

Among Friends

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Diversity: God's Fingerprints

Dear Friends,

Unusually warm and pleasant Autumn weather accompanied me on several trips recently, from a lovely long weekend in September The Hague, where the EMES Executive Committee met as guests of the local Meeting, German Yearly Meeting in early October, Hungary, where Evangelical Friends Church International (EFCI) Europe held its triennial conference later in the month.

Different locations, different landscapes, different languages, cultures, architecture, food – experiencing such diversity was an intensely rich blessing, and led me to reflect on the meaning of it. Surely, a tree is a tree, and a flower is a flower. A bird is a bird, and a cat is a cat – yet creation seems to have an extravagant abundance of different types of tree, flower, bird, cat etc. And even within each type, the individual specimen is unique, recognisably different from all others. Each and everyone of us has fingerprints that are unique and distinguish us from every other human being on the planet.



EFCI Europe Conference, Tolna, Hungary Photo: Antel

This reminded me of the story in Sanhedrin 38a (Soncino transl., p. 240): *Our Rabbis taught: Adam, the first human being, was created as a single person to show forth the greatness of the Ruler Who is beyond all Rulers, the Blessed Holy One. For if a human ruler mints many coins from one mould, they all carry the same image, they all look the same. But the Blessed Holy One shaped all human beings in the Divine Image, as Adam was shaped in the Divine Image [Gen. 1: 27], “btzelem elohim,” “in the Image of God.” And yet not one of them resembles another.*

The Quaker Youth Pilgrimage took place in Peru and Bolivia this year, and gave a group of young Friends from all Quaker traditions the opportunity of experiencing the joys – and challenges, of our diversity – their moving epistle invites us to respond to George Fox' call to “*be obedient to the Lord God and go through the work and be valiant for the Truth upon earth*”.

Diversity is no accident – it is intended. It is God's fingerprints in creation. We need not fear it when it manifests in our different ways of being Friends, or condescend to tolerate it. We are called to affirm and celebrate it in each other, and to be open to learning from each other. I hope we can give thanks for each other, and always pray for each other's ministries.

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Marisa Johnson, Executive Secretary

A Testimony To The Grace Of God As Shown In The Life Of Ann Strauss (Née Clark)

31 March 1931 – 4 December 2013 (Edited Extract)

Ann's parents were birthright Friends. Her mother trained as a nurse; her father was a tea planter Ceylon but came home to marry her mother, after which they both returned to Ceylon where Ann was born. With World War 2 threatening, the family came back to live near Sidcot, the Quaker boarding school in Somerset, where Ann was one of the first pupils in a class newly created to take in children evacuated from the cities. A couple of years later another evacuee arrived at Sidcot, Kurt Strauss. He and his parents had escaped Jewish persecution in Germany with Quaker help. Kurt and Ann went through the school together until 1948, when he left to begin an apprenticeship and she went to university to study German. It was only after leaving Sidcot that they began to take a serious interest in each other, and it was another eight years before they were married.

Not long after their first child, Peter, was born, Ann and Kurt sought a spiritual base on which to bring up their family. They applied for, and were accepted into, Quaker member-ship. Shortly after their second child, Diana, was born, Kurt got a job with Eurovision in Brussels where the family lived from 1961 - 1965. There was no recognised Meeting in Belgium in those days; isolated Friends, several of them expatriates, were under the care of France and Netherlands YMs, and of FWCC's EMES, and met in each others' homes. Ann and Kurt therefore greatly valued the annual Border Meetings, and even helped to organise a couple of these in Belgium.

Ageing parents and growing children led Kurt and Ann to seek employment back in England, and he was fortunate to find a job in the electricity supply industry where he could use his know-ledge of French and German, so the family moved back. Over the next 40 years, Ann's Quaker service included being a Convener of Overseers, Clerk of a Monthly Meeting and two different Preparative Meetings, and a Registering Officer for Quaker Marriages. Outside Quaker work, Ann was active in the local CND movement, in work



Ann Strauss

Photo: Kurt Strauss

for asylum seekers and refugees, and in teaching English to immigrants in their own homes, but in 2006 Ann and Kurt moved again, this time into a continuing care retirement community outside York.

“Throughout her life Ann had a natural feeling for the environment. She was passionate about plants and gardening. It was said that all ten of Ann's fingers were green and she gardened with loving care and great success, growing both vegetables and flowers. The life of Ann Strauss has demonstrated the essential features of true Quaker living. They encompass integrity, caring for others, service to the disadvantaged, concern for peace, commitment to her Quaker Meeting. Her life has touched many others and we recall her life with thankfulness.”

Quaker Youth Pilgrimage Epistle

To all Friends everywhere,

For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another.

Romans 12, 4-5

Friends in God: having to describe the why and the what unites us which is God's love, has been a unique experience for each one of us.

We twenty-six pilgrims from 9 different countries have travelled together in Peru and Bolivia for a month (July 22nd – August 21st, 2014). Due to the

pilgrimage being the first to Latin America there has been much travelling in order to see as many Friends and places as possible. The places we have visited include Ite, Tacna, Moquegua, Arequipa, Puno, Ilave, Amacari, Sorata,

La Paz, Coroico, Cochabamba, and Santa Cruz. At most of these places we heard the about the founding and stories of the churches we visited. We are grateful for the hospitality and care shown to us during our travels. One of the achievements of this pilgrimage was showing that a trip to Peru and Bolivia can be a success; with thanks to God's blessing, to our leaders and the FWCC pilgrimage committees for helping make this possible. It was explained to us that we were guinea pigs and it just so happened that we also ate guinea pig.

