left for "their" meeting and the other playroom we had 10 blissful minutes of intergenerational meeting, probably one of the cosiest in 350 years of Quaker history. ☺

Czech Friends are doing well with no significant changes among the maybe 10-20 people regularly involved with Quakers throughout the country. There have been a few new attenders, a few others have moved on. We were asked and felt happy to be able to organize the Central European Gathering in 2013 again and host about 40 Friends from neighbouring countries. Ella, our Clerk, has been generous in opening her flat to Monday evening meetings in alternate weeks with the Sunday meetings. Having dinner in summer in her small garden and then settling into worship after a day's office work is a

real treat. Two of us have been “experimenting extensively with light”. We meet once a week to follow Rex Ambler’s “Experiments with Light” meditation and are curious where it will take us in 2014. Our oldest member Eugen has been largely homebound due to his high age and it is a challenge for us to keep him “in the loop”. There is certainly more we could do, maybe in repeating a meeting at his place on a somewhat more regular basis, we did this only once in 2013. Other important news are that there appears to be new worship group forming in Czech Republic’s second biggest town Brno. More news on that next year I hope! Finally, I personally very much cherished a course I participated in at Woodbrooke and can only recommend this to Friends in the strongest and Friendliest ways throughout EMES as a wonderful way to recharge their Quaker batteries.

Arne Springorum

Denmark Yearly Meeting

For Danish Quakers the year 2013 was in many ways quite usual. We have Meeting for Worship in Copenhagen each Sunday from 10-11 am and in Jutland a few Friends meet once a month. After Meeting there is an opportunity to share thoughts and feelings that may have come to us during worship and to chat over a cup of tea/coffee. Once every second month we have our Business Meeting. We are a small Yearly Meeting with around 30 members, and are eager to come closer to each other and to reach out.

Friends in Jutland arranged our traditional “Skovhusmøde” from the 25th - 27th April, allowing Quakers from all parts of the country to meet for a retreat in a very beautiful area. The theme was “Peace“, and the Meeting was led by Mariama Guldagger.

Our member Hanne Henriksen took part in the world gathering in Kenya and enjoyed experiencing the various Quaker traditions from around the world. She gave an enthusiastic report and ended by saying: “I was a Quaker before, but now I know I am a Quaker.

Harald Bertram went to the FWCC-EMES Annual Meeting in Kortenberg, Belgium, held from 2-5 May, which was a brilliant experience of good will and outreach.

Petra Berg Holbek represented Denmark at Britain Yearly Meeting on 24th – 27th May. She learned about decision-making and ended her report with the words: “As we go, we learn to see ourselves and our world through God’s eyes, the eyes of love”. Petra has a concern for reconciliation work in Rwanda and visited the country for three weeks. Danish Friends now support one of the Quaker workers there. In November she paid a visit to the nearest Swedish Meeting in Malmoe, making good contacts with some new Friends.

From 27th – 30th June we had a joint Nordic Yearly Meetings gathering in Höör Sweden, for Norway, Sweden, Finland and Denmark. The theme was: “How do we support our relations to each other and to God?” Many of us enjoyed renewing old friendships and meeting new Nordic Friends and guests from other Meetings abroad.

On 24th November we had a one-day meeting at Silkeborg, Jutland. The theme was: “What does it mean to be a Quaker?” This allowed members and others from all over the country to meet and worship together and unite in a spirit of understanding and inspiration.

During the year we have had contact with the Friends Meeting in Tunbridge Wells (UK) through Betty Raymond and Rosemary Dixon-Nuttall. They participated in the Nordic Yearly Meeting and visited Danish Friends before and after the event. They have encouraged us in many ways and have helped us contact the American Friend Thomas Swain, whom we hope to see at our Yearly Meeting in March 2014.

Harald Bertram, Representative

Estonia: Tallinn Worship Group

In 2013 we held Meetings for Worship on a monthly basis in Tallinn, Estonia. We had 17 Meetings for Worship. There are currently 3 regular attenders from Tallinn and 1 from Tartu. We seek and welcome visitors and generally meet on the first Sunday of each month in changing locations.

In September the Meeting organised a public event to highlight World Peace Day, with a special game together with Diverse Faiths Alliance (DFA), led by Roland Rand. Member Mik Seljamaa introduced his creation of a board game called the “Path for Peace”, which we hope to be able to share with other meetings in the future.

In May, we had a delightful weekend in Tallinn at the Robert Gilchrist residence with visiting friends from Helsinki. In addition, we were joined on the Saturday by a group of 12 theology students and their professor from the University of Tartu, which is Estonia's second largest city. Three of these students joined us on the Sunday for our Meeting for Worship. We enjoyed this Meeting outside, as it was one of the first mild days of the season.

Maija Mäkela from the Helsinki Worship Group wrote: “*Friends, thank you very, very much for your hospitality! It was a great pleasure to be with you. We all three were very pleased with the trip. And we hope this will give you something for your Meeting for Worship in Tallinn. It was very stimulating for us, too, as always when we are in Tallinn, with its long roots and history. KGB was also interesting, but horrible how*

much energy was wasted on paranoia. The guide make it come alive, she was great at telling things. Waiting to meet up in Helsinki! Maija Mäkela.”

Members of the Tallinn Worship Group had a Friendly meeting with Erik Geijer, a Swedish Quaker, and a group of people from Austria, Italy and Romania. We were also happy to see Susanne Jalka from Vienna.

A key focus of our group has been looking for ways to keep such a small meeting sustainable over the long term, particularly as expatriate members frequently rotate out of Estonia. We welcome links with other meetings, and would greatly appreciate insight on best practices for bringing in new members or attenders.

Another highlight for us during the year was the participation by our member Roland Rand and his son Rafael at Woodbrooke 1-3 November for European Friends who are isolated or members of tiny and dispersed groups. We all had three amazing days with lots of encounters and, amazingly, lots of sharing about the weekend and about Quakers. A special thanks to Julia Ryberg, Helen Rowlands and all the Woodbrooke staff who made this event possible.

Our small group welcomes all who visit Tallinn.

Roland Rand, Clerk

Finland Yearly Meeting

Year 2013 has been a very special year for Finland Yearly Meeting. We have gone through a process of discernment what it comes to developing our activities and how we want to grow as a faith community. We have realized that we need to grow in understanding our diversities as individuals and it is a hard and long process that can begin with getting to know one another as persons.

One of our questions is what do we understand by Society of Friends. Are we supporting one another as friends and welcoming everyone as equals? In our Yearly Meeting for business in October we decided to organize gatherings also without actual issues for business, but to offer time and possibility to focus on our spiritual life and friendship.

We have four worship groups meeting regularly in different parts of Finland. Some of us have participated different short courses in Woodbrooke during the year 2013 and we have realized, how important it is for members in a small meeting to get a chance to experience a wider fellowship in international context and then share the experience with other ones in the Meeting. The Nordic Yearly Meeting in the summer gave an opportunity to meet with Nordic and other Friends.

Members in our YM have different languages as mother tongue and we would like to remind all Friends, how important it is to use time for translating discussions and especially Meeting for Worship for Business, when everyone does not share the same language as their first language. Being excluded because of a language barrier can be a painful experience.

We want to emphasize that a Quaker Meeting is a good place to exercise peace building and conflict resolution.

Jaana Erkkilä, YM Clerk

France Yearly Meeting

The 2013 Annual Meeting was held at La Gardiole, Conqueyrac, a beautiful place surrounded by trees and the sound of cicadas. Our group was much bigger than last year and we were especially pleased to welcome six children between one and a half and ten years of age. Their presence brought a new breath of life and strengthened our sense of being a big family. It is always a pleasure to see our old friends and make new acquaintances, including European and American visitors.

Our theme was “Learning to know each other in the eternal”. Thanks to the efforts of the planning team and regional groups on the subject during the year, we achieved our goal and really deepened the bond that unites us in our spiritual practice. Our task was helped by the use of modern technology.

During our work together we heard powerful personal testimonies which questioned us and even deeply moved us. Our sharing went beyond words, with the involvement of the body in our worship as an integral part of the programme.

We enjoyed the presence of authors who presented their publications. We tried to adapt the programme to take all ages into account. So we had a playful family worship and other activities like "Godly Play" to introduce children to our Quaker identity.

We considered the challenge: “Are we the last Quakers in France?”The Assembly felt that we were at the beginning of a growing period, while wishing to keep our origins and values.

In 2013 there were a growing number of retreats and burgeoning small meetings unencumbered by buildings and responsibilities and a Friend in France who is the contact for all the isolated Friends. Most groups meet just once a month in homes, but

there are weekly meetings in Paris and Congenies, where other groups are also welcomed and use the spaces. Some meetings are on Sundays and another new group in Brittany meets on a weekday evening to supplement the existing spiritual practice of the members of this group. Pastors and bishops of the Eglise Reforme have attended these meetings too. There were the regular two retreats in the South of France and a new bi-annual retreat was held near Toulouse (facilitated by Kerstin Backman from Sweden) for the strengthening group in Midi Pyrenees. There was also a pilot art retreat at Congenies in October. This will be followed by two others in 2014. In May there was the Collogue in Paris on Antoine Benezet, which was followed by a publication called “Observations sur les Quakers”. Our numbers are stable, despite the loss of some dear Friends. We ended the year optimistic and determined.

