

Among Friends

No 133: Summer 2015

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Pilgrims' Progress

Dear Friends,

It seems hard to believe that three years have already passed since the World Conference of Friends in Kabarak, Kenya, issued its cry for the earth and all life in it in a call for Peace and Eco-justice. We are now just a few months away from the next opportunity for the wider Quaker family to come together again, this time in a smaller World Plenary, to be held in Pisac, near Cusco, Peru'. We shall remind ourselves that *Creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God* (Romans 8:15) and that we are called to *Live the Transformation*.

Friends in our Section came together at Woodbrooke in June for our Annual Meeting, to reflect on the progress that we have made since Kabarak, and ask how we need to prepare for the next stage of the pilgrimage of faith on this troubled earth. Surrounded as we are by wars raging in the Middle East, random acts of terrorism, continuing tensions in Ukraine, desperate migrants arriving by the thousands on the shores of Mediterranean coastlines and at the borders of many European countries, economic disaster in Greece and austerity in many other states, we ask: "What can we as Quakers do?" We need to find new ways of witnessing to a faith that requires a different world order – can we find the grace to be God's agents – even God's children – in this ever more broken world?

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*Marisa Johnson and Rhea Kamal Abou Khalil.
Photo: Averil Armstrong. See pages 4-5.*

We can draw inspiration from Friends who in the past faced turmoil in their own age, and found creative ways of bringing hope – one such Friend was Theofilus Waldmeir, who founded the Quaker school in Brummana, Lebanon. I was there recently at the invitation of the Quaker International Education Trust (QuiET), and local Friends decided to mark the centenary of Waldmeir's death with a small ceremony. The accounts on pages 4 and 5 are drawn from this event. The school still strives to embody "Quaker values" and I wondered what this means for the students and their parents in this present time. The answer came from some parents' representatives who said: "Here you cannot tell who is rich and who is poor. You cannot tell who is Christian and who is Muslim. We are all equal, and there is one God".

Marisa Johnson, Executive Secretary

Waging Peace: Global Adventures of a Lifelong Activist

Berne Weiss, Budapest Worship Group, reviews *Waging Peace: Global Adventures of a Lifelong Activist*, PM Press 2014

David Hartsough started practicing nonviolent resistance when he was seven years old and he faced a gang of bullies. His response was based on his understanding of Jesus's command: "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." (Matthew 5:43-44)

Since then his life has been about acting nonviolently, and out of an abiding feeling of love to bring peace to the world in conditions of violent conflict and threats of violence. His work in the world has been to wage peace. The title of his recently published autobiographical book, written with Joyce Hollyday, is an inspiring story that brings to life the famous quote by Margaret Mead, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

David's father Ray, a Congregational minister, learned about Quaker Peace Projects, and in 1949 went to work in Gaza, Palestine, transporting humanitarian aid to refugees on both sides of the conflict. He was away from his family for nine months when David was eight years old, another defining experience in David's life.

David is a member of the San Francisco Friends Meeting. (I made his acquaintance in 1987 when I worked with his wife Jan on a food distribution project under the auspices of AFSC.) I started reading his book as an act of loyalty to a friend, and soon found myself engrossed in a good story, well told.

Heroism is most often attributed to those who risk their lives in violent confrontations, like war. David's story

is a story of an entirely different concept of heroism. David has brought loving, Christian nonviolent strength – and strategy – to people caught in conflict conditions, beginning with the Civil Rights movement in the American South. Over the course of his life as a peace activist he has borne witness at the Berlin Wall, in Central America, Palestine and the Philippines. He has challenged American militarism at Nuclear weapons labs, and at US military bases where arms were being sent to Viet Nam, Nicaragua and El Salvador. He has reached across Cold War barriers in Cuba and Yugoslavia. In Red Square, Moscow, he challenged Soviet nuclear weapons testing.

A potentially serious disappointment with reading about inspiring the actions of heroes like David Hartsough is feeling at a loss for how to add one's own efforts – short of becoming a lifelong peace activist. *Waging Peace*, however, adds sections on "Resources for Further Study and Action: What You Can Do"; "Ten Lessons Learned From My Life of Activism"; "Suggested DVDs, Books, and Websites for Further Study and Action"; "Six Principles of Kingian Nonviolence"; and "The Six Steps of Kingian Nonviolence". There is also a new global movement to end all war and promote enduring peace called World Beyond War

www.worldbeyondwar.org

World Beyond War is an invitation to join with a growing "group of thoughtful, committed citizens who believe in the possibility of changing the world". They are acting on their belief by working to eliminate war, and devoting human creativity and energy to solving the many other threats to the health and well-being of our planet and our human family.

