



Friends World Committee  
for Consultation  
EUROPE & MIDDLE EAST SECTION

**Europe & Middle East Section**  
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## **FWCC/EMES Annual Report 2015**

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

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## What is FWCC?

The Friends World Committee for Consultation was established at the Second World Conference of Friends held at Swarthmore, Pennsylvania, in 1937. The concept of a world 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 at 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 few 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 6<sup>th</sup> 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 World Plenary Meeting (formerly the Triennial/International Representatives Meeting) will be held in Pisac, near Cusco, Peru, from 19-27 January 2016. The theme is *Living the Transformation: Creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of God's children (Romans 8:19)*. See <http://www.fwccworld.org/fwccworld/> for details.

## Europe & Middle East Section

The FWCC Europe & Middle East Section (EMES) was established in 1938 and now consists of 12 Yearly Meetings, 2 Monthly Meetings and 14 worship 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

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## Clerks' Report on the Work of the Trustees/Executive Committee for 2015

EMES had two Clerks in 2015, which makes this a joint report. Rachel Bewley-Bateman, who served as Clerk up to 7<sup>th</sup> June, begins the report. Sue Glover Frykman, who became Clerk on 7<sup>th</sup> June, ends it.

FWCC EMES is a charity registered in Scotland. The members who served as Trustees of the Registered Charity for 2015 have been Rachel M Bewley-Bateman (Clerk - Retired 7<sup>th</sup> June 2015), Sue Glover Frykman (Clerk from 7<sup>th</sup> June 2015), Neithard Petry (Treasurer - Retired 7<sup>th</sup> June 2015), Martin Touwen (Treasurer from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2015), Dag Hovda Sture, Lee Taylor, Paul Sladen (EMEYF), Leo Wieldraaijer-Vincent. Marisa Johnson (Executive Secretary and also a Trustee) has prepared and attended all the meetings. Julia Ryberg has attended as our Ministry and Outreach Co-ordinator.

We held our first Executive Committee via Skype on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2015. We then met in Kingston-on-Thames (England) 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> March 2015 and in Woodbrooke Quaker Study

Centre on 4<sup>th</sup> June 2015, immediately before our Annual Meeting which also took place in Woodbrooke from 4<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> June 2015.

**Finance:** We were delighted that after detailed consideration and discussion in co-operation with the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, the final details were agreed and the new Small Grants Fund was established, to be administered by FWCC EMES. The official launch took place at our Annual Meeting in June 2015. Grants will be made to successful applicants for activities organised within the Europe and the Middle East Section. We very much appreciate that JRCT has demonstrated confidence in our work in such a practical way.

We continue to be grateful for donations for our core activities from Yearly and Monthly Meetings, as well as the individuals who enable us to continue the work of FWCC EMES. Our new treasurer reminded us that increases in contributions and additional donations to support the work of EMES will be necessary. Our Ministry and Outreach work continues to be funded by a grant from the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust (JRCT). Sheila Fletcher of Enigma Business Solutions has been reappointed to act as independent examiner of our accounts. Full audited accounts for the year 2015 will be available separately for presentation by our Treasurer, Martin Touwen. We have very much appreciated Neithard's contribution to the work of FWCC EMES during his time as our Treasurer.

**Staff:** Marisa Johnson (Executive Secretary) and Julia Ryberg (Ministry and Outreach Co-ordinator) continue to work closely together. Kim Bond provides part-time assistance from the FWCC World Office in London. Marisa continues to be in regular contact with the FWCC World Office. We are happy that Marisa and Julia will be able to help with preparations for the FWCC World Plenary Meeting to be held in Peru in January 2016. We value links with the FWCC World Office and other FWCC Sections. The EMES Executive meets monthly by Skype for Meeting for Worship.

**Intervisitation** is important and we were particularly pleased that Marisa was able to visit Brummana High School and Friends in Lebanon during May. Concern for Quaker educational establishments, Friends and activities in the Middle East amid the continuing violence, continues. We receive regular reports and monitor activities within the Section. Staff and trustees engage in visits to meetings, groups and individuals within the Section. Personal links have grown with Friends from other sections.

We were very pleased that members of FWCC Central Executive Committee were able to join us for our Annual Meeting held in Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, Birmingham, England, in June 2015, before holding their own committee meeting. The theme for our Annual Meeting 2015 was *Pilgrims' Progress – from Kabarak to Cusco (via Busan and Birmingham!)*.

Our spiritual journey continues – and we look forward with anticipation to the FWCC World Plenary Meeting to be held in Pisac (via Cusco!), Peru, in January 2016, where the theme will be: ***Living the Transformation: Creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of God's children (Romans 8:19)***

It has been a real privilege to serve as Clerk to FWCC EMES. It is my hope and prayer that Friends around the world may continue to grow in a spirit of love, compassion and care for humanity and our fragile planet.

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My first duty as the new Clerk was to attend the FWCC Central Executive Committee meeting, which took place at Woodbrooke immediately after the EMES Annual Meeting. It was a timely reminder that the Section is an integral part of the worldwide body of Friends, via the Friends World Committee for Consultation, and not a separate or isolated body. Possible changes to the FWCC Constitution reflecting future needs and conditions were discussed, with a view to bringing them to the World Plenary Meeting in Peru. As three of the Section clerks are new to the work – Africa, the Americas and Europe and Middle East – it was a good opportunity to meet and talk about how we clerks might work together.

With regard to our own Section, we held a face-to-face Executive Committee meeting in Oslo from 4th-6th September, during which we met with members of Quaker Service Norway and learned more about the work that is undertaken in various parts of the world. We also worshipped with local Friends in Oslo. The Executive Committee meets in different parts of the Section in order to connect with local Friends, listen to their concerns, learn about their work and Meetings and in that way be more responsive to their needs. If your Meeting or Group would like to invite the Executive Committee to meet in your area, then please contact the EMES Secretary!

On 29<sup>th</sup> November the Executive Committee met via Skype for a four hour online meeting, partly to prepare for the Annual Meeting to be held in Pisac and partly to attend to necessary business. Meeting virtually has its own challenges and is certainly different from getting together in the same physical space. Despite the challenges, we find that we are able to conduct business in a spirit of worship and practise discernment, both of which are important to us.