The pilgrimage makes us understand that it is God's purpose that we are not alone. Whether our worship is programmed for a whole morning one day a week, or an un-programmed spiritual moment that lets the silence work and enables us to listen to the voice of God or sometimes a semi-programmed union of the two, we are united in faith to praise God. At first our different forms of worship slightly conflicted, but after we discussed both at length; we came to appreciate each other's beliefs. In our meetings for worship for business we nominated co-clerks, elders, a committee of care, a nominating committee, and a closing committee. Some of these appointments were made twice in order for more pilgrims to participate.

We have found a home away from home within each other. Everyone quickly became integrated in spite of



Quaker Youth Pilgrimage Photo: from QYP blog

the language gap. We had "secret friends" (anonymously assigned friends) to look after, which gave us a chance to get to know one another better. Playing games and learning songs in English and

Spanish have helped us get to know one another, including the young Friends from churches we visited, who made a valuable contribution to our pilgrimage. Our bus journeys were made more vibrant and noisy by Noah's Ark, a singing game. Many hours have been spent learning new games from pilgrims' home countries. Whenever given the chance, we played lots of sports. It has been a month entirely separate from our everyday lives yet we feel that we have known each other for years.

Let all nations hear the word by sound or writing. Spare no place, spare not tongue nor pen but be obedient to the Lord God and go through the work and be valiant for the Truth upon earth; tread and trample all that is contrary under.... Be patterns, be examples in all countries, places, islands, nations, wherever you go, so that your carriage and life may preach among all sorts of people, and to them. Then you will come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in every one.

George Fox 1656, letter from Launceston Gaol

Signed on behalf of the Quaker Youth Pilgrimage 2014, Santa Cruz, Bolivia, August 20th 2014

Original co-clerks:

Alexandra Corcoran

Myron Guachalla

Current co-clerks:

Rachel Whittaker

Sergio Espino Gregorio

European Border Meeting 2014

Lina Jordan of Maidenhead LM, UK writes:

The 2014 European Border meeting took place in Walberberg, Germany from 12-14 September and brought together over 60 Friends, young Friends and children from Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Switzerland, the UK (England and Northern Ireland) and the US.

The weekend began with a lively session facilitated by German Friend Susanne Odeh which focused on the unity between mind and body. As Quakers we listen for the promptings of the spirit in the silence of Meeting for Worship or through the words of ministry offered to us. Susanne encouraged us to listen to our bodies and look for the subtle signals of our senses as another way of attuning to the spirit. Through movement and body awareness exercises Susanne led us in a light hearted yet deep exploration of our bodies' potential to support us in worship.

The theme for the weekend was *Quakers and Jung: One Direction - Two Paths* and the keynote speaker was Nancy Krieger, a Swiss Friend and Jungian analyst.

Nancy's preparation was extensive and her detailed keynote paper brought to life Jung's ideas about the psyche and the collective unconscious, archetypes, the shadow, the ego and the self among others.

We explored the common ground between Quaker theology and Jungian thought: the experiential knowing of God present in both, the similarities between what we as Quakers call "that of God in everyone" and Jung's idea of the Self, and the parallels between early Quakers' understanding of Pentecost as an inward experience of spiritual unfoldment and Jung's idea of individuation.

While the conversations about Jung and Quakers stimulated an inward exploration of ideas and experiences, the meeting was also very much open to Friends' involvement with other causes and concerns outwardly in the world.

Edward Haasl introduced the concern of Belgian Friends about providing a strong Quaker presence



European Border Meeting Photo: *Lina Jordan*

at the protest against Eurosatory 2015– the largest defence trade fair in France.

On behalf of Dutch Friends, Martine Kuipers invited us to join the global campaign against amendments to Article 9 of the Japanese constitution, which renounces war as a way of resolving conflict.

Young German Friend Hannah Odeh spoke engagingly about her experience of Young European Friends pilgrimage to South America earlier in the summer, her appreciation of diversity within Quaker traditions and the joy of discovering a sense of deeper connection with her own Quaker roots.

After the thought provoking and sometimes challenging sessions, there was time to get to know each other better through conversations, gentle walks and entertainment. On Saturday night the many talents of Border Friends entertained us with live music, comedy sketches, dancing and games followed by a delightful evening of conversation and roasted marshmallows around the campfire.

I came away from the weekend thinking that calling the meeting a Border meeting could be somewhat misleading if borders were interpreted as barriers. For me the meeting achieved the opposite by crossing some of the borders we create ourselves or co-create with others: geographical, personal, spiritual and the ones between our bodies, minds and Spirit.

Ukraine Concern

At the EMES Annual Meeting in Strasbourg in May 2014 two Friends, Misha Roshchin of Moscow Monthly Meeting, and Roland Rand, an attender at the small worship group in Tallin, Estonia, brought a concern to the Meeting to travel to Ukraine to investigate the realities of the conflict that was raging at the time, and see whether Quakers could provide any support to people engaged in peacemaking. The concern was thoroughly tested, a support group set up and an appeal for funding launched, which Friends around Europe supported very generously.

Although Misha and Roland had planned to undertake their separate trips during the summer months, the escalation of the conflict prevented travel until September.