Goodbye to Rachel, and hello Sue

Europe and Middle East Section of FWCC has a new Clerk. At our Annual Meeting at Woodbrooke in early June 2015 we said a fond goodbye to Rachel Bewley Bateman of Ireland Yearly Meeting, who had been our clerk since February 2011, and welcomed Sue Glover Frykman of Sweden Yearly Meeting.

Rachel has faithfully served and enthusiastically supported FWCC over many years, having attended the World Conferences in 1967 and 2012. She was an active member of the Local Arrangements Committee for the 2007 Triennial in Dublin. She has enjoyed very much the interaction with Friends during her service, and we know she will continue to be part of our international family of Friends.

Sue has lived in several European countries and has gathered deep experience with Quakerism in our Section. She has worked on innumerable committees, often as Clerk. She has served as an FWCC Visiting Friend, on the EMES Executive Committee and most recently as Sweden Yearly Meeting's Representative to EMES.



Rachel Bewley Bateman,

Marisa Johnson,

Sue Glover Frykman

Photo: Leo Vincent

God & decision-making: a Quaker approach by Jane Mace, Quaker Books 2012

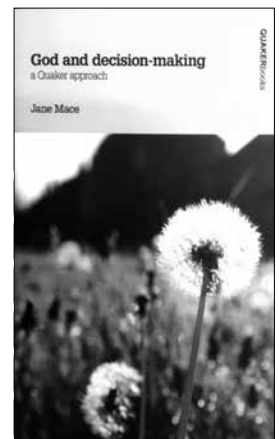
Sue Glover Frykman, Sweden Yearly Meeting, writes:

Regardless of whether you are new to clerking Quaker meetings for worship for business, an experienced clerk wanting to refresh your knowledge, a faithful supporter of Quaker business meetings, a member of a Quaker committee, or simply curious about what a clerk does and what the Quaker business method entails, Jane Mace's book is for you.

Drawing on fieldwork conducted among Friends in Britain, Jane unpacks the language we use to describe Quaker decision-making under divine guidance and lays out the process that has been practised in the unprogrammed liberal tradition for generations. She talks about the tensions of managing time as the world knows it and our seeking of the Spirit in an expectant, unhurried way. She explores the discipline, the upholding and the discernment process that infuses our Meetings for Worship for Business and reminds us that these things are not the responsibility of the clerk alone, but are the responsibility of the group as a whole. If the clerk is to

listen, discern the movement of the Spirit in the meeting and move the group forward towards a decision, he or she needs to be fully supported by those gathered. In easy-to-read chapters peppered with practical examples from her fieldwork she explains what she understands terms like worship, God, time, unity, discernment, discipline, clerking and minute writing to mean.

Jane presents the clerking model that I learned as a new Quaker by attending meetings for church affairs back in the 1970s in Britain and that I have practised ever since in my various clerking duties. Even now, as I embark on my new role as clerk of EMES, I find her book helpful – as a reminder of our practice, as confirmation of it and as an adventure that is mystical, mysterious and moving. I can warmly recommend Jane's book to anyone with any interest at all in Quaker ways.



Celebrating Theofilus Waldmeir on the Centenary of his death

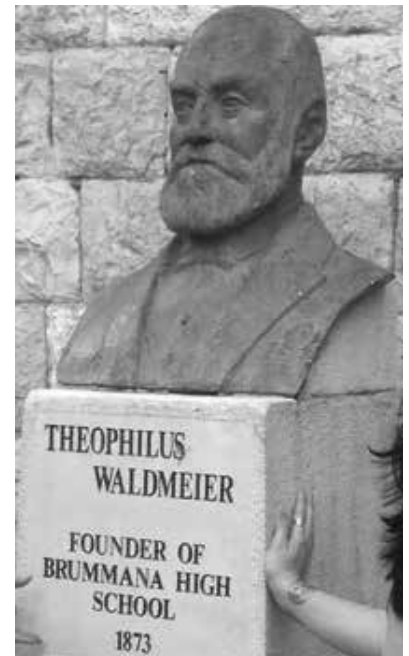
Rhea Kamal Abou Khalil and Juhaina Abou Khalil researched Waldmeir's life and shared some of the history with local Friends as they assembled on 24th May 2015 to commemorate:

"I was born a Roman Catholic in Switzerland" begins Theofilus Waldmeir's autobiography, and brought up under severe religious instruction by my dear mother and grandmother, who were very anxious for the salvation of my soul, and strict with me on matters of religion." His father died when Theofilus was young and, when his mother married again, he ran away from home and was adopted by his childless uncle and aunt. It was the fanatically strict upbringing by his grandmother in his early years that accounts for his antagonism to all ritualistic practices: "She forced me to kneel down on the ground for three hours daily, praying with rosaries." Eventually, Waldmeir experienced a conversion to Evangelical Protestantism and entered Carl Spittler's missionary training school at St. Chrishona.

Waldmeir first came to Mount Lebanon in 1867, during the time of the Ottoman rule, and was employed as inspector of branch schools in Beirut, the nearby mountains, and Damascus. Between 1869 and 1874, Elijah G. Saleeby opened the first school in Brummana, a remote village overlooking Beirut (three hours from the city on horseback), called the "Darlington Station" because it was supported by Quakers in Darlington, England. In 1873, Theofilus opened a girls' school in Brummana, with money sent to him by his friends in Switzerland. Before the end of the year he received more financial support to open a boys' school, also in Brummana.

In 1874, Waldmeir visited England to raise funds for the school from the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) and he himself became a Quaker. When he returned, he purchased 20,000 square yards of land called "Berket al-Ghanem" (the Pool of the Conqueror) which was a hillside of pine, fig, and mulberry trees with two fountains of water on the edge of Brummana.

In 1876, the Boys' Training Home (now Brummana High School) was opened in a leased house in Brummana until the new building was ready. The land name was changed from "Berket al-Ghanem" to "Ayn al-Salam" (The Fountain of Peace). Within five years, the school had grown to 300 students, bringing literacy and new ideas to the isolated mountain area.



When in 1878 the new Boys' Training Home building came into use, it housed the only dispensary in Mount Lebanon. As the medical work increased, in 1881 alternative accommodation was found in an old silk factory which was converted into a hospital with 15 beds on the ground floor and a dispensary and outpatient accommodation in upper storey. In 1882, the Girls' Training Home at Brummana was opened.

Education at Brummana High School was based on the principles of the Religious Society of Friends, which stress non-violence, equality, the spirit of service and encouragement of the pursuit of higher standards through enlightened methods. Furthermore, the fundamental Quaker belief that there is something of God in every individual, made it mandatory for the school to prepare its students intellectually and technically, while imparting their spirit of service so that upon graduation they were equipped to be good servants of their communities. The school did not undertake mission activity, and the students' beliefs in their own religions were never challenged



24th May 2015 gathering at Mount Lebanon

Photo: Averil Armstrong

or deprecated. Teachers from outside the Religious Society of Friends were expected to be in sympathy and to teach in accordance with Quaker principles, particularly emphasising moral values, intellectual excellence, respect for the individual, and self-reliance.

Rhea added: "One of the many great achievements of Mr. Waldmeir was a place known as "El Asfuriyeh". I want to talk over about this place because it offered a lot to many individuals in particular my grandparents who served El Asfuriyeh for about 30 years where my grandfather was responsible of the maintenance and my grandmother was a very dedicated nurse.

El Asfuriyeh was founded by Mr. Waldmeir in 1898, a hospital for the insane to provide care for the mentally afflicted of the Lebanon, Syria, and the Middle East. The hospital gradually expanded and by 1949, 14,000 patients had been treated. In addition to clinical work, in 1922 it was affiliated with the American University of Beirut (AUB) and became the Psychiatric Division of the University hospital. In 1948, it opened a school of Psychiatry, first of its kind in the Middle East, and which was subsequently used by World Health Organization for the training of specialized personnel.

However, in 1972, the hospital started facing real financial difficulties and unfortunately it was sold in April 1973.

Though, this huge humanitarian project in the Middle East came to an end, till now many people remember this remarkable accomplishment by Mr. Waldmeir who had a superior ability, a special effort, and a great courage and faith in God to attain this.

I hope we as Quakers can steal some of his many heroic qualities and take all Waldmeir's charitable and benevolent successes as a lesson or life message in order to become better and productive humans in serving other humans in our community and society."