Rachel mentions the Small Grants Fund in her part of the report. To date, five Quaker communities have received financial support for their projects from the Fund: Finland Yearly Meeting, France Yearly Meeting, Friends House Moscow, the Quaker worship group in Dresden and Europe and Middle East Young Friends. Details about the various projects can be found on the FWCC-EMES website.

Preparing for the World Plenary Meeting in Peru in January 2016 has been top priority for the EMES staff. It has been a mammoth undertaking and all credit is due to the World Office and the many volunteers who are making the event possible. The EMES fundraising efforts have been successful, especially with regard to raising money for as many young adult Friends to attend the gathering as possible. We are grateful to all the organisations and individuals who have contributed.

*Rachel M Bewley-Bateman, Clerk January–June 7<sup>th</sup> 2015, & Sue Glover Frykman, Clerk from 7<sup>th</sup> June 2015*

## Report from the Executive Secretary

I am grateful to have served in the role of Secretary for the 8th year in 2015. The year went by very quickly, with plenty of activity, as always.

My heart-felt thanks are due to the Friends in Kingston-upon-Thames who welcomed the Executive Committee for its meeting in March. The new Meeting House is beautiful, and it was lovely to work and worship in it.

The Quaker International Education Trust (QuiET) invited me to join them in Brummana, Lebanon, for a meeting of their trustees in May 2015, which coincided with the centenary of the death of Theophilus Waldmeier, the school's founder. It was a marvellous opportunity to spend time with the community of Friends in Brummana, and their families, as well as seeking to discern the distinctive Quaker character of the school, which is still very much appreciated by the parents of the students. I was especially glad to spend time with the Meeting's much loved "matriarch", Renee Baz, whose faithful and loving presence had been at the centre of the community for many decades. Sadly, Renee died in November, and she will be much missed by all those who knew and loved her.

We were delighted to have Central Executive Committee of FWCC join our **Annual Meeting** in June 2015 at Woodbrooke, and believe that the gathering was a tremendous success, and helped the preparation of our Representatives for the World Plenary. Many more people came who would normally attend an Annual Meeting, so the feeling of being an international community felt deeper and stronger. We made "footprints" of fabric for a bunting, and some made their way to Pisac as greetings for those who gathered there.

As already covered in this report, we had a change of Clerk. Rachel Bewley-Bateman stepped down immediately after the Annual Meeting, and Sue Glover Frykman became our new Clerk. I am most fortunate in their considerate guidance for, and support of, my work.

The Executive Committee met in Oslo in November 2015 and virtually by Skype at the end of November. The meeting in Oslo was another opportunity for fellowship with the Monthly Meeting there, and also to get to know better Quaker Service Norway, whose committee was meeting on the same weekend. Virtual Meetings continue to be very successful in helping us connect more often than face-to-face meetings alone would allow.

Decisions were made about the first round of funding of project via the Small Grants Fund established with funding from the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust. We were able to support a gathering of Finnish and International Friends in Lapland to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the work initiated by AFSC to rebuild that region after WWII; a project by Friends in Dresden to counter prevailing xenophobia in Saxony by taking immigrants to talk about their experience in schools and community centres; the organisation of an all-age gathering in 2016 to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the setting up of the Young Friends network in our Section; a project to offer a quiet, reflective practice to people who may not identify as religious in Moscow; and support to Friends in France to enhance their communications campaign.

**German Yearly Meeting 2015** took place in Bad Pyrmont in October and the Cary Lecture was given by Esther Köhring, a Young Friend. You can read the lecture in German or English from the EMES website: <http://www.fwccemes.org/news/cary-lecture-2015>.

**Quaker Youth Pilgrimage:** We are collecting feedback from a number of Friends and organisations around the Section who work with teenage Quakers, to contribute to the consideration of how to develop this programme for the benefit of the whole of FWCC.

**EMES Peace & Service Consultation** took place in Kortenberg, Belgium, at the end of November 2015, on the theme *Who is my Neighbour?* The consultation took place one week after the attacks in Paris, while Brussels was in a state of high alert. The Friends who had gathered together felt moved to issue a statement in response to these events, which can be seen on our website: <http://www.fwccemes.org/news/european-quakers-call-for-an-end-to-the-cycle-of-violence>. We were particularly pleased to have with us Cornelius Ambiah from Nairobi Yearly Meeting, who was a guest of Quaker Council for European Affairs. Cornelius led us in worship for one of our epilogues, and, together with Kristine Hovland of Quaker Service Norway, talked to us about Quaker peace work initiatives in Kenya and elsewhere in Africa.

### **International Membership Matters**

Two Friends from Poland were accepted in membership, and one will be attending the World Plenary in Peru'. Two more applications have been received, one from Poland and one from the Czech Republic.

### **Publication of Issues of Among Friends**

Among Friends was published and distributed in March, July and November 2015.

We continue to maintain the website: [www.fwccemes.org](http://www.fwccemes.org), and Facebook page, and hope that many readers will use them to keep in touch with our activities between Annual Reports!

*Marisa Johnson, Executive Secretary*

### **Ministry & Outreach Development**

A welcome and encouraging development is the establishment of the JRCT Small Grands Fund. It is covered in more detail in other parts of the Annual Report. The fund affects and complements the Ministry & Outreach programme as a resource that helps Meetings and groups grow and develop. EMES staff encourage, guide and assist Meetings and groups in project proposals.

Eldership and Oversight have been in focus generally within EMES over the past few years, and we intensified the exploration upon the specific request of a Yearly Meeting. Early in the year, there was on-line interaction, using a Google group, between Friends from many European countries to share experience of Eldership and Oversight. In April, a residential weekend was held at Svartbäcken, Sweden, with participants from many countries. Sue Glover Frykman (Sweden YM) and I facilitated the gathering. Another well-attended residential was held in November at Svartbäcken, with a small overlap from the April group, on the theme *Growing the Meeting: Deepening the Community*. This included a focus on Eldership and Oversight and was broadened to include outreach. Natasha Zhuravenkova (Moscow MM) and I were co-facilitators. An ongoing online forum for Eldership and Oversight will soon be available.

In February, I participated in the Border Meeting in Budapest and, with a support companion from Sweden YM, visited the tiny group in Reikjavik, Iceland, who meet in the manner of Friends. Later in the year, the initiator of that group became an International member. During the May Central European Gathering in Novi Sad, Serbia, two more attenders were interviewed for International membership, and I was able to support Central European Friends as they explore their identity and structure. I attended another gathering of Central European friends in Brno, Czech Republic, in late autumn, as they continued in their discernment process. Norway YM invited me to be a support person during YM proceedings in June.