Roland Rand went to Kiev and Odessa with the aim of meeting with local peace activists and some representatives of governmental, religious and citizens' organizations as well as ordinary people, in order to understand better the current crisis and promote dialogue where possible. Roland had planned to travel with an Estonian friend of his, but due to an unfortunate accident this person was not able to travel at the last minute. Meetings, seminars, AVP workshops were held, in conjunction with local AVP trainers, and some tentative proposals to promote peace through future activities sketched, to promote peace, in accordance with Friends' witness. These plans consisted of a possible camp for families with children to be held in Estonia and Ukraine, and a Christmas festival of organ music and an exhibition of Estonian and Ukrainian artists' work to be held at the church of Pastor Andrew Hamburg.

Misha Roshchin travelled to Lugansk in Eastern Ukraine, He found Lugansk, where a lot of fighting had taken place, very quiet during his visit. The ceasefire was being observed well.

Misha writes: *I visited many places in the city and have met different people including the President of People's Council of Lugansk Republic (so designated under the Minsk protocol, but disputed by the Ukrainian government) Alexei Kariakin who took part in the Minsk' negotiations. At the end of my visit I met a few people who sought to organise a dialogue between Ukraine, Lugansk Republic and Russia to address present day problems. I feel*



Damage to a Church Photo: Misha Roshchin

that this proposal is very positive and might be fruitful. Especially interesting and helpful for me was a meeting with a troupe of Ukrainian-speaking musical-dramatic theatre in the city. It gave me a real sense of what is going on between ethnic Ukrainians and ethnic Russians in Lugansk province and what should be done to avoid more problems in future.

I consider that this was my first tentative trip to this troubled area. I didn't see any humanitarian, peacemaking or human-rights international organizations operating in the area apart from the International Red Cross. I tried to reach Donetsk, but it was quite difficult because the city of Debaltsevo which is on the way there is under Ukrainian control and there is an intensive fighting around it. For Russian citizens is rather difficult and dangerous to travel through any territory in Donbass controlled by Ukrainian forces. It would be good in the future to visit Donetsk area too.

The Quaker Vigil at the Eurosatory Arms Trade Fair, Paris 2014



Karina Knight-Spencer of France Yearly Meeting writes: I think Yvonne Cresmann would have been so pleased to see us all gathered at the Parc Des Expositions, near Charles De Gaulle Airport from June 16th to 20th last. I had met Yvonne when attending France Yearly Meeting several years ago and I had heard her speak of her attendance at this, one of the biggest trade fairs for the sale of armaments in the world, held in Paris every two years. I thought that I would attend one year as part of long list things I felt called to do. From the moment I heard of her death, last year, my mind was made up, I would go and hopefully encourage some Friends to travel with me from Ireland. As so often is the case when a right decision is made, the way opens and it was not long before Karina Knight, another Friend in France, began to organize and an invitation went out to Yearly Meetings, far and near, to attend the Quaker vigil for peace in Paris, and the stage was set.

Friends in my own Meeting were interested and supportive and two others were strongly motivated to accompany me. In the end four of us set out, bringing with us my sixteen year old grandson and the fourteen year old daughter of my Friend Margaret. Flights were booked and then an Irish Friend Jenny Haughton whose painter husband Brian works in an atelier in Paris, offered us the use of their place for our time there.

The experience began with a Meeting for Worship at the Quaker centre at 117, Rue Vaugirard near Montparnasse. Some Friends from Germany had brought some posters which we were to make into placards. After a great lunch,

provided by the Paris Meeting, we set to and through this activity got to know each other and prepared for the vigil and the practicalities that were to be considered. An independent film crew moved around as we worked, which was a bit unnerving at first but in the fun and excitement of the work they quickly faded into the background. We carried one of the placards with us as we left and as we saw some sights on our way back to the 19th arrondissement in the north east corner of Paris, There were many curious glances as we walked through the Luxemburg gardens among the Sunday family groups and people relaxing in the sunshine. My grandson (the carrier) was nonchalant and unaware of people's attempts to read the words on the poster as he and my friend's daughter were intent on the sights and sounds in what was their first visit to Paris. Our vigil had started.

Getting to the exhibition park the following day, was a challenge as there was a rail strike and a go slow was in operation by the Paris rail workers.. The trains were crowded and we got off at one stop too soon by mistake. We decided to try and get a bus to the Park and a young bus driver who was just going off duty saw our placard and our anxiety. He stopped to ask us if we needed help and when he heard why we were in Paris and our dilemma, immediately offered to drive his bus to a stop where we would be able to get a bus connection to our destination without charge. Reading the placard he was pleased that we were there for peace.

There were about 50 or so people present on the first day, made up of Friends from France, Germany, Luxemburg,

Netherlands, UK and Ireland (us). There were also a number of activists/pacifists from the campaign against the arms trade (CAT) as well as some others who were present to show their concern and their non agreement with the hosting of this enormous trade fair, where in an extensive complex of trade exhibition halls, could be found the latest technologies employed in warfare and killing. The first day was the day when media would be present and there was a sense that there might be more exposure and visibility

As we walked up from the station which was at the entrance, I was horrified by the digital advertisements which were placed on either side of the route. It was eerie to see large images of military aircraft and rockets in this way. The business and the market of war were visible from the moment of arrival. As I continued along the path taking the buyers/visitors/sellers to the vast exhibition halls, I was struck afresh by the advertisements pointing out the advances of science and technology in the War industry. From the latest innovations in drone design and aviation, tanks and armoured vehicles, science that could make water from air, protective clothing for the military, ever lighter to carry guns and then up to the minute, state of the art hydraulic prosthetic limbs. I am still trying to get my head around that.