Sources:

Quaker Service in the Middle East, H. J. Turtle 1975, Friends Service Council

www.bhs.edu.lb

School of Oriental and African Studies Library: Lebanon Hospital for Mental and Nervous Disorders/
www.mundus.ac.uk



Ben Pink Dandelion (a)



Young Friends (b)



Dorothy Selebwa and Rachel Bewley Bateman (c)



Erik Dries on the right (d)



Friends dancing (a)

EMES at Woodbrooke June 2015



Gretchen Castle (a)



Rachel Bewley Bateman (a)



Sandra Berry & Friends returning from group photo (b)



Other Friends returning from group photo (b)



Ben Pink Dandelion and Na'amat Little (b)



Erik Dries (b)



Photo Credits:

(a) Leo Wieldraaijer-Vincent

(b) Paul Sladen

(c) Lee Taylor

(d) Martin Touwen



EMES at Woodbrooke June 2015 (a)



Joshuah Lilande (c)



Neithard Petry (a)



Richard Thompson and Liz Morris (b)



Janet Scott and Ronis Chapman (b)



Jessica Bishop and Michael Searle (b)

Tackling homelessness

Tony Crofts of Bristol Area Meeting writes:

Living in a city with over 2 million square feet (60 acres) of empty offices - not just tower blocks, but also streets of formerly family homes converted to offices in pursuit of per-square-foot rents which, when unlet, are usually boarded up and left empty - we conceived the idea of AEOB. This arose out of a Rich-Poor Reconciliation Laboratory in St Stephen's Church

Abandon Empty Office Buildings - House People has launched a Community Share for people of conscience to invest in to rescue these buildings and convert them into homes for some of the 14,750 people left homeless by the selling-off of these council houses, a third of which have ended up in the hands of buy-to-let landlords who then relet them at three times the rent. We follow in the footsteps of Bristol Quaker Elizabeth Sturge, who in 1903 built six houses for poor people in Lawrence Weston. Her initiative ultimately led to the building of 15,000 council houses in Southmead, Sea Mills and Knowle West; and was an example of how Quakers can change the world.

The share has been whole-heartedly supported and invested in by Bristol Area Meeting, and has already raised £300,000. With this, we have bought a disused office building with planning permission to convert to four highly energy-efficient flats and build two more new ones on adjoining garden. We hope to start a national revolution in community-owned, permanently-affordable homes let on secure long-term agreements so people have somewhere safe to bring up their children.

Castle or community? Quakers' role in building the new Europe

A joint QCEA-QPSW conference

4-6 December 2015

Chant d'Oiseau Conference Centre, Brussels,
Belgium

What kind of Europe do we want?
How do we work together to build the
Europe we want, as Friends?
How can Quaker values and processes
contribute to effective advocacy?
How does our witness inform our advocacy
and affect European policy?

Friends from all over Europe are invited to gather in Brussels and reflect on these questions together.

This conference will give Friends:

- the opportunity to explore our vision for Europe, our hopes and fears, and our current concerns. Above all, we will have the opportunity to connect with and build community with Friends from all over Europe Facilitated discussions by a team of Quaker facilitators
- the chance to hear a keynote speaker on the witness and advocacy work of QCEA and from a Friend working within one of the European institutions
- a choice of workshops and discussion groups to learn more about the work of QCEA and QPSW.

Cost: £ 160 (€195) per person
(including registration, meals and accommodation;
excludes travel)

Registration Deadline: 31 July 2015

Booking is essential as places are limited!

For further details please contact

www.qcea.org

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Epistle from EMEYF Spring Gathering 2015 at Ureki/ Georgia, 4-11 April 2015

This year's EMEYF Spring Gathering took place in Georgia, after several Georgian Friends could not get visas to join us at past events. This was the start of a long journey that ended with us arriving in Ureki on Saturday 4th April for a week full of surprises. Our community came into being while huddled under blankets at our very first Meeting for Worship, as it poured with rain outside.

If anything, Georgia is a land filled with contrasts: blankets and sunburn, mountains and the black sea and the old mingled with the new. Our theme "Living as one faith amongst many" was present throughout the week. All around us we faced the uncertainty of being in a different culture, experiencing language barriers even within our group; yet feeling the certainty of the community we built, as a rock in the storm. We had several opportunities for worship sharing, starting with our personal spiritual journeys and ending with our various theological views. Many other conversations happened, while we were waiting for the gas cookers to slowly heat up our inventive concoctions that we prepared together. We heard the cows, which wandered freely around the village, moo-ing during Meeting for Worship for Business and felt joy as Saskia played football with locals and Peter played football with us, even in the train station.