Karina Knight

Georgia Worship Group

The year 2013 was normal for Georgia and for Georgian Friends. No collapse took place in the country. Presidential elections were held and a person from the ruling party won. Georgia returned to being a parliamentary Republic, which means that the president does not have much power.

Georgian friends were visited by a Friend from Cambridge and latterly by a Friend from Russia. With the aid of Friends from Europe we implemented a few humanitarian projects. We would like to express our gratitude for that to Friends from Cambridge, Ireland and Sweden.

Georgian Friends also would like to express gratitude to The Radley Trust for its support. We hope that 2014 will be peaceful and will bring happiness to our homes.

Georgian Friends Worship Group

German Yearly Meeting

Our Yearly Meeting has about 250 members and nearly as many attenders. The centre of our community life is the historical Quaker House in Bad Pyrmont, which was restored 80 years ago. The Quaker Office in Berlin (recently lovingly refurbished) also looks back on a rich tradition and serves as a meeting place for German Friends and international visitors.

2013 saw joyful gatherings as well as consideration of solemn subjects. Our New Year’s and Easter gatherings for youth met with great acclaim. The young people penned a “Join-In-Epistle,” which appeared serially in our bimonthly journal, *Quäker*. As in previous years, a Family Gathering took place in Hirschluch, drawing fifty adults and fifty youth and children. Participants enacted scenes from the life of Leo Tolstoy, which then served as a basis for discussion. A German-Swiss Border Gathering considered

“Fear and Trust”, while the November edition of *Quäker* treated “Life, Death and Dying”, eliciting many powerful contributions.

German Friends continue to engage with Quaker traditions. In May, a workshop explored “Being an Elder”. In the same month a group met to probe the possibility of establishing an intentional Quaker community. Our Peace Committee also held meetings to discern its future. Enriching our spiritual life, a silent retreat carried the title “Being in Being”.

Members of our Yearly Meeting were active this year in a variety of concerns at the local and international level. In September, a group of Friends travelled to Geneva to learn about the work of QUNO, which German Friends help support. When the intervention of western nations threatened to escalate the conflict in Syria, a group of Friends followed the example of British Quakers and quickly wrote a letter to leading politicians, urging them to seek humane, non-military solutions.

The “Alternatives to Violence Project” continues to be a focus of German Friends. Nearly 20 courses developed by Quakers – most led by Friends as well – took place in prisons this year. Supported by monthly and quarterly meetings, many Friends followed leadings. For example, one Friend volunteered with Christian Peacemaker Teams to Palestine; yet another assisted asylum seekers in getting on their feet in Germany.

Our 2013 Yearly Meeting Gathering celebrated the 50th anniversary of our service organisation, *Quäker-Hilfe*. Founded in 1963 to support the work of European Yearly Meetings in Algeria, it has broadened its range since then, supporting projects of the QPS, AFSC, Norwegian Friends in Gaza and the Rural Service Programme of Kenyan Quakers, among others. For the celebration, we invited guests involved with the service work over the years, including Egil Hovdenak and his wife Turid, who helped *Quäker-Hilfe* get off the ground. Two *Festschriften* chronicling the organisation’s work have been published.

In the gathering’s plenary address – the Richard L. Cary lecture – Martin Kunz spoke about his life as a Friend and his experiences with Fair Trade. Martin pondered the compromises that we sometimes make (the “grey areas”) in (usually only partially) achieving our goals, even as he encouraged us “To Think, to Believe, to Hope: Variations in Grey”.

Lutz Caspers and Lucinda Martin, Representatives

Gran Canaria Worship Group

*1 Corinthians 13.13: But now these three remain: faith, hope, love,
but the greatest of these is love.*

These words from the Bible were present with me when my husband left us to go to his Holy Father. He was a very loving person with a big heart. In 2009 he became a Quaker after having attended Meetings for Worship for several years, mainly in Freiburg, Germany. Finally he felt "at home" when he was accepted into International Membership as a Quaker. For some time we were the only two at Meeting here on the Island of Gran Canaria, except for the visit of a Belgian couple every time they came to stay for several weeks. In autumn 2012 Marisa Johnson gave me an article about 2 Quakers living on the island. We contacted them and had Meeting for Worship every second Sunday and were joined by a friend of Friends who is English and also lives here, so in the end we were often seven, which for us was a very big group. We were very grateful for this opportunity and still are. The love that this group gave me when my husband passed away was very helpful. Thanks to them all, thanks for Meeting for Worship, thanks for all the love you gave me, thanks to the Quakers for being there. We would be happy for anyone to join us when here on holiday. Please, just call or send an email.

Astrid Bruhn-Sanchez

Hungary, Budapest Worship Group

There was considerable 'inreach' in 2013. We held two Border Meetings with Austrian Friends, one in January 2013 focusing on *Vision, Commitment, Action*, and one in December, on *Reconciliation*.

Progress has been made in bridge-building with *Programmed Friends* in Tolna through mutual visits and hospitality. Our *MfWs with Serbian Friends* are on the way to becoming regular. Old Friends from the U.K. were welcomed and new Friends were made with members of *Moscow Meeting*.

Practising *Experiment with Light*, the focus of our Central European Gathering in Litomyšl, has proved to be a really meaningful exercise for some.

Woodbrooke courses attended by members of our meeting included *Reaching in, Reaching out* and the *Event for European Friends: being part of dispersed meetings in Europe*.

Our blessings included attendance at the *EMES Annual Meeting* in Kortenburg and Berne Weiss' invitation to present her workshop *Imagining the World Without War* to the Quaker Council for European Affairs in Brussels.

There is real interest in the peace trail walks. We hope to see more fruit maturing next year.

Ireland Yearly Meeting

Ireland Yearly Meeting (24-28 July) was held for the first time in Cork, a city rich in heritage located on the southern coast of Ireland at least three hours away from Quaker House in Dublin where our administration is. We believe Yearly Meeting went some way to bringing Cork Friends closer to other Irish Friends. Part of Cork's heritage has been the presence of Quakers from as early as the 1650s. George Fox visited Cork in 1669 and it was whilst living in Cork that William Penn became a Quaker. Cork Friends have contributed much to the life of their city and along with other Irish Friends they are remembered for their response to the Great Famine in Ireland in the 1840s.

The theme of the Yearly Meeting was “Living in the Spirit” taken from 1 Corinthians 2.10 “The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God” or from another translation ‘The deep wisdom of God’. Paul calls on us to allow the Spirit to search us so that we might grow in our understanding of the will and purpose of God for us. Friends sought that understanding in our shared experience in bible studies, worship sharing and from several “thoughts for the day”.

The Ministry and Oversight session encouraged us to listen to the promptings of love and truth and ‘to stand still in the light’ (George Fox) and to respond to the call of God within each of us. If we are to allow the Spirit to search us we need to be more reflective in our worship and to listen and obey the light of Christ. The theme of listening was also the core message in the Public Lecture given by Julia Ryberg, a Swedish Friend who challenged us to listen for the voice of God during our spiritual journey through life.

We welcomed Friends from a number of Yearly Meetings in several countries. Together with Friends from all parts of Ireland we enjoyed a range of social activities and workshops. Cork Friends organised several outings to different places in their beautiful County. Meeting and sharing with these Friends develops and confirms our appreciation of the extended family of the Society across the world.

Many speakers reminded us that as Friends we are called to reach out to a world in need. We not only heard of Quaker projects in Burundi, Kenya, Uganda and Bolivia but also of the work of “Cork Penny Dinners” which provides not only food but clothing to needy and homeless people in Cork city.

One of the joys of our Yearly Meeting was the attendance and involvement of an increasing number of young adult Friends. They developed their own programme but joined with us in a number of the main sessions. They played a lively and positive part

in our gathering and we hope and pray that the future of Ireland Yearly Meeting appears to be in good hands.

Daniel H Sinton, Clerk

Italy: Bologna Worship Group

We meet regularly twice a month (2nd and 4th Sundays in the month) in via Lombardia, 36, Bologna [in the public library in Quartiere Savena] from 11:00 a.m.

During the summer we organise a longer meeting, possibly outside Bologna, for a deeper spiritual experience. Last year we tried to connect to the other small groups in Italy, but unfortunately the contacts were only kept by e-mail. We hope to meet during 2014.

We have a website *amicidelsilenzio.org* and a Facebook page called: *Società degli Amici-Meeting di Bologna* which we try to keep updated.

The work in Dozza prison (Bologna), started by Pier Cesare Bori (more than 10 years ago), with the inmates (initially from the Middle East) is continued by Fabian Lang, once a week, regularly, with the collaboration of some students from the university [see: www.unavia.it]. The meeting is usually introduced by 10 minutes of silence, then a reading from a text (many are the ones selected by Pier Cesare Bori from different spiritual traditions) and a round of sharing.