We stood with our Friends at a large roundabout not far from the entrance, where we had permission to be. From time to time we could see escorted limousines arriving, presumably dignitaries and VIPs. We faced the hordes of people who were disgorged from the arriving trains, as they made their way to the main exhibition areas. It took courage to stand in friendliness and silent conviction in the knowledge that we were so few. As the crowds moved forward and around us I had a sensation similar to standing in a strong incoming tide, feeling the pull and tug which had the potential to knock one over. It took effort to find a way of standing solidly and I was grateful to a Friend from Brussels who advised on posture. We had been asked to dress in white clothing and although the rain held off, it was cold and windy and I felt a chill which was not helped by the psychological temperature of such a terrific severance from the

point of sale of these weapons and the point of delivery which invariably meant death for so many hundreds of thousands of people around the world.

As I held on to one side of a banner, I tried to make eye contact with what seemed at the beginning, to be a sea of suited men and some women, carrying briefcases, many smoking between the train and entering the smoke free zones of the trade fair. Many just walked by and refused the cards we offered. Others smiled as they accepted the fliers and cards. One man said to me, with a smile of recognition "I met you here the last time" as he passed, and I smiled back, glad that whoever it was I looked like, had been there before and that he had remembered "her" presence. Over the days we attended the vigil many of the faces became familiar and we recognized each other on the train as we travelled to and from the city. Most however kept their eyes down or ahead and one woman repeated the words, "idiot, idiot, idiot" every day as she passed me. Ironically on the last day, when I was offered a seat in yet another crowded train, it turned out to be beside this woman, whose recognition of me had her reach into her bag for a book, as she could hardly continue to repeat those words for the entire duration of the journey, could she? Well not without risking some kind of conversation! There is so much to say about the experience and I am glad that I have had the opportunity to speak to many of my friends, family, colleagues and Friends too, since I have returned home. I needed to digest and indeed I am still doing so as I write. I don't know if it's possible to prepare fully for anyone's participation at this Quaker vigil as the experience is such a unique one for each person. I am so glad though to have had this experience



and I feel it has brought me closer to the reality of the size of what I have come to understand as the death economy, and an understanding that many wars are probably provoked in order to sustain this multimillion Dollar/Euro/Pound industry

The young Friends were enthusiastically distributing cards, being friendly and chatting to people, who were more receptive to them than to us older ones. It was great to see new friendships beginning and older ones being built on. Our own young people found the experience challenging and impressive, both saying that it was a highlight of their time in Paris.

One story I would like to tell is of a young man who after taking a card from me on my last day there, returned a moment later saying “what is your argument?” Freezing in anxiety as I looked for words to express what I could say (I had become so accustomed to standing in silence). I said a silent prayer for inspiration and then found myself telling him that as he was the first person who had stopped to talk to me and given the volume of people who had passed, I was curious about what it was that had made him turn back to talk to me. That was all I said. He then spoke at length about his struggles when it came to taking the job with the company he worked for. He spoke of the arguments he had engaged in internally before he became convinced that it was right to take a job with his present



company. He spoke about how his family supported him and that his parents were on his side. He spoke of his new fiancé and his hopes for their life together. He spoke of his beliefs about the need to protect and defend the security of countries and people. He believed that if all the weapons in the world were destroyed tomorrow that more would be made. He spoke about the weapon that killed most people in African countries being the machete. He spoke about his disagreement with the resale of arms and weapons and saw that, yes, weapons did end up in the wrong hands at times. He spoke about the abuse of power and came back to the need as he saw it, to work at overseeing and monitoring the use of weapons. As I stood there listening I saw a loving mother's son, his parents pride and his love for his family, his conscientiousness and his thoughtfulness, his continuing conflict and his efforts to reach out, his aspirations for his personal life with his soon to be wife at his side in a new family unit. And I saw the best in him. As he finally came to the end of what was a monologue of maybe 10 – 15 minutes, I thanked him for stopping and for sharing his views with me. I told him I was glad that he was someone who put such thought into how he was living his life and that he was someone who was able to ask difficult questions of himself and others. I said it sounded as if he was part of



a very loving family and I wished him well and hoped he would enjoy a long and peaceful life with his new bride and in their family together. “Bon chance monsieur” said I, not having said one word of an argument, the argument he had wanted. No words of my disapproval of the Euroatory Arms trade fair passed my lips, nothing of my horror, nothing of my fear for all those who would die violently as a result of the production of weaponry, nothing of my journey to Paris from Ireland, nothing of the work of the artist, Brian Maguire, whose studio we had been privileged to stay in while in Paris, work that focused of the violent deaths of people and a traumatized community in Juarez in Mexico, nothing of my own research on the millions of women, girls and children killed by guns in war zones and in their own homes in acts of “intimate terrorism”, in countries where selling, buying and use of guns is made easy by governments who are seduced and bought by the wealth of huge corporations and arms manufacturers. I said nothing of the brutalization of children pressed into soldiery and forced to use guns and the traumatic affect of this on their young minds, hearts and spirits. I said nothing of any of this and neither did I speak of envisioning a world without weapons and the devastation of war.