The EMES Annual Meeting at Woodbrooke in June was especially constructive as a time to begin preparing for the FWCC World Plenary Meeting in Perú. Preparations intensified during the autumn, when I worked with British Friend Ruth Homer to prepare the study booklet, allocate Home Groups and their leaders, set up and administer Home Group interaction via Woodbrooke's Moodle during the run-up to the Plenary.

The on-line work continued, with the *Quaker in Europe* course offered in Polish and Spanish for the first time respectively, and in Czech for the fourth time. When possible, I take part in the regular on-line international Experiment with Light group. Meeting for Worship has been held twice with an isolated International member in Kiev, and hopefully these kinds of worshipful opportunities can continue to be developed.

It has been a rich and encouraging year!

*Julia Ryberg, Ministry and Outreach Co-ordinator*

## **Amari Play Centre, Ramallah**

Since 1974 the Amari Play Centre has provided hundreds of children from the camp with free access to preschool education. This access is made possible through the generous donations of individuals, as well as Quaker meetings in the US, Europe and Japan. Each year, three teachers and a supervisor educate, guide and care for over 40 five-year-old children. These children are among the most vulnerable and poverty stricken in the community, whose families have been in the camp for decades with no end in sight.

The Play Centre has become an important fixture at the camp. It is a symbol for tolerance, as the camp's entirely Muslim population appreciates the services provided by what they know as a Christian mission programme. The Centre restores dignity and hope to refugees who seem to have lost faith in their future.

Children consider the Play Centre a place to learn and be exposed to new things. Here they can escape the pressure of older siblings at home and feel their own individuality. They learn to read and write and play with others. They often have visitors from abroad who open their minds to places outside their own community.

## **Bright Lights Story**

In September last year, the Amari Play Centre required its teachers to open bank accounts so that their salaries could be automatically deposited. Wafiyeh, the head teacher for over 30 years, went to the bank. She was asked for proof of employment and Wafiyeh asked to meet with the bank manager. Much to her surprise, Ashraf El Shafi, one of her former students at the Play Centre, was the branch manager. He quickly recognised her and this began a long and happy conversation about memories of his time

at the Play Centre. Ashraf was inspired at an early age by the many visitors who came to the Centre. He believes his determination to continue his studies came about in part by his attendance at the Play Centre during his formative years. Wafiyeh's new account was opened smoothly and her spirits were lifted by the success of her former pupil.

### **Recent Development**

With the help of UPA (United Palestinian Appeal) we have been able to install a small kitchen in the storage room so that we can offer milk and sandwiches without disturbing the ongoing activity. Previously, the only place to do this was in the same big room in which the teaching takes place. Now we have proper kitchen and a place to store milk, sugar, rice, oil, pasta, toilet paper etc.

We encourage visitors to come to the Play Centre so that the children feel that they are thought about and are not alone. The recent incidents in the area have had a great effect on the children and everyday there is talk about what is happening. Two days ago, as a result of the clashes, Israeli troops invaded the Amari refugee camp with a view taking prisoners. In the hot clashes that ensued 28 young from the camp were injured and the whole camp was under curfew for 4 hours until the mission had been accomplished. Our children remained at the Play Centre until it was safe for them to go home.

Donations for the work of the Centre are highly appreciated. Without your generosity and thoughts, the Amari Play Centre would not be able to continue.

*Muna Khleifi, Supervisor*

### **Church and Peace**

In 2015 Church and Peace held its Annual General Meeting in Pristina – Kosovo.

We were invited by one a small Protestant Evangelical Church, the Fellowship of the Lord's People' which in recent years joined the network of Church and Peace.

We were warmly welcomed by our hosts. Amongst them many young people, who not only took part enthusiastically in the proceedings, but also prepared breakfast for us every day!

Nevertheless, as one of our hosts expressed it: *"Welcome to the land of the broken bridges"*!

During times of war the infrastructure is bombed first... roads and bridges. Entire villages are also burned and bombed.... And these parts of the Balkan have had their share of wars: first the Ottoman Turks invaded, conquered and ruled this region for centuries.... We were taken to a war memorial which commemorates this battle in 1389 (!!) in which 40.000 lives were lost... A memorial where in recent history Milosevic called for a new war on Serbia's neighbours! Instead we sang Kyrie there, asking for peace....After the Turkish rule came the first world war, the second world war and the wars when former Yugoslavia broke apart....

After much struggle Kosovo is an independent nation for just seven years now!

United Nation peacekeepers (KFOR) are still stationed in the country. Several languages are spoken: Albanese, Serbian, Turkish, Roma.... There are still tensions between the Kosovo-Albanese majority and the Serbian minority in the northern parts.. So much so that whilst we were there literally was a physical fight in Parliament over the rights of the Serbians...

During our time in Pristina C&P organised a public event in a local hotel. Religious leaders from the Muslim majority (90%), the Serbian Orthodox church, the Roman Catholic church, the Protestant church and the tiny Jewish community were invited to share their vision of living peacefully together in Kosovo today...C&P presented some examples of peace projects by its members, particularly in some other areas of the Balkans...Since the national television and some newspapers were at this gathering, this offered a peaceful counterweight to the rather aggressive and worrying tensions in the national parliament! After all, the overarching theme of our meeting was: *the fruit of righteousness will be peace* (Isaiah 32)...

It should therefore not be underestimated that this meeting also was a peace mission in the sense that it meant important support for this small church in Pristina attempting to be a peace church in Kosovo here and now...They were happy with these peace builders from at least 18 different nations visiting them, particularly those from Bosnia and even Russia!

We heard a good reflection on our theme by Leonardo Emberti Gialloreti of the Saint Egidio Community in Rome. One quote: 'To the rulers of this world we say: war is not overcome by war. It is a fraud! War always gets out of hand. Do not be deceived! War makes entire peoples inhuman. Let us start afresh from dialogue, which is a unique art, an irreplaceable medicine that brings reconciliation among peoples'...

Next year we will meet in Paris and be able to join the protest against the arms fair there!