We still keep contact with the 23 people who came to an “introductory” Silent Meeting at the Ceis school in Rimini on the 30th September 2012, on the occasion of the visit of Raymond Bentman from Philadelphia [Cherry Street Meeting]. The meeting was strongly wished for and organised by Pier Cesare Bori, who beautifully introduced the topic of Quaker spirituality.

One year after Pier Cesare Bori’s death, on the 4th November 2013, we organised a silent Meeting in Bologna, at the university where he was professor, and another one, in the evening, with his family, friends, students and anyone close to him.

We are involved in the activities of Harambe Association for the social and school inclusion of minors [see: www.harambe.it]. Young students from Bologna University volunteer to provide supplementary lessons and games after school-time in gypsy camps, collaborating with Associazione Universo Interculturale [see: www.universointerculturale.it], with information and advice points for foreigners, Italian language courses and job search assistance in difficult situations.

We are actively supporting the realisation of a Medical Charity Centre in Weh, in North-West Cameroon, and are thinking of initiatives in schools in Bologna and in Rimini to attract children and families to the project. The Centre will be entirely run by locals, with

our support (in terms of economic help, collaboration in the construction planning, volunteers) See: www.wehcenter.org.

Lucia Biondelli was at Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, Birmingham, UK, in August 2013 and this beautiful and interesting opportunity was beneficial to the whole group. We feel involved in the organisation and hospitality for the XXX Ridef 2014 [www.ridefitalia.org]. This is an international meeting of teachers and educators of the Freinet Movement (active education) which will be held in Reggio Emilia from 21st to 30th July 2014. Please feel free to contact us for further information.

Lucia Biondelli

Italy: Milan Worship Group

The worship group in Milan held regular once-a-month Meetings for Worship throughout 2013 at the All Saints' Anglican Church in Milan city centre. There are seven - eight regular Friends and Attenders, while generally about 3-4 of us do meet for worship on each occasion. We also have tea / coffee and informal talks after Meeting for Worship. During these, we explored possibilities to nourish the life of our small worshipping community. We wish to give priority to our regular meeting for Worship and we are aware of objective difficulties for each of us, not least in terms of logistics, having to travel to Milan, and time with non-Quaker family members. We explored the possibility to meet with Friends in Bologna at least once a year and/or to organise a study day, possibly in the form of a Woodbrooke-on-the-road course, some time in 2014 or (more likely) in 2015. There is also the possibility brought by a new attender to connect with other denominations in the Milan area (Baptists and Roman Catholics) to organise an event on silence, meditation, interfaith dialogue, and similar topics, in the near future

Marco Bertaglia

Latvia: Liepaja Worship Group

Last year was a sad one for Latvian Quakers. We lost our Elder, Ivars Abelis, from the Liepaja Worship Group, who was a very important and experienced Friend. Now in Liepaja there is a core group of 8 people who meet every month for worship. We now have a website for information and different materials: www.draugi.ls.lv

The Liepaja Worship Group keeps in regular contact with isolated Friends from Riga and Friends from Vilnius, Lithuania. In 2013 we had meeting together and plan similar activities for 2014 too.

In May 2013 I attended the FWCC-EMES Annual Meeting in Kortenberg, Belgium and met Friends from the wider Quaker family. In November I visited Barcelona, Spain, and

had a meeting together with the Barcelona Worship Group, which is similar in many ways to our group in Liepaja.

Inese Ansule

Lithuania

We have new members of the group – Indre and Michael Pennock, who moved from the UK to Lithuania last year. Michael is “originally” a Quaker – from a Quaker family, so we feel much more “traditional” right now. Although our group has been in contact with the Latvian (Liepaja and Riga) groups, we have not yet established a workable plan for a common Baltic gathering. We also plan to contact Estonian Friends to see how we could do this in the foreseeable future. We have not yet launched the www.quaker.lt website.

Our primary goal this year has been to to sustain the group and maintain regular bi-weekly Meetings for Worship. Apart from that we are all involved in life’s transitory problems, with God’s help, given that the economy is still in recession.

Algirdas Davidavčius

Malta Worship Group

It has been a mixed two years for our fledgling group here in Malta, with attendances at Meeting varying wildly amid many welcome visits from Friends from around the world. We started life in 2011 and held our first Meeting for Worship in November of that year. It was decided to meet on the first Sunday of the month in the church hall of the Church of the Holy Trinity in Sliema, and we have done so ever since. At that first meeting we were much helped by the kindness of Linda Hoy of Sheffield Meeting, who brought booklets, copies of ‘Advices and Queries’ and lots of encouragement.

As a group we attended a performance of the play ‘Jesus had two Daddies’, given by an American Friend Peterson Toscano. This turned out to be a witty and challenging analysis of biblical stories and we used the occasion for a bit of outreach with leaflets about the Meeting.

In November, Linda Hoy gave an inspiring reading from her book ‘The Effect’ to which some members of the Anglican congregation also came. The second year here has seen changes, with initial attenders leaving and new people joining. I, as clerk, had a moment of soul searching at one point, because it seemed as though I might be left on my own in the Meeting. I was helped by Ann and Colin Millar from Aberdeen Meeting, who told me a tale about a Scottish Meeting House, where a woman attended on her own for quite some time before the Meeting came back to life. I decided to ‘soldier on’ and seven people attended the next Meeting, which is almost a record for our small group!

Especially heartening was the meet up with Annie Pye and Valerie Morgan, both of whom are members of the Society. On several occasions we were joined by Ellen McHugh, a theology student visiting Malta, and Timothy Katiba Chepkwesi, from Kenya YM, who introduced us to other forms of Quakerism before returning to Oslo to continue his studies. Both contributed greatly to the spirit of the Meeting.

Due to conflicting schedules with the Anglican Church we will now be meeting at the later time of 11.30am until August. This might even be better for people coming from afar.

Piers Headley

Middle East Yearly Meeting, Brummana Monthly Meeting

Brummana Monthly Meeting in Lebanon remains committed to its mission and values in this sad part of the world. Friends in Ramallah and Brummana meetings continue to witness wars, assassinations and brutal mass killings, sometimes amongst brothers and at other times between arch enemies. Innocent children are often the victims of these horrible wars, feuds and injustices.

Lebanon is witnessing one of its most unstable eras with little visibility of the future, as the determining factors of the local politics are governed by the larger players in the area. One of the most significant implications and consequences of what is happening in Syria is the influx of refugees and dissidents into Lebanon, causing a severe imbalance to the delicate demographics and a heavy weight on the economy since the country's resources were never abundant. Local NGOs and UN organisations are doing their best to cope with the refugee crisis, but are overwhelmed by the increasing numbers and not knowing when this will come to an end. Our meeting remains, very much like the whole country and even the bigger religious groups, bewildered by what is going on around us and the uncertainties of the toppling regimes and their replacements. Islamic fundamentalism is increasing all around, with hostile ideas spreading amongst a largely uneducated public that is attracted by rhetoric.

Brummana, in the Maten region, where the Quaker school (Brummana High School, BHS) is located, remains a safe and calm area. Many Syrian refugees have arrived, partly so they can send their children to BHS. We are making every effort to ensure that these families receive quick and friendly help at the school, with the appropriate financial help if needed. Many of these newcomers may have the means now, but it is not known how they will fare as the crisis in their own country unfolds. Many businesses in Syria have closed and family incomes have been dramatically reduced. This will undoubtedly pose a problem for Lebanon. Many protestant churches have been attacked and demolished in Aleppo and Homs, and the Supreme Council of Evangelical Churches

in Syria and Lebanon (our umbrella group) is overwhelmed by the repercussions on both the work and load of the Council.

There is little that our meeting can do in this big game of power, greed and injustice. The whole area is a big volcano, with oil and red lava in its bosom. Public prayers for peace are needed. Lobbying for Justice and Peace needs to be done at all levels amongst all those who want to help. The only material help that can be secured for the needy areas is via the UN Refugee Relief Agency and the Red Cross/Red Crescent. There needs to be more compassion on the part of the politicians and decision-makers in the powerful countries. They need to see that there are many broken hearts in the families that have lost loved ones, or among those undergoing the hardship of leaving their homes and belongings. This has been going on for too long...over 60 years. The Middle East has the right to justice and its people have the right to live in peace.

Tony Manasseh, Clerk

Middle East Yearly Meeting, Ramallah Monthly Meeting

The year 2013 started with some challenges and difficulties that called on all our physical, mental and spiritual resources. There were so many misunderstandings, judgements and worries about whether Ramallah Monthly Meeting would survive without FICR or not. It is amazing how sometimes we forget that we are not in charge. The Spirit of God is available to us if we wait on this Spirit for guidance, patience, faith, hope and love. Yes, Ramallah Monthly Meeting survived and blossomed. Thanks be to God, and to all of you who understood the challenges we faced and were open to continuing with your support.