As I waited for him to move forward towards the exhibition halls and said again “Bon chance”, but he did not rush off. This young man hesitated and remained standing with me in silence for a moment and then he looked at me and with a beautiful smile he said “ I am glad you are here” and looking around at the few of us (about 18) who were still there, “... that all of you are here...the world needs idealists..... to give us hope”. Another moment passed and we said goodbye to each

other each of us able to thank the other.

I feel very lucky to have had this meeting and although I had been thinking of what possible difference a handful of people could make set against such a “tsunami” of people busy with the economics of war, I came away glad that though small and quiet, we were visible and our testimony for peace was being seen and heard. I am still thinking of that hope, the hope that was projected on to our small group by this lone young man. I cannot help but think that in his own life and in his willingness to reach out and engage and to ask the questions he represents hope to me and I don’t think he is the only one. There must be so many, like this young man, who is doing his best. I like to think that we have both given something to each other and that seeds have been sown.

At Meeting for Worship last Sunday, back in Limerick again, the size of what we had been part of came into me and with it a feeling of enormous compassion and so much appreciation for the work of the Alternatives to Violence project who as I write are coming to the end of their international conference at Maynooth, near Dublin. Forty two countries were represented by AVP trainers and facilitators, ordinary people who are convinced that it is possible to live in the light of transforming power and wish to pass on awareness and knowledge of alternatives to violence to others. Perhaps our efforts are small and quiet but the image of the drip drop of water on stone over time and its power to affect change and make a dent, is strong after my Paris experience.

*All photos by Karina Knight-Spencer of France
Yearly Meeting*



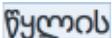
EMEYF Spring Gathering 2015, Georgia

Andrew Lane writes:

Why Georgia? I had gone out for the afternoon at the 2014 Spring Gathering of EMEYF (European and Middle East Young Friends, see www.emeyf.org) and wasn't in the hostel when Friends met to determine where the 2015 Europe and Middle East Young Friends Spring Gathering would be held. I returned to find the group reeling from a Business Meeting that had agreed to hold the next Spring Gathering in Georgia. I heard stories of a discernment process that seemed to have surprised everyone.

Part of the reason for the decision was that several Georgian Friends have been hoping to come to Spring Gathering for several years, but each year they have been denied a visa to enter the country where the gathering was taking place.

Georgia is a beautiful country with the Caucasus mountains to the north and the Black Sea to the west. It experienced violent conflict in 1992-3 and 2008, but had its first peaceful transition of power following the elections in 2012.

The Georgian language uses a unique script, where every letter looks a bit like the number 3. For example, water is pronounced ts'q'ali and would be written .

Along with its close cousins, Svan, Mingrelian, and Laz, it is one of the Kartvelian languages, which are not known to be related to any other languages in the world.

A handful of Friends in Georgia hold un-programmed Meeting for Worship in the capital Tbilisi. We may



Map: CIA World Factbook

think Young Friends can be isolated in Britain, but Friends in Tbilisi would probably have to travel more than 700 miles south west to Lebanon to find their next nearest Quaker Meeting.

The Spring Gathering is an opportunity to support, share with, and learn from our Friends in Georgia.

It's also a chance to deepen our spirituality with Friends from around Europe through discussion and worship. I had fun last year and recommend April's Spring Gathering in Georgia to anyone up for a bit of a Quaker adventure.

For more information on EMEYF's Spring Gathering, which will be held in April 2015, visit www.emeyf.org.

EMEYF is a community of Young Friends aged 18-30 from across Europe and the Middle East. It can be thought of as being something like YFGM covering a much bigger area. EMEYF's main event each year is the Spring Gathering, which is held in a different location each year. In the last few years, EMEYF has visited Germany, Switzerland, Yorkshire, and the Republic of Macedonia.

The 2015 Spring Gathering will be taking place from the 4th – 11th April in Ureki, Georgia, which is near Batumi on the Black Sea Coast. Theme is to be confirmed.

You can find out more about Spring Gathering by emailing emeyf.spring.gathering@gmail.com. For more general EMEYF information you can email emeyf@qcea.org or visit www.emeyf.org.

This article was originally published in the October 2014 issue of *The Young Quaker*, a print and online publication for young Friends everywhere. You can find their publications and articles (including a write-up of EMEYF's 2014 Spring Gathering!) by visiting www.theyoungquaker.org.uk

Quaker United Nations Committee, New York

Penny Heymans of Norway Yearly Meeting writes:

I recently attended the Quaker United Nations Committee (QUNC) meeting in New York. QUNC consists of five representatives appointed by American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) and five appointed by Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC): one from each section and the General Secretary. I am the representative for EMES.

The mandate of the QUNC-New York (there is also a QUNC for QUNO-Geneva) is among other things is to be “responsible for setting program priorities, recommending program plans and budgets to the AFSC Board of Directors, and monitoring and evaluating the work of QUNO-New York”.

The committee received reports from the work for 2014 and looked at the proposed work for 2015. QUNO-New York has four main strategies: (1) Local perspectives in the work of the UN Peacebuilding Commission; (2) Promote peacebuilding and peace issues within the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals framework; (3) Coordinate work on the UN of direct interest to Friends; (4) Promoting change through peaceful means.

Kerri Kennedy, Associate General Secretary at AFSC, presented an overview of AFSC’s international programs in 18 countries around the world and the future strategic focus. Of particular interest to QUNO was AFSC’s renewed focus on the Quaker International Affairs Representatives Program together with the intention to link this with policy work.