*Abridged from an article by Kees Nieuwerth, first published in Among Friends in November 2015*

## Reports from Yearly Meetings, Monthly Meetings and Groups

### Belgium and Luxembourg Yearly Meeting

In the past twelve months Friends in Belgium & Luxembourg YM have:

- held Meeting for Worship twice a week in Brussels, and once a month in Luxembourg,
- organised Meetings for Worship in the houses of people who because of illness or other reasons have been unable to come to Meeting,.
- carried out groundwork on meeting and reaching out to our neighbours by meeting with the Muslim university in Brussels, and hosting the CEJI interfaith group which we hope will lead us to planning more activities of this kind,
- organised the Christmas Eve candlelight Meeting for Carols,
- supported Friends in need and supporting the staff at QCEA,
- met with EMES coordinators to suggest starting a European group of elders and overseers to learn from each other what works in our Meetings and what does not,
- held a number of ‘stepping stone’ meetings twice a month on different issues including: Quakerism in the workplace, what is belief anyway, spiritual and mental simplicity, what do we do in Meeting and many more,
- started a monthly Deepening our Spirituality group, and organising the creation of a second group in October 2015,
- co-organised a WWI Meeting for Worship in Ypres, hosted by the Protestant Kerk,
- held our residential Yearly Meeting near Leuven,
- planned and held our first all-age Meeting for Worship,
- organised and held Memorial Meetings for Worship for Friends who have died,
- attended courses at Woodbrooke to deepen our understanding of our office and supported members and attenders who also want to attend courses,
- held Meetings for Clearness at the request of individuals in the Meeting, and

- organised getting to know each other social activities, e.g. the Meeting picnic.

*Kate Macdonald, Clerk*

## Britain Yearly Meeting

Events in Britain and around the world have made Friends in Britain increasingly aware of the need for international and global collaboration to minimise hardship now and in the future. We have been reminded that we must not be held back by the magnitude of the questions come before us, nor by a sense of our own unworthiness.

Our Yearly Meeting on the theme of living out our faith in the world was held in The Light, the refurbished and refurnished Large Meeting House in Friends House, open to skylight. This and the lighter panelling and seating drew us together as we could better see one another, raising our spirits as in worship we listened with open minds and loving hearts to the guidance of the Spirit.

Part of the Epistle of the EMES Annual Gathering of 2014 was read to Yearly Meeting and reminded us of our international context, our shared aspiration for tolerance, acceptance of uncertainty, and cultivation of one another's expression of the spirit of goodness and the need to hold international work in the light

[http://old.quaker.org.uk/search/apachesolr\\_search/bym%20epistle%202015](http://old.quaker.org.uk/search/apachesolr_search/bym%20epistle%202015)

In the Salter lecture we heard from Jude Kirton-Darling, a Quaker and Labour MEP for North East England of efforts to reach agreement on reducing trade barriers between the European Union and North America

[http://www.quakersocialists.org/page\\_3257804.html](http://www.quakersocialists.org/page_3257804.html) We discussed means by which voters and their representatives could prevent this leading to lowered safety and ecological standards, worse employment conditions and reduced powers for elected governments.

In the Swarthmore lecture, Diana Francis spoke of her experience as a peace activist and inspired us with accounts of how non-violent protest and resistance could limit and sometimes resolve destructive conflicts (<https://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/pages/swarthmore-2015.html>).

We were reminded of the chronic undersupply of housing in Britain and the unjust effects this has on low earners, unemployed and the sick. We were reminded of practical actions that Friends could take and the need for Parliament to revise fiscal policies and budgets and rules on social housing in particular. We are aware that at a time when many refugees and asylum seekers are coming to Europe this concern is shared throughout the European Union.

We listened to the guidance of the spirit on how best to live out our faith in the world. We were led to reflect on the need to learn from other faith communities, to recognise

injustice as the root cause of inequality. Our individual small actions are political choices and what we do at the everyday level spreads messages from our testimonies.

Our current political and economic systems only recognise and encourage the selfish competitive greedy part of the human condition. The model of power as domination needs to be challenged and replaced with a model of power as service to the community. In doing this we need to live our testimony and hold firm to its source in faith. We came to recognise how we benefit through our possessions and our homes and to consider when we are part of the problem. In living out our faith we may be called on to give up our privileges but if we do so our voice and our lives will be all the more authentic and powerful. We were called on to be a community of Friends pushed toward the important things we can only do together.

Our Meeting for Sufferings has been taking these concerns forward, exploring the experience of individual Friends and Area Meetings as they tackle and publicise concern about reductions in welfare benefits, unwise transport policy, and our government's inhospitable attitude to asylum seekers and economic migrants. Other concerns coming to the attention of our Meeting for Sufferings include the treatment of Palestinians in the occupied territories, Islamophobia in our society, the militarisation of schools, the replacement of values in education with performance targets and the plight of refugees fleeing wars.

The respect we have for the content of our book of discipline, *Quaker Faith and Practice* remains a unifying force. We recognise that much new insight has come since the current 1994 edition was finalised and are considering drafting a new edition: as preparation for this, all Meetings and individuals are being encouraged to read carefully chapters of *Faith and Practice* over the year.

Our media draw us to commemorate the First World War emphasising remembrance of the sacrifices made by so many. We Friends are mindful of the ostracism and imprisonment of those who followed their consciences and refused to take part. We long for commemoration of the suffering of those of former enemy countries at our hands, and greater barriers to be placed on those who promote war and the glorification of war. Resources telling stories and offering peace perspectives have been produced: these (and others on issues of concern) can be found on the new BYM website: <http://quaker.org.uk>.

We are in this for the long haul, sustained by our sense of God's Abundance in the world and our testimony of simplicity. This spiritual wealth expresses itself in love, joy, laughter and hope. We find strength in the following sentiment from *Living Adventurously - Quaker faith & practice*, Central and Southern Africa. "Out of love I can share some of my material wealth but not lose it. A cup of soup shared with a passing woman carrying a bowl of beans, mealies or morogo, trying to make a living for herself and her

family. If we keep our material possessions and circulating in order to create more for all of us. Poverty will move out.” (<http://quakercsaym.ning.com>)

We rejoice in welcoming Friends from elsewhere when they visit Britain and share the joy, insight and the concern that comes of our faith. Particularly, those of us in the Quaker World Relations Committee look forward to learning of your activities and to our 2016 residential gathering with your representatives in Pisac, Perú.