Outreach, ministry and hospitality are still happening. Ecumenical and interfaith groups and seminaries are visiting us to understand how our Quaker values sustain us in these difficult times. Yes our Meeting is small, but we are called upon by many local and international groups to address issues of justice and peace, inclusive spirituality, feminism and structures of domination and violence. We have lived most of our lives with wars, structures of domination as well as the brutality of occupation. It is known that we are constantly trying to find ways to transform ourselves and, in the process, become transforming people in our broken world.

We were lucky to have Gordon Matthews as Friend in Residence for six weeks, for the month of November to the middle of December. Gordon's ministry of presence and sharing news from our Meeting has been appreciated.

We meet for Meeting for Worship every Sunday at 10:30 am at our Meeting House on the main street in Ramallah. We are surrounded by trees and a nice garden. The Meeting for Worship is unprogrammed and lasts for one hour. In worship we encounter one another and God. Then we join for refreshments and reflection. God is a God of

surprises. Sometimes we are few, although we are often joined by members of the Christian Peacemaker team or trainees, and members of the World Council of Churches Accompaniment Programme serving in Israel/Palestine. Quaker visitors, groups or work groups worship with us too, and find it enriching. For instance, on December 29th 2013 we had a group from Langley Hill Meeting and Northwest Yearly Meeting in the United States and some visiting Mennonites.

In January 2014 I have been asked to speak to three groups who want to worship with us too: Lancaster Seminary students, Max Carter with a group of students from Guilford College and a group from the Living Stones organisation in England. The two other groups that will be visiting us are students from McGill Seminary (Chicago) and another group from the United Church of Christ.

We are doing all we can, both locally and internationally. We seek your support in any way you feel led to offer it. This is our work together to promote peace, justice and liberation.

Jean Zaru, Clerk

Netherlands Yearly Meeting

In last year's account we reported that Netherlands Yearly Meeting had committed to action in the following areas:

1. Responding to the Israel-Palestine conflict.
2. Experimenting with other forms of worship.
3. Building a partnership with another Quaker meeting/Friends' Church.
4. 'Giving hands and feet' to the Kabarak call to start a worldwide campaign for peace and ecojustice.
5. Taking part in the World Council of Churches' process for pronouncing war *illegal*.

What have we done about these issues in 2013?

1. Two Dutch Friends continue to provide courses on non-violent communication in the Middle East, while others are actively increasing awareness in the Netherlands. These Friends have our wholehearted support.
2. Some Monthly Meetings have been experimenting with semi-programmed Meetings for Worship. Alternative forms of meeting for worship were used during our YM
3. Two of our Monthly Meetings are trying to connect with other meetings.
4. We revived our Peace Committee, and several of our Monthly Meetings were active during the national Peace Week.
5. We considered the topic of making war illegal at YM, where we compared working for the abolition of war with working for the abolition of slavery (now 150 years ago for the Netherlands). Kees Nieuwerth represented us at the World Council of

Churches conference in Busan, Korea, in November, where a 'pilgrimage towards just peace' was agreed on.

We have had positive coverage in the media and have attracted new attenders. Quakers old and new gathered for several inspiring meetings. In May we held our Yearly Meeting and discussed the themes: 'slavery then and now' and 'walk cheerfully answering that of God in everyone'. In October a meeting of 'younger' Friends (under 60) was held concerning how we can include our (few) children in the general programme during Yearly Meeting to a greater extent. We were happy to have Kerstin Mangels from German YM with us, the author of a Quaker handbook on all-age work-forms. Kerstin told us about her four years of experience with an age-inclusive German YM, a mix of worship-forms and mixed-aged interest groups. In November some 40 Friends gathered for a two-day meeting about the future of our Yearly Meeting. We considered: How do we want to invest our assets? How can we reach a balanced budget? What do we want to achieve? What is our identity? and How do we connect our spirituality and our means? We discussed many ideas, such as investing in a better connection with other churches, Quaker flash-mobs and New Year greetings cards to people or groups with whom we disagree.

Erik Dries and Martin Touwen, Representatives

Norway Yearly Meeting

In July 2013 we participated in the Nordic yearly meetings' gathering in Skåne, southern Sweden, together with Danish, Finnish and Swedish Friends. The theme for the gathering was the paired responsibilities for eldering and pastoral care. As the four yearly meetings have all worked on raising awareness of these responsibilities over the past few years, each from a somewhat different approach, our sharing on the subject was fruitful. Our Nordic Friends gathering has been held every fourth year and we look forward to meeting again in 2017 at Kungälv near Gothenburg, Sweden.

Norway YM has three monthly meetings – Oslo, Stavanger and Kristiansand – and additional worship groups meeting in Bergen, Bø and Smøla. Meetings for business have been held quarterly in Kristiansand and Stavanger and seven times in Oslo. In 2013 we have followed our tradition of holding meetings for worship at least once in each of the two oldest meeting houses in Norway, built in 1830 and 1850: one at Stakland on the south-western fjords, and the other at Roiseland, Kvinesdal, in the southern tip of the country. Both of these meeting houses are kept in good repair under private ownership, with members of the Stavanger meeting helping at Stakland and some YM funds for maintenance.

We continue with the writing of a 'faith and practice' manual for Norway YM. We have had a set of 'queries and advices' in Norwegian since 1967, a translation of the 1964 version from London YM, updated and edited in 2004 through several drafts circulated

in the membership. We hope to have a complete draft of our first version of a 'faith and practice' (*Tro og Liv*) ready for our annual gathering in July 2014. That gathering will mark the start of the celebration of the 200th anniversary of the founding of Quakers in Norway.

There are two publications of the yearly meeting: our newsletter, *KvekerNytt*, which came out three times with news from the monthly meetings and worship groups; and our quarterly journal, *Kvekeren*, with thoughtful pieces written by our members or translated from the wider world of Friends.

In 2013 we marked the 50th anniversary of the start of our Friends service organ, Kvekerhjelp (Quaker Service Norway), with a conference of public lectures in Oslo. Kvekerhjelp was established in 1963 to support the rural community development project in Algeria led by Egil and Turid Hovdenak from 1963 to 1972. Since that time, Kvekerhjelp has supported and led projects for peace and development in Palestine, Israel, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Zimbabwe, Brazil, Lebanon, Northern Ireland, South Africa, Sri Lanka, and the Great Lakes region of Central Africa.

Stephen Collett, Clerk

Poland, Warsaw & Poznan Worship Groups

The year 2013 was the fourth year of Warsaw Friends Meeting activity. We meet regularly in The Reformed Congregation in Warsaw. Our meetings take place in Congregation house on 2nd and 4th Sundays at 1PM (al. Solidarnosci 76A, Warsaw). Number of members of the meeting stabilized at the level of ten Warsaw Friends Meeting manages as well nationwide quaker discussion group <http://groups.google.com/group/kwakrzy> (27members) and co-manages open forum about Quakerism <http://www.kwakrzy.fora.pl/> (39members). Warsaw group administrates the website www.kwakrzy.pl/ www.rtppl.pl which is official site of Warsaw Friends Meeting, but is also open for other quaker initiatives in Poland. Representatives of Warsaw group were in Litomysl, Czech Republic, where XVI Central European Gathering of Friends (CEG) was organized. In 2013 we continue joint meetings of Warsaw and Poznan Friends. In September both groups met for the third time in Warsaw. Bradius Maurus gave a lecture about "Acredalism in Quakerism: Its Rationale and Effects on Quaker History". During the meeting Warsaw and Poznan Friends decided to organize first Poland Friends Gathering in Poznan in November 2013. Three Friends from Warsaw Meeting took part in the meeting for European friends - members of the small and scattered groups organized in Woodbrooke on 1-3 November 2013. The course was conducted by Julia Ryberg from Sweden and Arne Springorum from Czech Republic. It was a great opportunity to exchange experiences, common worship, mutual support. We met friends from Estonia, Finland, Spain, Ireland, Russia, and Italy. We have obtained financial help from Catchpool fund. Our stay in Woodbrook

leaves many fond memories inter alia because of friends working there and taking care of us, wonderful library resources and beauty of the place and nature.

The first Poland Friends Gathering held in Poznan from 9-11 November 2013. Friends from Poznan, Pila, Szczytno and Warsaw were present. The program included: unprogrammed meetings for worship, worship sharing - "What do I find in Quakerism", singing, reports on the activities of each group as well as individual stays in Brussels, Strasbourg and Birmingham (Woodbrooke). We had a lecture and discussion about the history of Quakerism in Poland and the quaker impact on the development of psychiatric treatment in England and the United States. We were discussing the translation of selected quaker books into Polish and the development of Polish quaker dictionary. Finally, we talked about the next gathering and the actions that should be taken in the near future. Gathering was organized by Poznan Friends with cooperation with Warsaw Friends.

We hosted at Warsaw Meeting a delegation of the Quaker United Nations Office. Ellie, Lindsey and Jonathan come to Warsaw for the climate summit. Despite their many duties at the summit they were able to meet with us twice.

Warsaw Friends organized in 2013 lectures and discussions. Inter alia, in December a lecture by Professor Karol Karski about William Penn took place. We plan to organize this kind of events regularly in subsequent years.