In 2015 the UN will undertake a full review of Peace Operations, which includes Peacekeeping and Special Political Missions as well as the Peacebuilding Architecture. QUNO is concerned at the growing trend for more militarized UN intervention, and will be finding ways of having input into the review process, one of which will be a joint project with Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) to help make the connection between the Peacebuilding Commission and experiences of those working on the ground.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon launched an exciting new initiative, Human Rights Up Front, in November.



QUNC New York members Photo: Penny Heymans

Its goal is to equip the UN system with the ability to respond to human rights violations before they turn into mass atrocities, in other words a focus on prevention. (There is a video of a panel discussion on this topic on <http://www.ipinst.org>).

After intense work by QUNO and others throughout 2014, the outcome document from the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development actually includes a goal on peace and good governance, quite an achievement. However, it is one of 17, and it remains to be seen if it will still be in the final list after intergovernmental negotiations during 2015, during which NGO input is limited.

Collaboration is growing beyond the two QUNOs and other Quaker agencies. The joint statement on Climate Change signed by nine Quaker groups is a good example. As also is the Annual Review of work (most recent edition May 2014) and the joint QUNO website.

In September Lindsey Cook, representative for Climate Change in QUNO-Geneva spent an intense week with QUNO-New York in events around the UN Secretary-General’s climate summit. These included among other activities co-hosting two lunches at Quaker House, as well as of course taking part with QUNO-New York staff in the People’s Climate March.

It is exciting and a privilege to be just a little part of the excellent work the QUNOs do at the United Nations on our behalf, and I encourage you to read more on their website: <http://www.quno.org>

Helping to Create the World We Want to Live In

Alexandra Bosbeer, Quaker Council for European Affairs writes:

I am part of a small team at Quaker House Brussels. Together we are ‘the Quaker voice in Europe’. (The organisation is known formally as the Quaker Council for European Affairs, QCEA.) We advocate at the European Union and the Council of Europe on peace, human rights, democratic governance, economic justice, and sustainability. Our starting points are Quaker testimonies, and our method is robust monitoring and analysis, together with Quaker discernment.

With a small staff of less than half a dozen people, we monitor policy developments and select the policy areas in which the Quaker voice might make a difference – and where our contribution will not simply be the same as that of other, larger organisations already active on the topic. Our voice is most often valued at the conjunction of programme themes (e.g. the impact of trade and trade rules on conflict and on sustainability as well as on economic justice). The Quaker voice is also valued by others in Brussels and in Strasbourg, as being ‘moral without moralising’.

Quakers and others often ask how we staff carry out our advocacy. In order to give you an idea of how we find where to suggest a Quaker whisper, here is a description of some of the activities we have carried out over the past few weeks:

- Sevasti and Andrew completed case studies of hate crime measures in four different EU countries.
- George drafted answers to a public consultation on the EU’s energy goals for 2020, inviting Friends to submit their own answers through an action alert e-mail. The call to action was also translated into German by a Quaker volunteer.
- Tim observed a debate in the European Parliament Sub-Committee on Security and Defence and wrote a blog about the MEPs’ plan to open research funding to military purposes.
- I worked with a consortium of NGOs on a briefing paper describing the threats from a mechanism being incorporated into free trade deals: an arbitration tribunal, at which multi-national companies can sue national governments and be awarded compensation for loss of (future) profit due to public interest legislation.



The QCEA team (plus one visiting mother):

- *Alexandra Bosbeer (Representative, also working on issues including human rights in trade),*
 - *Sevasti Christoforou (communications and hate crime),*
 - *Tim Harman (peace),*
 - *Andrew Lane (Deputy Representative, focussing on peace and on criminal justice),*
 - *Gordon Matthews (managing the house for Friends as well as the office administration),*
 - *George Thurley (sustainability).*
- Nearly all the staff pitched in to shop and cook for twenty people on QCEA Council, who come to Brussels twice a year to review our programme work and discern ways forward. Council members commented on the excellent Greek-influenced food, as well as the productive meetings.
 - I welcomed former Ecumenical Accompaniers who had volunteered in Palestine and then come to Brussels to raise questions with EU politicians. The discussion focussed on QCEA’s project on the role of the EU in Israel-Palestine.
 - Andrew joined in planning discussions at a network meeting of more than 40 partner NGOs, on how the EU can be more effective in conflict prevention globally.

This is just a small taste of the various ways in which the staff here at QCEA in Brussels works. We look forward to meeting you at a Quaker gathering sometime soon!