*Britain Yearly Meeting's Representatives*

## **Coalition for Work with Psychotrauma and Peace (CWPPP)**

As Croatia [has become the 28th EU member](#), the Croatian political elite wants its citizens to believe that the old dream of joining Europe, which framed the narrative that once legitimised the reasons for abandoning socialism and Yugoslavia, has been achieved.

Even though the Constitution defines Croatia as a welfare state, the country continues to sink into inequality, exclusion, and discrimination. Solidarity, workers' rights, and equality, are banished from the political discourse. Apart from groups such as persons with disabilities and ethnic minorities, the country is faced with an increase in new vulnerable groups such as unpaid workers and debt slaves.

The situation in eastern Croatia has not changed substantially, particularly with regard to issues of reconciliation. Hate speech, has various consequences, such as human rights violations, decreasing self-esteem, feelings of inferiority, fear, and depression are common among individuals.

We note that, 20 years after the end of the war, we are the only organisation in the region offering assistance on psychological issues other than drug therapy. We have a large number of educational groups in various villages. We are working with various marginalised groups like war victims, refugees, victims of torture, etc. These groups frequently are part education, part therapy. That aspect of the course overcomes some of the stigma associated with obtaining assistance for mental health. We continue to begin groups in villages in the region.

There are several particular programmes. One is training people working in an institution for people with mental health challenges to assist the residents to move into and live in the community. This is part of the policy of the European Union known as “psychology in the community”. We are very much in favour of this policy and wish to promote it.

Recently, we have been providing online education for non-governmental organisations such as Ludruga from Zagreb, and several similar organisations, with the aim of creating a network of providers of psychosocial care.

Our idea is to increase capacity in the world even further. We would like to prepare an online version of our programme of Pragmatic Empowering Training (PET). This strategy can maximise the efficient use of scarce resources, especially in areas where resources are lacking. In that sense, we had been working with various organisations from Bangladesh, InterChange from Toronto, and CERESAV, a group of the victims of acid attacks, from Uganda.

Croatia has taken actions from the beginning of the refugee crisis, advocating a free corridor, and the non-existence of wire fences. It is important to say that participants from one of our training programmes are offering first psychological help, volunteering in Tovarnik. In general, migrants suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder and/or other psychological and physical problems. Thus, for a variety of reasons, we feel that it is essential that these groups obtain adequate assistance. Using modern technology, this can be done in onsite and online form. The CWWPP has developed a programme for such training and supervision that is available upon request. We look forward to a challenging 2016.

*Charles David Tauber*

## **Czech Republic, Prague Meeting**

Despite our small numbers, Czech Quakers continue to be very active. The Plzen group meets monthly and in Prague we have fortnightly Meetings, with children being welcome and having their own activities in both cities.

The Prague group twice sent members and attenders to Svartbäcken, Sweden, in April for the *Eldership and Oversight* training and again in October.

Three of us also joined the *Europe, Castle or Community?* conference in Brussels in early December. In addition and very importantly for the development of Quakers in our area, several people attended the annual CEG in Novi Sad, and there were also two planning meetings held in the Czech Republic, attended by representatives from many CEG Meetings.

At Meeting the refugee crisis was discussed often and we attempted our first letter to the Czech press – unsuccessfully as we could not agree on the wording, but it has been a very useful learning experience.

After a summer break, the weekly Experiment with Light continues, and we repeated our carol singing in two Prague venues - a multigenerational, multilingual and multi-talented

group, with visitors, was very well received and the money earned will go to a local charity.

An exciting development to end the year on was an approach to the Prague group from the Bader Philanthropies Foundation (bader.org) encouraging us to put in a bid for funding available from mid-2016. In conjunction with other CEG Meetings and coordinated from Prague, the bid was sent off and we got through the first round. Watch this space!!

*Liz Coling*

## **Denmark Yearly Meeting**

Thanks to economic support from FWCC-EMES, we have been strengthened by frequent visits from two Friends, a Norwegian/Swedish couple living in nearby Skåne, Sweden. At our Yearly Meeting in the spring we refrained from inviting other visitors from abroad because the problem of logistics, e.g. accommodation, would have been too much of a burden for our very small Meeting (30 members are on our list, with the most active Friends being mostly elderly).

The traditional two-day meeting in Jutland was attended by ten Friends and attenders. This year visitors again found their way to our meeting place during Copenhagen's "culture night" in October. One of our members, when taking part in Sweden Yearly Meeting, became aware of an earlier Swedish publication on "Silent Meeting for Worship", which has now been published in Danish in her translation. We have unfortunately not been able to find a Danish Friend to attend the FWCC meeting in Perú in January 2016.

We welcomed three new members in 2015: a young American woman who grew up in a Quaker environment in the USA, now married to a Dane and studying medicine at the University of Copenhagen, an experienced British Friend who now lives in Copenhagen with his Danish wife, and a former minister in the Danish Folk Church who lives with his family in Aarhus, Jutland.

*Mogens Clausen, Clerk*

## **Estonia: Tallinn Worship Group**

The Tallinn Meeting Group of Estonian Quakers meets once a month. Additionally, we come together whenever special projects or campaigns call for it. During the year, we met with six visitors from different foreign countries. Five members come to the meetings regularly and at the moment there are three people whose interest brings them to the meeting. All of them are from different parts of Estonia. Since we don't have a facility of our own, we meet at different locations, and to date we've been welcome to use the LGBT centre located in downtown Tallinn.

Leena from Kiev, Ukraine, visited us in June. During her sojourn we visited the Open Air Museum in Tallinn, where she saw Estonia's traditional country architecture. We had a picnic, played games, and a discussion on the topic "Is it possible for a person to have internal peace during war?" Together with a Russian speaking group we analysed the effects of the project "A peace dialogue in Eastern Europe", carried out in September 12-17 last year in Ukraine, on different groups' understanding of a common history that had created hate and distrust. As a result, it was thought that the Kiev AVP seminars, combined with games and exercises, would be suitable for the Russian minority groups in Estonia. Two families in Narva, a predominantly Russian speaking city, have become interested in Quakers.