There are many other moments that strengthened our community: driving up the mountains and walking in the snow, laughing with the Quaker Hulk, going swimming in the Black Sea, singing in epilogue, experiencing Georgian driving, trying the famous Nabeghlavi spring water and eating many khachapuri.

In our sessions we explored our own cultural and religious identities as well as ideas and thoughts about conflict resolution. We learned about Georgian culture from a guest speaker and held our own session on linguistics and the Georgian alphabet. One of our Georgian Friends told us about the conflicts that have shaped the country's recent history.

We experienced first hand the generosity of welcome in



Young Friends in Ureki

Photo from EMEYF website

Georgia for example as we visited the mosque in Batumi, received traditional beans and bread from the owner of our hostel along with many offers of chacha and wine and friendly greetings. Although there were cultural differences between us, which caused confusion and called for patience and understanding at times, we were all left with an impression of warmth. This was often particularly obvious when little Peter, our youngest participant aged 2, was met with smiles and affection wherever we went.

We are very excited about the All Age Gathering we are planning for the summer of next year as part of the celebration for the 30ish anniversary of EMEYF. We hope that the bonds we have either renewed or formed will only grow stronger at our next gathering. As we go back to our communities, we hold each other in the light, enriched by our week together, taking with us the spirit of embracing uncertainty and living adventurously.

*www.emeyf.org –
EMEYF :
European and
Middle East
Young Friends –
emeyf@qcea.org*



Peace in Europe: A report from the Quaker Council for European Affairs

Alexandra Bosbeer writes:

What is happening at the EU level these days? And how are Quaker concerns being communicated? Even during this steamy July, the staff at the Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA) in Brussels are working hard to advocate on peace, economic justice, and sustainability. Let me tell you about some of our recent activities:

Peace

The EU is often described as a peace project, and yet the summit of heads of national governments in late June confirmed a joint drive towards increasing militarisation. Armed drones, and the diversion of research funding meant for civilian uses to military purposes, are focuses of QCEA's work. QCEA has worked to keep Friends up to date, by producing a summary of issues in EU militarism (available in both English and German) in advance of the summit. A blog reflecting on peace advocacy after the summit can be found on qceablog.wordpress.com.

Peace within societies is also a concern: QCEA recently published recommendations to counterbalance the increasing incidence of hate-related crimes within EU Member States.

We continue to focus on the role of the EU in Israel/Palestine, and have produced a short background paper for the Members of the European Parliament (MEPs). We also wrote recently to relevant EU Commissioners about the need to progress labelling guidelines for products originating in the illegal settlements in occupied Palestine. So far we have received two responses.

Making our use of resources sustainable

In addition to our direct work on peace, QCEA advocates regarding drivers of injustice and conflict. Economic justice and sustainability are of key importance. We are currently focussing on the circular economy, which entails a re-structuring of the manufacturing

sector in order to minimise the input of raw materials by increasing recycling and reuse, and improving design to reduce the wastefulness of production and consumption. QCEA is cooperating with a network of other organisations to develop a model for what an EU circular economy policy should include, meeting with MEPs and preparing recommendations for the European Commission. All EU citizens can respond to the Commission's consultation: if you sign up now for our action alerts, you will have an opportunity to participate in this piece of active democracy!

Take a look at QCEA.org for our many resources:

- Have you seen our 'guide to getting involved' to help you to engage with EU policy? You can also sign up for our action alerts. Since April, we have issued four alerts for Friends to write to your MPs, MEPs, and local authorities on peace, sustainability, and economic justice.
- Are you concerned about the future of the EU with or without the UK? Briefing papers on what the UK referendum might mean for peace, trade, and internal EU migration, will be published on our website this summer.
- Come to Brussels for the QCEA/QPSW conference in early December 2015: Castle or Community: Quakers' role in creating the new Europe. Register by 31 July at www.qcea.org.

News from Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre Being Part of an International Quaker Community

Friends in Residence are a central part of making Woodbrooke a Quaker centre. They nurture the daily worshipping life of Woodbrooke, and provide the welcome given to visitors, and reception and security cover outside of normal opening hours. **Ronis and Michael** from Canberra Meeting in Australia have written a short piece about being Friends in Residence.