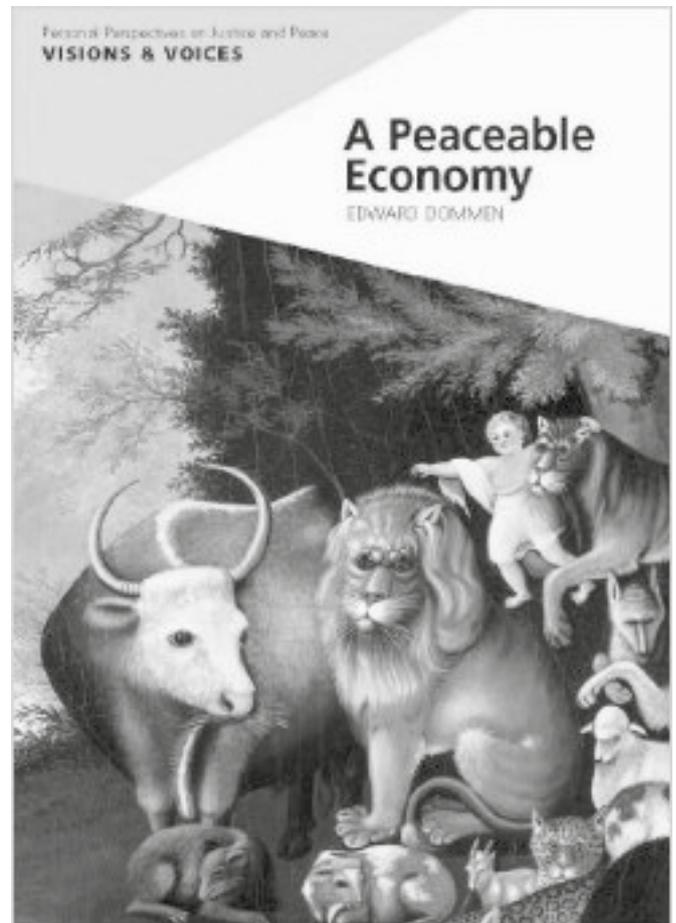
continued on page 13

A Peaceable Economy

Edward Dommen, a Friend from Geneva, Switzerland, has just written *A Peaceable Economy*, a short book which argues that the dynamics of most kinds of economy as they really work are identical to the dynamics of conflict, violence and war. It then explores whether these underlying processes can actually be modified to achieve a more peaceable economy and society, and what to do in so far as they can't.

The same dynamic drives all kinds of economy and wars: it is cumulative causation, along the lines of "Those who have will receive more and they will have more than enough; but as for those who don't have, even the little they have will be taken away from them". Violence is rooted in the workings of both economies and war. The purpose of war is to compel others to do our will, and it is the outcome of many kinds of economic activity. War and economies are intimately related. The key to an alternative vision is the injunction, "Love your neighbour as yourself" However, while sermons are easy, there is no conclusive evidence that humanity has made moral progress over time. The struggle for a peaceable economy must be ceaseless, repeated again and again to counterbalance the inertia of cumulative causation. As William the Silent said, "One need not hope in order to undertake, nor succeed in order to persevere".

The Quaker Centre in Congénies is organising a workshop around it on the weekend of 16 to 18 October 2015, next year. Planning is still at an early stage, but pencil it in already. It will probably be in both English and French. If you would like more information about the programme, or better still if you have suggestions for it - including offers of contributions - contact Edward Dommen at edommen1@worldcom.ch (Tel. +41 22 774 1884).



The historic Quaker centre, just outside Nîmes, is a delightful place, not least in the autumn when the weather is balmy and sunny (<http://www.maison-quaker-congenies.org>). For questions about accommodation and registration, contact the resident Friends, Judy & Dave Kashoff, centre.quaker.congenies@gmail.com (+33 4 66 71 46 41).

The book, published by the World Council of Churches, is advertised for as little as £2.70 (+p&p) through Amazon - but not (yet?) through the Quaker Centre bookshop in London.

Helping to Create the World We Want to Live In *(continued from page 12)*

QCEA represents Friends in Europe on European policy issues. Get involved! Sign up for action alerts (write to Gordon at office@qcea.org), follow our blog (qceablog.wordpress.com), re-tweet our information on Twitter, and 'like' us on Facebook. Check out our new website at qcea.org and find out about our publications.

To raise concerns and contribute to the direction of our

programme work, get in touch with your Yearly Meeting's representative on the QCEA Council, or the EMES Executive Secretary.



**Quaker
Council for
European
Affairs**

Woodbrooke News

A message from Julia Ryberg

The 7- week Quaker in Europe online introductory course has been available for over five years now and has been run in many languages. Translations are nearly finished in Esperanto, Polish and Spanish, and the course can then be run in those languages. Are you interested in joining a learning group in any of those languages? The course can also be run in English as soon as there are enough participants interested in the course.

Another online offering at Woodbrooke is the *Deepening the Life of the Spirit* 6-week online retreat. It has been run a number of times in the past couple of years & is a lovely way to incorporate spiritual practise into our daily lives over a longer period of time than at a weekend retreat. The participants share experiences and reflections, and the group is accompanied by the retreat leader. At present the retreat is being offered to a small number of Young Friends.

The *Seasons of my Friendship* retreat at Woodbrooke 5-7 December still has some openings. It is an opportunity for Friends who have actively been serving their Meetings to re-connect with the Spirit and to what brought them to Quakerism.

Julia Ryberg is responsible for Woodbrooke's multi-lingual online learning programme in support of Friends and Enquirers across Europe.

What else is happening at Woodbrooke?

Woodbrooke is pleased to announce that from 1 December 2014 our new Head of Learning will be Simon Best. The recruitment process produced a strong field and we are grateful for all the support Friends have given in this search. Simon is currently working as Woodbrooke's Nurturing Friends and Meetings Tutor. He has previously worked with Young Friends General Meeting, The Leavers, & the Children and Young People's team of BYM. As Head of Learning, he will be leading the delivery & development of the entire learning programme, which includes short courses, postgraduate work, Woodbrooke-on-the-Road & e-learning.

Our attention is starting to turn towards the new year and to the inspiring opportunities that are available for Friends, based in the UK, in Europe & beyond.