We camped on Aegna Island, located 14 km to the east of Tallinn, from August 1 - 3. Several NGOs, a men's choir, and families attended the camp. We had handicraft workshops, practised making flutes, hiked and held silent prayers in the evening. It had been planned to have the camp together with the Ukrainians, but due to budgetary constraints, two separate camps were held: Alla Soroka organised the camp for Ukrainians in Odessa and we had ours on Aegna Island.

We visited the Vao refugee centre at the end of August. We met with the director, the volunteers, and the residents. We decided to observe the International Day of Peace together by having a "peace picnic". On September 21, we gathered for the peace picnic at *Hirvepark*, one of the loveliest parks in Tallinn.

We will attend the QCEA/QPSW conference "Castle or community? Quakers' role in building the new Europe" from December 4 - 6 in Brussels. We hope to get new ideas and meet with friends to discuss means for a peaceful co-existence in Europe despite the existent cultural differences.

We continue to work on the Integration Farm project. Although the exact number of refugees who might come to Estonia in the next years is not known, an estimated 500 are expected from the different war zones. According to the EU guidelines, the refugees are to be integrated into their new environment, given a place to live and to work. The Quakers in Estonia think that the Integration Farm project would provide an appropriate place for living, working on the land, and for pursuing handicraft activities. In addition, it is in harmony with Quaker principles. Feedback on the project has been positive and we hope for strong support from Friends.

Our small group is open to all who want to share their experiences and we welcome all visitors to Tallinn.

*Roland Rand, Clerk*

## **Finland Yearly Meeting\_**

In 2015, Finland Yearly Meeting focused on remembering the past and trying to see a way into future. American Friends' Service Committee and the Finnish Settlement movement played a crucial role in the reconstruction of Lapland after World War II. Quakers organised work camps from 1945-47 and many fruits arose from that work. The work camps were a starting point for the Viittakivi International Centre, which became a base for Friends in Finland for decades.

FYM received an invitation to participate in a gathering about relief work in Tervola, Southern Lapland, in July. Members and attenders from the Helsinki Worship Group and the Northern Friends Worship Group took part in the gathering.

The main emphasis for the YM was on organising the gathering *Remembering Quaker relief work in Finnish Lapland 1945 – 47; looking at current and future challenges*, from 3-4 October at ROVALAn Settlementti, Rovala 5, 96100 Rovaniemi, Finland. The aim of the event was to look back, celebrate and learn from the past in order to see new light in the future. By remembering the work that had been done, and seeing the fruits that have ripened, we hoped to discern what the role of the Quaker community in Finland might be today. How might we work with the Settlement Movement? Where are we needed and called to serve?

The weekend was divided in two sections. On the Saturday the focus was on Quaker work camps in Lapland 1945 – 47. We also looked at the cooperation between the Finnish Settlement Movement and Friends in Finland in the past and tried to see what we might do together in the future. Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> October was Quaker Day and we invited the representatives from international Quaker organisations to talk about their work. Marisa Johnson from EMES ([www.fwccemes.org](http://www.fwccemes.org)), Shan Cretin from AFSC ([www.afsc.org](http://www.afsc.org)) and Jonathan Woolley from QUNO ([www.quno.org](http://www.quno.org)) told about Quaker service around the world. The talks were recorded and are available on the Internet.

We have also sent and supported representatives to international gatherings and hope that this has been meaningful, both for the individual representatives and, through their experience, for the whole Yearly Meeting.

*Jaana Erkkilä, Clerk*

## France Yearly Meeting

Following the change of dates for our annual meeting this year, little more than six months have passed since my last report. In 2014 the decision not to have an annual meeting, with all the preparation work that entails, allowed a buzz of activity. Initiatives such as the communication group, the online meditation "Experience with Light," the online "Lettre des Amis", are still active. Here I would like to quote no.20 of our "Advices and Queries" "Do you give sufficient time to sharing with others in the meeting, both newcomers and long-time members, your understanding of worship, of

service, and of commitment to the Society's witness? Do you give a right proportion of your money to support Quaker work at local, national and international levels?"

We are asked to consider not only our financial contribution but also our time. The Nominations Committee, which has the role of finding Friends to fill more than 20 positions – some of which require many people – so that our Society can function, is struggling and many positions remain vacant. As to our treasurer, she will tell you that the amount of contributions received is insufficient to meet the expenses necessary in order to support the work we do ourselves and the important work that other groups like EMES and QCEA to which we subscribe do on our behalf for peace and on European committees.

As for our contact with our European Friends, we have been represented this year at the annual meetings of Great Britain, Ireland, Belgium/Luxembourg and Switzerland, and were pleased to welcome representatives from Sweden, Great Britain, Belgium/Luxembourg and Germany.

*Sylvette Thompson, Clerk*

## **Georgia Worship Group**

2015 was interesting and full of light for Friends in Georgia. However, the economic crisis affected this part of the world. It started in Russia and slowly moved to Georgia and other countries of the Caucasus as well. Friends in Georgia are very concerned about the war conflicts that are happening in nearby countries like Ukraine, Syria and Iraq, and pray for a peaceful resolution in those countries.

Two Friends from Georgia attended the EMES 'Deepening the Meeting' weekend in Sweden in November. Prior to this, they were able to meet members of the Quaker Service Sweden Committee in Stockholm.

A representative from Georgia attended the FWCC gathering in January 2016. The gathering was very well organised and Friends from Georgia express their deepest gratitude to FWCC/EMES for the possibility of being represented there. Friends in Georgia believe and pray that the world will become more peaceful in 2016.

*Georgian Friends Worship Group*

## **German Yearly Meeting**

The most pressing concern of German Friends in 2015 was the refugee crisis. Many German Friends have worked on refugee and asylum issues for years, long before the current crisis began, and these Friends have led on this concern. Several Quarterly Meetings took the subject of refugees as their theme in 2015. German Quakers have written letters to Chancellor Merkel and other politicians urging more attention to the refugee crisis, and especially an end to weapon sales and other policies that fuel the wars

that cause people to leave their homes. Some quarterly meetings, committees and our service organisation, Quäker-Hilfe, have been putting more money at the disposal of our Friends who are doing what they can to help refugees in practical ways. Some Friends are working together with other local organisations, but many have also taken individual action, paying for refugees' German courses, medical care and the like. A number of small, new initiatives by Friends have sprung up, and work that was already being done is being refocused. For example, Dresden Friends' work against xenophobia in the former East of Germany (which has been a problem since reunification) has taken on new urgency due to attacks on refugees. This work is funded by the Small Grants Fund, managed by EMES.