Michał Kotakowski-Mickiewicz

Portugal, Lisbon Area Informal Worship Group

We are a small group of people, 7 in total, living in the Lisbon area and interested in Quakers. In 2012 we started to meet once a month and very much enjoyed the Quaker experience. We received a lot of support from EMES, and one of our members took part in a Companionship programme with a specifically trained and experienced Quaker based in Britain. Meetings are usually preceded by reading an excerpt from Quaker Faith and Practice in order to stimulate the act of listening and waiting. Following the meetings, there is always some time for sharing over a cup of tea or coffee, and for talking about the Quaker way, or just general socialisation.

At the beginning of 2013 we continued our monthly meetings and one of our members attended the EMES Meeting for Exploration, held between 1 and 3 March at Svartbäcken, Sweden. That same member applied for international membership, which was finally accepted later on in the year. We also started exchanging emails with Quaker groups across Spain and discussed the possibility of organising a Border Meeting.

From June onwards, and because one of our members started spending long periods of time away from Portugal, the Meetings became very sporadic. Several attempts to

organise Meetings were made, but for various reasons members could just not coincide on the same day.

We hope to organise our first meeting of 2014 in January and to re-establish our monthly Meetings.

Matias Linder

Russia, Moscow Monthly Meeting

Moscow Friends Meeting continues with reduced attendance (6-8 in attendance at a typical weekly meeting for worship). However, several Moscow Friends meet regularly in other locations and stay in close contact with the Monthly Meeting. We now meet every Saturday at the offices of a charitable organisation founded with Quaker help a decade ago. (You can contact the clerk for exact details of time and place via the EMES website.) We were very sorry to lose the use of the superb community centre where we met until December 2012, but when that centre was privatised over the protests of many community members, we had no choice but to relocate. Our present location is small, but we love our hosts! Our new location also gives our small meeting an outlet for volunteer work.

This summer, our long-time member Sasha Gorbenko married a British Friend, Jasmine Piercy. They are settling in Kremenchuk, Ukraine, but will visit us as often as possible. Sasha's recent extensive monograph on Quaker history was accepted for publication in edited form by the Orthodox Encyclopaedia, which is sponsored by the Moscow Patriarchate of the Orthodox Church. We are looking for opportunities to do more public outreach (seminars, round tables, lectures) on the basis of this major contribution to Quaker studies.

We are also committed to a more general review of the effectiveness of Friends outreach in Russia during 2014 ("Keeping our Quaker promises"), drawing upon ecumenical advisers as well as our own members and attenders.

During the year, we often followed meeting for worship with discussions on the spiritual themes or biblical passages that arose during the worship. We heard reports on Friends World Committee events, the work of Friends House Moscow and Woodbrooke gatherings. One event at Woodbrooke, attended by Natasha Zhuravenkova and Judy Maurer, was devoted to the "Experiment with Light" and disciplines of spiritual leading based on the spirituality of early Friends. Another Woodbrooke event, sponsored by the Friends World Committee for Consultation, also directly impacted our meeting: a gathering of "dispersed meetings in Europe" to discuss the special needs and experiences of small, geographically isolated meetings and individual Friends. Assistant clerk Misha Roshchin reported to us on this helpful conference.

International contacts have included a steady stream of visitors, whom we welcome eagerly. Board meetings of Friends House Moscow are special opportunities to build and renew friendships.

During the year, we often thought and prayed about Syria. Toward the end of the year, Ukraine's troubles were very much on our mind.

Johan Maurer, Clerk

Russia, Friends House Moscow (Dom Druzei)

2013 has been a year of growth and exciting progress for Friends House Moscow's far-flung partner organisations. Both members of our small office have kept abreast of the activities of the variety of Russian NGOs which we support, and embarked on some Quaker literature translation projects of our own.

An unusual – yet deeply relevant – initiative for Russia is the **Alternatives to Violence Project**, the 'local' chapter of which has continued to expand its activities. Although its team of volunteer workshop facilitators remains small, AVP operates not only in Moscow and its surrounding region, but also in Dzerzhinsk (near Nizhniy Novgorod on the Volga) and what is often considered the unstable south of the country: the North Caucasus republics of Dagestan and Karachaevo-Cherkessia. Later in 2013, AVP brought its initiatives over the Caucasus Mountains to Tbilisi, Georgia and Baku, Azerbaijan.

The Kazan-based organisation **For Our Sons** also experienced expansion in its efforts to support young conscripts' right to non-violent alternative service. Their reports from Kazan are unadorned and plainly-worded, but one comes away with the impression of tireless, tough-as-nails activists who routinely speak truth to power and uphold the rule of law in the mass media, during numerous court battles, or on Kazan's central avenue with signs and flyers. This year, For Our Sons held more than 385 free consultations and also intervened in cases where the welfare of draftees was being threatened by abuses in Russia's brutalising conscription system. The organisation's reports on rampant legal trespasses by the Russian 'press gang' have attracted mass media attention. Furthermore, they have begun receiving clients from farther afield, such as Novosibirsk and Barnaul in Siberia and Samara in the Volga region. Their efforts saw at least one 'alternativshchik' (CO) preserved from criminal prosecution, a draftee granted a stay of conscription 15 minutes before his head was shaved.

Friends House Moscow's other partners focus their efforts on orphans and at-risk children in the Moscow region and the provincial city of Dzerzhinsk. **Big Change** is a Moscow-based organisation that helps orphans and orphanage graduates to adjust to independent life, providing counsel and support on the road to education and careers. They work with many promising and motivated young people, teaching difficult lessons in personal responsibility and relationships. Having long maintained close relations, this

year Friends House funded a Big Change-organised research project on the shortcomings of the foster-care system.

Friends House Moscow supports two child welfare projects in Dzerzhinsk. **Helping Children to Stay with their Families** works to repair broken homes by counselling parents and bringing them into communication with estranged children. The general aim of the project is to reduce the number of ‘social orphans’ removed from parental custody by courts. A brand-new offshoot of this project, **Good to Have Many Children**, supports large families. Both programmes share staff and boast a large contingent of volunteer psychologists and one pro bono lawyer.

Lastly, work continues on a three-year translation project, involving both our staff members and five other translators. Eighteen separate Quaker texts are involved in the project. The exciting biography of feminist Quaker and abolitionist Lucretia Mott, *Valiant Friend*, was recently completed.

Sergei Grushko, Natasha Zhuravenkova and Michael Long

Spain, Barcelona Monthly Meeting

Gerard Negelspach, a Friend long associated with the Meeting, died in February 2014 after suffering a stroke.

Caroline Wilson

Spain, Madrid Worship Group

The last four years have been a difficult time for us, but especially 2013, when one of our dear members, Josefina Fernández, was diagnosed as having cancer. She went through surgery and different chemotherapies, but sadly, died on September 7th. We miss her very much. She was a fundamental pillar of our Meeting as a Friend and as a friend. She was and still is a source of inspiration for all of us in Madrid, as we feel her among us wherever she is resting, in God’s bosom, we trust. We looked after her as much as we could and as much as she allowed us to, as she was a very independent person.

Josefina was the first Quaker in Spain. She was a very creative person, much advanced for the time in which she lived, and a faithful Friend. Her main interest was education and her life was dedicated to her many students, who will always remember her. She also enjoyed writing. *Las Otras Feministas, la Mujer Cuáquera*, was published by the Wider Quaker Fellowship.

We are happy to have achieved some of our small projects for 2013:

We made a small ecological vegetable garden from just a few square metres. We enjoyed digging and taking away all the weeds, nurturing the earth, planting and keeping it in order to get the beautiful products, such as tomatoes, green peppers, marrows and

mini potatoes (they didn't get very big). It was a very enjoyable experience and we learnt a lot in the process. This year we will plant it again, although a bit earlier in the spring.

We are studying the Advices and Queries of Pacific Yearly Meeting following our Meeting for Worship. When we are ready we will start another Quaker study series. Angelines and Carmen attended the EMES Annual Gathering in Belgium. It was wonderful to be among so many Friends.

We have had different visitors during the year from different parts of the world from Friends who are travelling in Spain and join us for Meeting for Worship. We appreciate this very much.

We are considering and working with the idea of putting information about Quakers in Madrid on the Internet and we hope that this will soon be ready. We are also working on meeting up with Iberian Friends (Portugal and Spain) for a Border Meeting, or at least getting to know each other.

Carmen Alcalde

Sweden Yearly Meeting

The Nordic Yearly Meetings of Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden met together for the fourth time to worship, study, talk, walk, and have fun together. This time the gathering was held in Höör, in southern Sweden, in June. The theme was "How do we nurture our Meetings for Worship and our relationships with each other?" Stephen Collett from Norway and Sue Glover Frykman from Sweden introduced the theme. In partnership with the inter-Nordic planning group, a group of Elders from the four Nordic countries gently guided and upheld the gathering.