We are about to publish our new 2015 course brochure that outlines our short course programme for Friends. An electronic version will be available to read on our website www.woodbrooke.org.uk from mid-November 2014.

We are delighted that our first cohort of students on the Postgraduate Certificate in Quaker Studies and the MA in

Quakerism in the Modern World started studying this autumn. These new programmes represent an innovative, interdisciplinary collaboration between our Centre for Postgraduate Quaker Studies (CPQS) and Lancaster University. Building on established scholarship, these distance learning courses, which are delivered entirely online, offer convenience and flexibility in terms of study time and location. The programmes can be undertaken full-time over 12 months or part-time over 24 months. If you are interested or have any questions about the programmes, please do email Professor Ben Pink Dandelion (b.dandelion@lancaster.ac.uk). And did you know that 'Woodbrooke on the Road', our travelling teaching service, regularly travels abroad to deliver workshops to meetings outside the UK? In recent years our team has travelled to Switzerland, Germany, Poland, Ireland and many other places.

We offer a menu of workshops for your meeting to choose from online including courses on Quaker history, theology and testimony, as well as those exploring Quaker roles, those relating to Quakers in the world and to the spiritual life of the individual and the meeting.

If you would like to find out more, contact our Educational Administration team at off-site@woodbrooke.org.uk.



Chatting & relaxing in the Woodbrooke grounds

Photo: Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre

The Småland Worship Group: its Birth and Development

Sue Glover Frykman of Sweden Yearly Meeting writes:

Sweden Yearly Meeting has around 100 members and a good number of Attenders – in Sweden we call them friends of Friends. Meetings for Worship under the care of the Yearly Meeting are held in Gothenburg, Stockholm, Småland, Järna, Uppsala, Mälardalen/Katrineholm, Skåne, Rimbo, Umeå, Västgötaland and Ekenäs in Finland. In Sweden most of the Quaker groups are small, and many Friends do not live anywhere near a Meeting – both of which have their own challenges.

I'm part of the Småland Worship Group, which has addressed the challenges of being small and living at a distance by developing its own particular model for holding Meeting for Worship. The group took off for real in December 2010, when two Quakers moved to Småland and more or less doubled the number of Quakers already in the county. There is no real geographical or meeting 'centre', because Småland is large and together with friends of Friends we cover a wide area consisting of Västervik and Oskarshamn on the east coast, Gränna to the west, Värnamo and Växjö to the south and Nässjö in the north.

Feeling adventurous, the expanded little group planned its first Meeting for Worship in Värnamo on January 6th 2011 – Epiphany. As luck would have it, a snowstorm raged in the county on that day, which led to each of



*The 'extraordinary' member in the garden July 2014
Photo: Sue Glover Frykman*

us having Meeting for Worship in our own homes and connecting to the others in spirit.

Unperturbed, we agreed on a six-month programme, the idea being to host meeting for worship in our own homes once a month on a rotating basis. Since then we have never looked back, but have continued to develop and to welcome newcomers. The advantage of meeting in different venues is that others can join us without having to travel too far. Our group ranges in age from four to seventy five and includes a faithful four-footed 'extraordinary' member.

We began by having Meeting for Worship – either on a Saturday or Sunday, whichever was best for us – followed by a simple lunch with conversation. This autumn we have added a 'study' session, in worship sharing format, before Meeting for Worship. This means that we now include study, a coffee break, worship, lunch and social fellowship in our day together, which feels more complete and allows us to go deeper. So far our study topics have included looking at politics and Quakerism and discerning how and whether they fit together, learning more about a member's ecumenical accompaniment work in the West Bank, and exploring the question "What are we afraid of?"

If the model that we have developed 'speaks to your condition' then I would encourage you to try it. It has worked for us and brought enrichment.



Gottfried Novak (the group's contact person) and Waldemar Novak Photo: Sue Glover Frykman

Diary Dates 2014 - 2015

More dates for 2014 are available on the website: www.fwccemes.org. Please send items for inclusion in the diary to Marisa Johnson at emes@fwccemes.org.

14-16 November: EMEYF Annual Meeting emeyf@qcea.org

28 – 30 November: EMES Peace and Service Consultation, Kortenberg, Belgium. Contact Marisa Johnson emes@fwccemes.org

27 – 29 March 2015: German/Swiss Border Meeting, Contact Brigitte Seger seger.brigitte@sunrise.ch

1 – 4 May 2015: Britain Yearly Meeting, London

4 - 7 June 2015: EMES Annual Meeting, Woodbrooke emes@fwccemes.org

Errata: The picture of Marius Boelsma on page 2 of Issue 130 was incorrectly attributed to Pieter Ketner and wrongly dated May 2014. The attribution should be to Horst-Dieter Breuer. We apologise unreservedly for this, and for the incorrect date.

A European Quaker All Age Gathering to celebrate 30 years of EMEYF is scheduled for 30 July to 6 August 2016 in Bonn. Would you be interested in helping plan it? If so, please contact martintouwen@gmail.com

22nd – 25th May 2015

Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre

People can't be made to forgive, yet how can there be reconciliation in large scale conflicts if there is no forgiveness? This weekend will examine this dilemma and explore some moving stories where forgiveness has made a difference. This course is for you if you want to look at models and frameworks of forgiveness and how forgiveness and reconciliation has been approached in conflicts around the world. It will involve a variety of input methods as well as discussion. www.woodbrooke.org.uk

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

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Deadline for Among Friends 132: 1 March 2015