Another major theme for German Friends in 2015 was "worship" – What is worship for us? What forms can it take? How often should we meet? What is "Quaker" about our worship? Several gatherings considered these issues, often in combination with discussions about the integration of young people into our meetings. Should we include more "moving" worship to appeal to the young? When can and should membership discussions take place?

At our Yearly Meeting 22-25 October in Bad Pyrmont, a young Friend, Esther Köhring, held the annual Cary Lecture. Her theme was *Spiritual Growth: Roots and Wings*. Her lecture added to the ongoing discussion about the inclusion of youth in our meetings and made clear that the young are not just the "future" of our meetings, but also their "present".

*Lucinda Martin, Representative*

## **Gran Canaria Worship Group**

A few years ago we were attending our regular meeting in Brussels where we met Marisa Johnson. We mentioned the fact that we were spending a lot of time in Gran Canaria. Marisa pointed out that there were two Quakers living in Las Palmas and gave us their telephone number. We contacted Astrid and Ramon and were invited to have a meeting for worship at their house in Las Palmas. We went there and that was the start of a regular Quaker meeting in Gran Canaria. Sadly Ramon passed away, but Astrid kept attending. Since then the meeting of four has grown to a meeting of six.

Our meetings now have 6 regular attenders. Barrie and David, Catrin, Astrid, Viviane and myself. They have a very strong spiritual impact on us and the meetings stay alive because we obviously need them. We now meet at Barrie and David's house. More than that, we started as Ffriends and we became friends... The meeting in Gran Canaria is there for everybody who needs it.

It is with great gratitude that I think about Ramon and Astrid, who opened their house for us so that we could meet. Thanks to all this, Gran Canaria is now part of our spiritual life!

*Harry Huyberechts and Viviane Gontie*

## **Hungary, Budapest Worship Group**

The Budapest Worship Group continues a slow pace of growing and strengthening. We are currently looking for a regular meeting space to replace our very informal rotation of members' flats. Meeting in our flats has been very cosy, but we'd like to be able to give enquirers a regular address for meetings. We are also now meeting twice a month, one of which is a Meeting for Learning.

The border meeting with Vienna, which was held in Budapest in 2015, is an event we've come to value and anticipate with pleasure.

The Central European Gathering is also a high point of the year, and 2015 was very special: We (the Budapest Worship Group and especially Vera Varady) organised the gathering, which was held in Novi Sad, Serbia. The Budapest Group has had a connection with the few Friends in Serbia, meeting with them there about once a year. This Central European Gathering brought us all into a wider circle of Friends. We are also participating in a CEG planning meeting, which will meet for the second time in Brno, Czech Republic, at the beginning of March.

In the summer, Zsuzsa Eastland, with the help of Anett Riboczi, Dag Hovda Sture (Norway), Jasmine Piercy (UK) and her husband Alex, organised a Friendship Camp at Lake Balaton. The children came from Serbian, Romanian and Slovakian schools in Hungary, plus a group from the Evangelical Friends in Hungary. The camp was created to build bridges across old Carpathian Basin antagonisms.

Berne Weiss (unfortunately without Roman Branberger) conducted the Imagining the World Without War workshop at the Common Ground on the Hill Festival in Westminster, Maryland, including one session with US military veterans, and another version of the workshop with a diverse group – including several Quakers – at a community art programme for at-risk youth in Berkeley, California.

And very exciting! Our new official Facebook page is up and running!

*Berne Weiss*

## **Hungary, Evangelical Friends Church in Tolna**

Greetings in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ! We are very grateful to God that He has helped us. I would like to share some important things with you.

We were allowed to continue the Bible study in 8 groups in some primary schools and in the secondary school in Tolna from September. This is a great opportunity for us. Half of

our students are from the church, half of them from different places in the world. Please pray that we could invite more international students to the Bible studies.

After the hard times of the last months, Joseph Fehér, my co-worker, was able to return from the border area, where he spent about two months with the migrants. We were able to visit him and help the migrants in some way.

There was a big worship day on 28 November 2015 in in our church house in Tolna. We prepared for it with great enthusiasm and joy. We were happy because of our EFC Hungary youth worship group, which consists of 10 members from different cities (Pécs, Komló, Budapest, Tolna). The children from Tolna sang two songs on this occasion. We started the children 'worship group' in January and they have developed a lot since then. Other groups besides ours took part in this meeting, for example the Pentecostal worship group from Kalocsa and the Baptist worship group from Csengőd. Every group worshipped for one hour.

We visited our mission stations on 12-13 December and distributed Christian calendars and gift packages. We visited five mission stations with 6 of my co-workers on the Saturday (Mohács, Kölked, Majs, Várdaróc - Croatia, Bacska Monostor - Serbia). We handed out 80 gift packages and 7 food packs. We were in Komló on the Sunday, where we had a baby dedication - my nephew's son Barnabás - and the Christmas church meeting.

My wife, Ági, had a successful operation. Fortunately, she can serve God again in the worship group, in the children's Bible study and in all the other ways she used to. We are thankful to God for it.

We ask you to pray for: Joseph Mihálovics, my brother pastor, who takes an active part in the gypsy mission with his wife. They are in a very difficult situation now. Marika, his wife was diagnosed with breast cancer and began chemotherapy the week after in Pécs. Please pray for her. Miklós Csáti's wife, Marika, who was the first in serving God, died two months ago. Miklós is finding it hard without her. Please pray for him too.

Please pray for the people to receive Jesus because they are very reluctant to hear about God. Please pray for us as well, so that we will be able to serve our God with wisdom and strength. We are very thankful for your friendship and for your prayers. May God bless your lives and your work.

*Frei Antal*

## **Ireland Yearly Meeting**

Ireland Yearly Meeting was held in Dromantine Retreat and Conference Centre in Co Down, Northern Ireland from the 9 to 12 April 2015. Our theme was KNOWING

GOD'S CREATION and it was related to Proverbs 4:11-12 – “I have taught you wisdom and the right way to live. Nothing will stand in your way if you walk wisely, and you will not stumble when you run”.