For some time Sweden YM has been considering how to best develop its study and retreat programmes and it was agreed that Torbjörn Söderqvist and Julia Ryberg should work on this in tandem, with Torbjörn focusing more on initiating and developing study and retreats at the Friends Centre in Stockholm. Julia and Torbjörn were interviewed about Quakers in Sweden by one of the national daily newspapers, which led to a lot of responses and interest from different parts of the country. As a result of the increased interest in Quakers and their work, an Open Day was held in October at the Friends Centre in Stockholm, which was attended by some 40 people. This coverage, together with a more local media focus, has led to some of the tiny worship groups (Lund, Malmö, Järna, Mälardalen, Umeå) expanding and being able to hold more regular Meetings for Worship.

The Yearly Meeting's Elders have been experimenting with distance communication methods, such as Skype, to facilitate contact with isolated Friends and as a meeting

platform for their own purposes. Friends spiritually upholding committee- and Elders' meetings, and the use of accompanying Elders for specific pieces of work, are also being tried and tested. As both an inreach and outreach tool, the Yearly Meeting's website <http://www.kvakare.se> is also becoming more of a dynamic resource/meeting place.

Building on the theme of this year's EMES Annual Meeting, Sweden YM is becoming more visible in an ecumenical/interfaith context. Ecumenical activities include a regular 'worship sharing' event in a local parish church and a regular column on the ecumenical "Seglora smedja" website. We were also one of seven churches to be asked by the Christian Council of Sweden to contribute to an anthology of peace theologies.

When it comes to other activities, the annual Summer Camp held at the Quaker Retreat Centre at Svartbäcken (Rimbo) continues to be well attended by adults and children alike. The 'worship sharing' hour before Thursday evening Meeting for Worship in Stockholm also flourishes and grows. The Quaker Faith & Practice Committee is working on additional chapters, e.g. on money resources and concern. The YM's second Year Book, with a range of longer and shorter articles on various topics of interest, has been published. Three members of the YM attended the international Experiment with Light (EWL) gathering at Woodbrooke in September. As a result of that meeting, EWL is now being developed globally via Skype.

Like its Norwegian counterpart, Quaker Service Sweden (QSS) celebrated its 50th birthday this year. QSS was initiated when some members of the YM returned home after working together with Norwegian Quakers in Algeria to help the local population in various practical projects. Sadly, Fredrick Ern, one of the founders of QSS, passed away in the autumn, although he lives on in numerous people's lives and hearts, through his many paintings, photographs and poems.

Sue Glover Frykman and Lars Longueville, Representatives

Switzerland Yearly Meeting

In 2013 we were saddened by the deaths of three long time members. We are aware that many of the members who played an active role in our Yearly Meeting have now left us. We are joyful for the admission of three new members.

The theme of the 2013 Yearly Meeting was "Living from the Spirit". This gathering was held from May 17-20 at the Haus für Bildung und Begegnung, Herzberg near Aarau. Christopher Hatton from the Christian Peacemaker Teams was guest lecturer, and spoke of the discernment process he went through in deciding to work for CPT. The weekend was further enriched by guests from Britain YM, Germany YM, QCEA, QUNO, and the USA.

From 25-27 January we met at the Communauté Don Camillo at Montmirail near Thielle in the French speaking part of Switzerland for a retreat, "Grounding our Spiritual

Diversity in Prayer and Meditation”. This was led by Jaana Erkkilä from Finland Yearly Meeting, and Roger Hill from Britain Yearly Meeting, as an activity of Woodbrooke-on-the-Road.

We conducted an on-line discussion of the book and film “The Life of Pi”, which proved interesting and involved members living too far from a local meeting to participate in activities regularly. We have plans to continue similar on-line discussions in 2014.

We are about 90 Friends with many more Friends of Friends on the mailing list, unfortunately many of whom we seldom see. Our average age is well over 70, and we have 18 permanent posts and committee positions for some 30 people to fill. There are five regional groups plus two additional smaller worship groups which depend administratively on a larger meeting. The people who are active are overtaxed and find it difficult to maintain this administrative structure. In an attempt to reduce the administrative tasks and avoid duplicating activities between the Yearly Meeting and the regional groups we have decided to concentrate on contributions to service projects by local meetings, and have eliminated the Service Committee for the YM. The associations we belong to as a YM will continue to be paid out of YM funds. We are also in the process of demanding tax-free status from the national government for contributions made to the YM, which requires a revision of our statutes.

There are three Business Meetings a year. The principle one takes place during the Yearly Meeting and is attended by about 45 to 50 members and representatives of other Yearly Meetings and Quaker organisations. Here major items for business are presented. Last year we mainly dealt with the changes to our structures. In addition we hold two smaller Business Meetings, each of which are attended by about 20 people. One of these is held in the spring, mainly for planning the Yearly Meeting and acceptance of the accounts from the year before, and the other is held in the autumn, and deals with the budget and nominations for the next year.

Although there are a lot of administrative tasks to attend to, the conduct of business and the maintenance of our Yearly Meeting bring us together to discern the workings of the Spirit in the lives of Swiss Friends and hold us together as a Yearly Meeting.

Swiss Friends

Europe & Middle East Young Friends

2013 has been a bustling and dynamic year for EMEYF and full of changes and experiments. We have gathered for three main events: EMEYF's Spring Gathering in the Yorkshire Dales explored the connection between our spirituality and creativity. We met again in the summer for an all-age EMEYF Open House in Congénies, France, and lastly in autumn for our Annual Meeting in Brussels. For 2014 we are looking forward to a joint EMEYF-QCEA Study tour where we expect a strong presence of Young Friends,

followed by our Spring Gathering in Macedonia, on the theme "Borders – within and without". Please pass details of EMEYF to those Young Adult Friends aged 18-to-35ish in your meetings. Our EMEYF website www.emeyf.org has details of all events and allows YFs to subscribe to the mailing list for staying informed.

Gatherings are very important for many of us as these allow us to build friendships, explore our spirituality and leadings, and care for each other on our individual and communal journeys. Some Young Friends feel at home in their local Quaker communities, but lonely at the same time, so are looking forward to EMEYF gatherings as their other "home" meeting. Young Friends are not Friends who are not yet fully grown, not yet fully arrived—but Friends who are facing decisions about how they want to live their life and what difference they want to make. This can be a harsh and radical situation and be a struggle at times. Being held and uplifted by community, company and spiritual friendship enables us to experience this as a chance and as a gift: we are aware of the impact each of our choices has to us and the world, and we are aware of being on a journey. Our faith is not easy, it is about this radicality and openness and the willingness to learn and grow. Because of this, our Gatherings are intense experiences—with deep worship, intimate connections and hilarious fun. This is us - living and celebrating the Quaker way.

Young Friends from all over the Section are finding their voices and leadings in their local and yearly meetings. As Young Friends, we know that we might be the future of the Religious Society, but for sure we are part of its present as well. In discerning EMEYF's relationship with other Quaker organisations, we understood why there are often misunderstandings: We want to be heard and seen, in our Quaker way, but not as "young people". We want to be heard as full-grown members of our community, who are on their spiritual journey, like other Friends of all generations, across the Ages.

In our meetings for worship for business and in our committees, we are working on keeping EMEYF going and making EMEYF better. We try to become more vivid and open, both to the spirit and to the enthusiasm of Young Friends in the Section. In 2013, we focused on how to follow our passions and encourage ourselves and others to bring in and share gifts and leadings. This led to discernments on our understanding of roles, our relationship to other Quaker organisations, and to a new-style Open House event in the summer.

This phase of transition does not go without difficulties, and it took a lot of energy especially from those working on our committees. At the moment, EMEYF does not have a clerk. EMEYF's Communication Committee has entered a period of grounding and discernment about the way we work together as a committee and how to serve the wider community of EMEYF. Next year, we will need to fill some roles and find ways to make the roles more accessible to Young Friends, as well as to restructure our finances

and funding, because our JRCT grant is ending. But we remain uplifted by the experience of the Young Friends meeting, sharing and supporting each other all over the section.

The **Spring Gathering at Ribbleshead, in the Yorkshire Dales**, brought EMEYF back to the area where Quakerism started. For those of us who came over from Continental Europe, visiting the old Meeting House in Settle was very impressive. Local Friends welcomed us and offered us situations to learn, have fun, explore and give back: we heard talks about the area, visited the meeting house, the nature reserve and did some secret caving, and spent a day volunteering on an organic farm. The Leaveners visited us for a day-long workshop inspired by our theme: "The Body Electric - Exploring our spirituality through creativity". We explored our community, the landscape, our spirituality and our creativity—as four shades of the same light. To quote from the report (which can be found on our website in full):

"Through workshops with the Leaveners, we explored how we use our bodies – to interact, to share emotion, to mirror one another and create relationships. We played games, becoming playful with each other, laughing at the frankly ridiculous noises we made at each other, and becoming intensely aware of each other in space. We created living statues with our bodies, representing hope, justice, truth and light. And finally we explored why we are creative, and why we are spiritual. For many, the two were, are, inextricably linked: "When I am creative I am silent, and when I am silent I am spiritual." For some, creativity provides an outlet for deep-felt emotions, and spirituality provides time to process this. Both allow connection to others, through shared interpretations of words and thoughts as well as art. [...] I suppose if I had to sum up the Gathering in three words it would have to be singing, laughter and silence. We sang almost constantly; whilst cooking, walking, digging earth or making friendship bracelets. There was always a melody in the air, and always a harmony quick to follow. 'We are a gentle, angry people and we are singing, singing for our lives.' And we laughed; at ourselves, at each other and at our mistakes, but also for our delightful successes, in celebration of an absurd moment, and at the joy of being together. Most of all, we appreciated the chance to be silent, to raise ourselves and each other to heights of spiritual contemplation we had not necessarily anticipated, and to be accepted for our desire to do so. We gathered together in song, in laughter and in silence. What greater gift can there be?"