There are many things we love being part of this intentional Quaker community. One of them is telling the Woodbrooke story to people who come for the first time and encouraging people to visit Bournville village while they are here.

Some of the tasks we do are to “put the building to bed”—closing windows, setting lights and the like, and waking it up each day. As a consequence, we know the building intimately, and understand well where everyone is sleeping, what their view is, how many steps they have to climb. We are also the help desk for Woodbrooke.

We have been here for 6 weeks and a number of Friends in Residence have come and gone in this time. For the last 3 weeks there have been a team of 4 who have worked well together. We have had an easy way of working together and sharing the ups and downs. We have also talked about what it means for us to have the job of “upholding the Quaker presence at Woodbrooke”. Part of our job is to facilitate morning worship and evening epilogue and we think these times of worship have had an extra richness to them over the last couple of weeks because we have given each other more support as we carry out this important role.

Woodbrooke-on-the-Road in Europe

Mary Meekes, one of Woodbrooke’s Associate Tutors, travelled to Toulouse, France in April to deliver a two-day on-the-road event about Quaker Worship and Ministry. The event sets out to explore the times when Quaker Worship is not silent, and ask the question, when is it the right time to break the silence with a message?

For information about holding a Woodbrooke on-the-Road event, please call +44(0)121 472 5171 or email off-site@woodbrooke.org.uk.



A helpful Friend in Residence Photo: Connar O’Keeffe

European f/Friends on Soul of Leadership

Soul of Leadership is Woodbrooke’s 18-month programme for anyone in a leadership role. There are four 4-day residentials with personal reflective practice and online whole-group discussion. In June, participants from the Netherlands and Ireland joined UK based participants for the last of their 4-day residentials.

For information about joining Soul of Leadership, please call +44(0)121 472 5171 or email enquiries@woodbrooke.org.uk.

For more information about Woodbrooke’s learning programmes visit www.woodbrooke.org.uk

Diary Dates 2015

More dates for 2015 are available on the website: www.fwccemes.org. Please send items for inclusion in the diary to Marisa Johnson at emes@fwccemes.org.

16-19 July: France Yearly Meeting, Nantes, Contact assembleedefrance@gmail.com

19-20 September: North West Border Meeting, Sittard. Applications open 1st May. <http://grenztreffen.be/index.php/en-GB/>

17-23 September: Cathar Quaker Tour – see <http://www.fwccemes.org/calendar/cathar-quaker-tour>

2-4 October: Celebrating Quaker work in Finnish Lapland 1945-47, Rovaniemi, Finland. See: <http://www.fwccemes.org/calendar/gathering-and-a-seminar-on-quaker-relief-work-in-lapland-1945-47>

16-18 October: Is a peaceable economy conceivable? An event at Congénies. Contact Judy & Dave Kashoff – see <http://www.fwccemes.org/calendar/is-a-peaceable-economy-conceivable-an-event-at-congenies>

22-25 October: German Yearly Meeting in Bad Pyrmont. Contact the Clerks clerks@quaeker.org

20-22 November: EMES Peace & Service Consultation, Kortenberg, Belgium. Contact emes@fwccemes.org

4-6 December: Castle or Community? Quakers' role in building the new Europe. A QCEA/QPSW Conference, Brussels. Contact conference@qcea.org

European Quakers of all ages Gathering

We are happy to announce the date for the “European Quakers of all ages Gathering”. This is an event open to Quakers of all ages, organised by European and Middle Eastern Young Friends to celebrate our 30th anniversary.

The gathering is set to take place from 30th July 2016 – 6th August 2016 and will take place at Haus Venusberg, Bonn, Germany.

The topic and further information will be published some months before the gathering

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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If you wish to make a bank transfer, please use the details below:

From outside the UK: (Payment in Euros can now be made to a German Bank. Details from the Secretary)

Bank – HSBC City Corporate Banking Centre

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IBAN No – GB48MIDL40053072138549

Account Name – CAF Bank Ltd

For Credit to (enter in field 72) – FWCC EMES 405240 00025578

Account Number – 72138549

Sort Code – 40-05-30

For holders of UK bank accounts please send cheques or CAF vouchers in GBP to the EMES office. Scottish Charity number: SC 036528

Deadline for Among Friends 134: 1 November 2015