The epistle from SG 2013 is a soundscape created from words shared and spoken throughout the Gathering, of songs, games, the wind, the river and the caves. Please listen to the full epistle: youtu.be/hHpWHVSAAnDY.

At the Spring Gathering we also discerned ways for EMEYFers to do what they felt enthusiastic about. An idea was born when we were talking about our wish to experience

community with Friends, and we made it happen only a few months later: The **EMEYF Open House in Congénies (France)** was an invitation to all Friends and attendees to spend some time together—regardless of their nationality, background and their age. In fact, there were nearly 70 years of age difference between the youngest and the oldest participant!

We enjoyed the summer in the South of France and the hospitality of the local Friends. Also, we learnt a lot about openness, just by living it: To be open to other people is sometimes challenging, but also enriching. It is a training in openness towards the spirit. As individuals as well as communities, we were adventurous enough to not stay in our comfort zone, we made ourselves vulnerable – and found a much more valuable form of comfort, of which our minute of record tells:

"Our Open House has brought together people from all over Europe, Quaker and non-Quaker, who are all ages and speak many different languages. Despite such differences we found, and continue to find, ways to not just communicate together but to come together as a whole group; a family—one that keeps expanding! With no set time schedule we have challenged ourselves in creating our event as a community. All participants had and found a role in contributing to the event. In this, we have had the young people taking care for the older in organising a hike in the woods; and we have learnt that age does not matter. We have been transformed and blessed by this community. We treasure the safety and the security we have built together, and we celebrate the way we have taken care for each other."
(Full text on www.emeyf.org)

In the autumn we met at Quaker House in Brussels for our **EMEYF Annual Meeting**. We focused on our relationship with FWCC–EMES and QCEA, and welcomed Marisa Johnson and Alexandra Bosbeer who both talked about their work. We explored new ways of working together, from which sprung the idea for the joint EMEYF–QCEA Study Tour 2014. We are aware that our current transitions ask flexibility from the people and organisations with whom we work together and we are thankful for their support and understanding.

In short, we tried to be adventurous in the way we are living together, because we realise that being open for the needs of a community of Young Adults, dispersed over Europe, needs the willingness to change as well as to care for our roots. We continue to explore our faith and our tasks in life by seeking each others' F/friendship in community. We are thankful to the people, meetings and organisations that support us spiritually and financially while we are finding our voices. We hope you will be following us with interest and hold us in the light as we approach the new adventures that are in store for us in 2014.

Mieke van Opheusden and Esther Köhring, EMEYF Elders

Coalition for Work with Psychotrauma and Peace (CWWPP)

The situation in Croatia, and in the Balkans in general, continues to be difficult. Vukovar, in eastern Croatia, is iconic for many, and thus attracts national and international attention. During 2013, we saw the rise of a group known as the “Headquarters for the Defence of a Croatian Vukovar”. This group is against the use of minority “languages” or alphabets. Since 2002, the Croatian constitution has said that street signs and signs on public buildings must be in minority languages if the proportion of the minority in a municipality is greater than 33%. It is about 35% in Vukovar. The Headquarters has held demonstrations throughout the year which, at times, have turned violent. Civilians and police have been injured and both have been arrested. On 18 November, the day on which Vukovar came into Serb hands in 1991, the Headquarters blocked the traditional vigil to the “Graveyard of the Heroes of the Homeland War”, which included the entire Croatian cabinet, a representative of the Serb minority, and 25 ambassadors. There was no intervention, and the officials returned to Zagreb. The Headquarters is involved with several political parties and uses Second World War symbols.

Right-wing extremism is strongly present in Croatia in general. At a football game between Croatia and Iceland in November, the slogan of the Croatian Nazi WWII regime was shouted by the crowd after encouragement by a player. Similar incidents occur regularly during national games. Furthermore, a singer known as Thompson, named for the “tommy gun”, came to Vukovar at the end of the year. He has been banned in a number of countries for his lyrics that encourage hate.

Vukovar remains ethnically segregated with regard to education, cafés, sports clubs, etc. The ethnic divide also is one of religion and, with a few notable exceptions, religious leaders encourage division rather than reconciliation.

The psychological situation has improved little since the CWWPP came in 1995. Recently, in addition to the very substantial and almost completely untreated trauma of the war, we have been seeing the kind of trans-generational transmission of trauma and narratives seen in Europe after WWII. This has led to a large amount of violence in families and in schools, and to a lack of initiative. The CWWPP is the only organisation working with people without drugs and without cost. Unfortunately, these issues are not considered “relevant” by officials or funders. The CWWPP is attempting to increase capacity in general by training “barefoot therapists and peacebuilders” through our Course for Workers in Areas of Regeneration, given without charge, and which we now are attempting to put online.

We receive virtually no cooperation from government in any form. Recently, we have become associated with the University of St Andrews. We continued our association with InterChange4Peace and other organisations. We have received requests for

cooperation from several regions, including the Eastern DRC and Nepal. We wish to expand work with former child soldiers and asylum seekers and refugees.

Our annual report will be published on www.cwwpp.org.

Charles David Tauber

Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA) – “Your Quaker Voice in Europe”

The Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA) is the voice of Quaker advocacy in Europe. We represent European Quakers: ten European Yearly Meetings participate in the QCEA Council, and Marisa Johnson, as the Secretary of EMES, represents those meetings and worship groups that are too small to send representatives to our biannual Council meetings in Brussels.

Looking back on 2013, a very small team here in the office in Brussels accomplished a great deal. The composition of the staff team changed considerably during the year: Gordon Matthews left Brussels to become Resident Friend at Claridge House in England and later Resident Friend at the Quaker meeting in Ramallah. Our extremely able Programme Assistants Bethany Squire and Chris Venables took up new challenges in England from September at the close of their year in Brussels. And Chris Diskin and Rebecca Viney-Wood joined the team in Brussels at the start of their own year at QCEA. Imogen Parker started as a Programme Assistant in January 2013 and took up a lot of the organisation of the biennial conference which we held jointly with Britain YM’s Quaker Peace & Social Witness (QPSW). Over 100 Friends came together in Brussels in November to discuss economic justice and what Friends can do to promote it (see www.qcea.org for the papers from the website). Annie Schultz was a volunteer intern with our team for two months over the summer, working on human rights and the worrisome restriction of the space for freedom of expression in several European countries (you can find some of her articles on our blog at <http://qceablog.wordpress.com/>).

QCEA works on five programme areas: peace, human rights, sustainability, democratic governance, and economic justice. Highlights of the year included the success of the conference mentioned above, the enthusiasm with which Chris Venables’ paper on militarisation of the EU (<http://www.qcea.org/2013/12/briefing-paper-growing-militarisation-of-the-eu/>) was received, and the fact that the focus of our project on the role of the EU in Israel and Palestine could shift after the EU published guidelines to prevent EU funding going to Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Other highlights included the many yearly meetings and other Quaker gatherings which we were able to attend. I look forward to getting to know more of you in 2014 and

ensuring that the work of QCEA representing European Quaker concerns is understood and supported by those whom we represent.

Alexandra Bosbeer, Representative

Quaker United Nations Office and Committee (Geneva)

QUNO's work on children of parents sentenced to death or executed progressed significantly, as evidenced by the mandating of a panel on this subject (without a vote) in the UN Human Rights Council in September 2013. QUNO deepened its contacts and its understanding of the issues by holding an off-the-record expert workshop in February, the results of which, together with other materials informed our publication, *Lightening the Load of the Parental Death Penalty on Children*, which is now available in Arabic, English, French, Persian, Japanese and Spanish.

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) published both a report to the Human Rights Council and a booklet on conscientious objection. The UN Higher Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) issued the Guidelines No. 10 on Refugee Status related to Military Service. In September, the Human Rights Council adopted, without a vote, its first substantive resolution on the subject. QUNO had organised a series of informal, off-the-record discussions on this subject beforehand.

QUNO further developed its work on engaging with the UN climate negotiations, strengthening contacts with present and former staff at the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, diplomats and other relevant NGOs. We produced a paper showing how other parts of the UN System have developed effective monitoring systems. We also attended inter-sessional negotiations in April and June 2013, holding an informal, off-the-record dinner discussion for diplomats at the latter meeting. In November, QUNO travelled to Warsaw to attend the UN conference on climate change to expand our 'quiet diplomacy' work. This included two informal and off the record dinners. Climate change work was led in 2013 by Lindsey Cook, who was appointed QUNO Representative for Climate Change in January 2014.

Natural resources, conflict and cooperation (NRCC) has emerged as a significant strand of QUNO's peace and disarmament work and brings together our programmes in human rights, land and food security, climate change and natural resources. This cross-cutting approach aims to work within the Geneva policy environment to influence international legal frameworks, policy and practice to recognise the links between natural resource management and peace-building, and to draw upon these approaches in order to facilitate peaceful and equitable natural resource management, especially around water, food and land.

QUNO's Food & Sustainability's programme works to put food security on countries' intellectual property (IP) and international trade agendas, and ensure that it is explicitly and adequately addressed in the international IP and trade regimes. In July 2013, we published a Briefing Paper on World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) genetic resources, farmers and food security. This pointed out the importance of considering small-scale farmers in WIPO discussions relating to genetic resources and traditional knowledge.

During the year, QUNO welcomed Emily Graham and Claire Rodgers as new Programme Assistants. Associate Representative Oliver Robertson and Programme Assistant Haifa Rashed left, while Ellie Roberts became Project Officer working on NRCC before leaving in December. Other 2013 QUNO staff include Jonathan Woolley (Director), Caroline Dommen, Diane Hendrick and Rachel Brett (Representatives), Lynn Finnegan (Project Officer), Sylviane Trousseau (Office Manager) and Rene Lejeune (Finance Officer). Neithard Petry continued as the FWCC-EMES member on the Committee for QUNO Geneva.

Stephen Schenck, Communications Coordinator

Quaker United Nations Office in New York

2013 has been an exciting year at QUNO- New York, with many highlights. There is not enough space in this short article to name them all, but you can read more in detail on the QUNO website www.quno.org where you can also sign up for their monthly updates.

During 2013 QUNO said goodbye to Programme Assistants Olivia Ensign, Amelia Breeze and Kirsten Mandala and welcomed Della Andersen and Rachel Singleton-Polster.

After months of planning QUNO and the Africa and Asia regions of AFSC organised a conference on UN peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding in Beijing, China in May. The conference brought together scholars and practitioners from China, Africa and the UN, creating a unique opportunity for participants to exchange ideas and explore future collaboration.

In June QUNO directors Andrew Tomlinson and Jonathan Woolley were named by Action on Armed Violence as among the world's 100 most influential actors in armed violence reduction. Both directors were quick to point out that they represent many colleagues, who have been working on this issue for decades.

It was decided in 2012 that it was time to evaluate the effectiveness of QUNO and to make recommendations as to how to strengthen its impact in the future. Simon Fisher carried out the evaluation in 2013. From 2015 QUNO enters a new program cycle of three years, and many of the 23 recommendations will be useful assets in the planning

process. The evaluation found that QUNO “has an enviable reputation for expertise, professionalism and commitment to genuine, value-based change amongst diplomats, UN officials and civil society organisations at the UN” and that the off-the-record discussions at Quaker House underpin all other QUNO work at the UN and give the whole programme a clear, indeed unique, identity.

The initial consultation phase of the process to replace the Millennium Development Goals is now over. Together with QUNO Geneva, the New York staff have concentrated on the importance of including considerations of the impact of violence and the particular needs of fragile and conflict-affected countries in the Post-2015 development framework. Andrew Tomlinson spoke as the only civil society representative at a high-level special event at the UN.

The long awaited High Level Panel Report on the Post-2015 Development Agenda was published in May. It was gratifying to see the inclusion of the words: “Freedom from fear, conflict and violence is the most fundamental human right” and that “peace and good governance [are] core elements of well-being, not optional extras”. The work is now to try to keep them there, through the months of negotiations that lay ahead. The report can be found here: <http://www.post2015hlp.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/UN-Report.pdf>

For many years it was the custom for Quaker House to be the residence of the Director and spouse but the practice ended a few years ago. Following discussions with AFSC, the owner of the house, Andrew and his wife Ursula moved into Quaker House, during some the hottest days in the summer!

In conjunction with the Geneva office, the 2013 QUNO Review was published. The Review is available in electronic form on the QUNO website, <http://www.quno.org>. If you would like to receive a hard copy send an email to qunony@afsc.org.

Penny Heymans, Oslo

Quaker Voluntary Action

This year we have again focussed on building connections with Palestine and Israel. QVA maintained its links with Friends in Ramallah during 2013 and we were able to send groups to two working retreats in the area in October. We continue to encourage younger Friends (aged over 18) to join us and, thanks to donations, have been able to offer limited bursary help.

Trustees have received inspiring reports from those participants on our retreats. Our current newsletter features one of these reports. Our working retreats coordinator Jasmine Piercy continues to build links in the area.

Our special appeal for the work of Ramallah Friends has continued. It has been promoted by writing to Meetings, advertising in 'The Friend', and approaching Trusts. Volunteer trustees have administered the recording and processing of donations to the appeal. We are pleased to report that approximately £15,500 was raised in 2013. Of this £11,000 will be sent to Ramallah Friends, and £4,500 is available to support QVA's work in the area. We are continuing our fundraising efforts in 2014.

In 2014 we will once again be organising two working retreats in October. We find that this is the month best suited to Friends who wish to attend. We would like to thank all who have supported QVA's work in 2013 – practically, prayerfully and financially; including of course those who have contributed directly to the Appeal already mentioned.

Jane Robinson, Clerk

Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre

In 2013 more people than ever before attended Woodbrooke courses at our centre in Birmingham in the UK. This included a gathering of around 15 Friends from around Europe who met in November to share experiences of being members of small and dispersed Meetings. We were also pleased that Friends from outside Britain Yearly Meeting were able to find ways of participating in our 2 year Equipping For Ministry course programme.

Whilst Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre exists as physical place in Birmingham, we are very much aware that Woodbrooke education extends beyond the boundaries of geography. In two key areas we have tried to ensure that access to Woodbrooke learning is available to Friends for whom travel might be difficult, by Woodbrooke coming to meetings and by offering access to learning via on-line or distance learning methods.

During 2013 we held a number of Woodbrooke-on-the road events which included the following:

- Ireland Yearly Meeting - '*The development of the Quaker Vision*', and an event for treasurers
- German Yearly Meeting – training for elders
- Belgium and Luxemburg Meeting – two events on eldership and oversight
- Switzerland Yearly Meeting – '*Grounding our spiritual diversity in prayer and meditation*', and '*Prophetic Voice*'

The use of technology offers opportunities to shrink some of the geographical barriers that get in our way, and during the year Julia Ryberg has been working on a global communication project. With around ten friends from around the world she has been exploring the use of different forms of technology to see how they might work for

different forms of learning and growth, in our dispersed communities. The group has explored the use of text messaging, Skype and Facebook etc., and this work will feed into Woodbrooke's ongoing development of on-line and distance learning resources and opportunities.

We have been delighted that participants from outside of the UK have been able to participate in on-line courses that were run last year, including *'Being a Quaker Clerk'* and *'Deepening the life of the Spirit'*. The latter was an online retreat exploring prayer and spiritual practice and proved so popular we were able to run it a second time in the same year.

At the end of 2013, Woodbrooke Trustees embarked upon the start of a 12 month period of strategic planning to establish Woodbrooke's direction for the next 10-20 years. We would be delighted to hear about your thoughts and ideas and there is a short survey which can help facilitate this at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/6KPQ5QJ> or if you would prefer please feel free to contact me directly.

We are so grateful for the continued upholding of our work by Friends from all over the world, so on behalf of everyone who helps deliver our work can I say a heartfelt thank you.

Sandra Berry, Director

Yearly Meetings in 2014

Yearly Meeting	When	Contact
Denmark	29-30 March	post@kvaekerne.dk
Ireland	24-27 April	office@quakers-in-ireland.ie
Netherlands	16-18 May	secretariaat@dequakers.nl
Sweden	29 May – 1 June	kvakargarden@kvakare.se
Belgium & Luxembourg	6-8 June	quakerclerk@gmail.com
Finland	6-8 June	jaanaerkkilaja@gmail.com
Switzerland	6-8 June	symclerk@swiss-quakers.ch
Norway	3-6 July	kveker@kveker.org
Britain	2-9 August	Paul Parker, Clerk, Friends House, 173 Euston Road London NW1 2AX karlg@quaker.org.uk
German	2-5 October	clerks@quaeker.org

Other events in 2014

Event	When	Contact
Grenztreffen Switzerland/Germany/France	11-13 April	Brigitte Seger
EMEYF Spring Gathering	12-19 April	emeyf@qcea.org
EMES Annual Meeting	1-4 May	emes@fwccemes.org
Central European Gathering	29 May–1 June	Jalka
Border Meeting	12-14 Sept	Anne Monheim
Peace & Service Consultation in Brussels, Belgium	28-30 November	emes@fwccemes.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 pounds sterling made out to 'FWCC-EMES'.

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

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.

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

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.

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.