This Yearly Meeting had been our first fully residential one for many years as the Dro-mantine Centre was able to accommodate all Friends who wished to stay overnight, including our Young Friends. The difference to our fellowship together was very apparent and all our sessions had increased numbers in attendance. Our sessions had some emphasis on sustainability matters with reports from Eco-Quakers Ireland, Eco-Congregation Ireland and the Foinse project, which seeks to establish a scientific research station looking at biological, ecological and geological sites of scientific interest in some of the Irish border counties.

Our Public Lecture was given by the Glasgow Friend, Alastair McIntosh on the theme “To Become the People of the Cross: Climate Change, Violence and some Meanings of Creation in our Times”. Alastair argued that the consumerism that drives climate change exerts violence against God’s creation, in contradiction with our Peace testimony. He also proposed a vision for the meaning of the Cross: the love of God was so great that he preferred to allow himself to be killed than to kill, making the image of Christ on the Cross a supreme symbol of non-violence.

In November the Clerk attended an Ecumenical Prayer Service organised by Eco-Congregation Ireland. This involved many young people and was focused on the forthcoming Paris UN Climate Change Summit which was subsequently held in December.

*Daniel H Sinton, Clerk*

### **Italy: Bologna Worship Group**

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

Last year we successfully connected with the other Friends in Italy and keep contact by e-mail. We hope to meet them and others in June 2016.

In October we organised a 3-day meeting in Celleno (near Orvieto) with Elena Liotta and Walter Branchi, which involved Friends from all over Italy, friends of Friends and people interested in deep spiritual experience both in the Quaker and Vipassana traditions of silence and meditation.

We have a website [amicidelsilenzio.org](http://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, most with long detention sentences) is still carried out by Fabian Lang, once a week, with the collaboration of some students from the university [see: [www.unavia.it](http://www.unavia.it)]. In 2016, some of our members will also join in (our requests have been accepted by the prison authorities). The meetings at the prison begin with 10 minutes of silence, then a reading from a text (many are those selected by Pier Cesare Bori from different spiritual traditions) and a round of discussion/sharing.

Every year, on the anniversary of Pier Cesare Bori's death (4<sup>th</sup> November 2012), we organise a silent Meeting in Bologna, at the university where he was professor, and another one, in the evening, with his family, friends, students and open to anyone close to him in a Yoga centre called "le Vie" in Bologna.

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

Our support for the realisation of a Medical Charity Centre in Weh, in North-West Cameroon, is continuing, even if, due to a scarcity of funds, the construction of the centre has not yet been completed. We are thinking about initiatives in schools in Bologna and in Rimini to tell children and families about the project. The Centre will be entirely run by locals, with our support (in terms of economic help, collaboration for the construction planning, volunteers). See: [www.wehcenter.org](http://www.wehcenter.org) for more information.

By way of advertisement, from 1-6 September 2016 two members of our meeting - Evan and Federica Welkin – will be running "Helping the Helpers: A Trauma Prevention and Intervention Training for Refugee Service Providers", in Borgo Basino, Cusercoli, Italy, together with Leyla Welkin PhD, LMHC, cross-cultural psychologist (born in Turkey, she was educated primarily in the United States) and Kirsten Voris, Trauma Sensitive Yoga instructor who worked in Turkey and in the States for people of the international aid community, for teenagers, adults and also in county prisons. The training will be offered in English with Italian and Turkish translations available as needed. See [trainings@upupe.org](mailto:trainings@upupe.org) for more details.

*Lucia Biondelli*

## **Latvia: Liepaja Worship Group**

In 2015 the Liepaja Worship Group continued to hold regular meetings for worship once a month on a Sunday by arrangement. We are a permanent group of 6 people. Two of us are international members of the Religious Society of Friends, but all together we are good friends who need to meet and share with others our thoughts and experiences.

*Inese Ansule, Clerk*

## **Malta Worship Group**

2015 was a peaceful year for the meeting here in Malta. The many refugees who had landed on the islands were mostly diverted to Italy. Members of the meeting worked with the Green Party and Friends of the Earth to organise a march to coincide with the meeting of Commonwealth Heads of Government in Malta, on the eve of the Paris conference on Climate Change; but after the Paris atrocities, all assemblies were temporarily banned by the police.

As always our small meeting has been buoyed up and inspired by visitors to Malta who have attended. If you are visiting, please seek us out, it makes a huge difference to us!

*Piers Headley, Clerk*

## **Middle East Yearly Meeting, Brummana Monthly Meeting**

Brummana Monthly Meeting consists of a small group of members who, although not very active as a group, are nevertheless active as individuals. We have members who work in education, both at Brummana High School and at other non-Quaker schools. We have members who act as volunteer consultants to the mayors of the town of Brummana and the city of Beirut. Some members sit on the school boards, others volunteer time to run the Brummana Tennis Tournament in the summer and to coach a youth basketball team. This year we also had an involved young member help launch a recycling project at the school, for which the meeting donated 21 coloured bins to encourage students to recycle their waste paper, cans, bottles etc.

Lebanon has seen a large influx of Syrian families. Many of them are poor but eager to work, and are skilled in areas such as farming and handiwork. Whenever the opportunity arises we try to provide them with hourly work to help them sustain their families. We also donate clothes to organisations helping the poorer families. Our shared Quaker faith brings the members of the meeting together, however each member's vision, and neighbourhood determines his own priorities and perceived needs for help. Members of the Meeting uphold Quaker practice and values, each in accordance with his own conviction and capacity to serve.

The Near East School of Theology has undertaken a project to archive material on Protestant missions in Lebanon and Syria, and we are working with them to index and digitise our Quaker archives going back to 1873.

This year marked the hundredth year of the death of the School founder Theophilus Waldmeier, and we held a gathering to remember his life and work. His many years of missionary work in Ethiopia and Lebanon, his selfless devotion to improve the lives of so many, not through proselytising as much as through education, medical care, and vocational training, have won him the respect and appreciation of the community.

The people of Ras El Matin, a village across the valley from Brummana, wanted to show their appreciation to Daniel and Emily Oliver who ran a Quaker orphanage and school in the village. The orphanage was closed after an earthquake in 1956 damaged the building. Former students of the school wanted to restore the graveyard where Daniel and Emily are buried. We visited the village and thanked them for their efforts and kind gesture.

On the centenary of the start of World War I the BBC showed a documentary on the famine that ensued in the region. It included a synopsis of the soup kitchen which was run by Quakers in Brummana and which helped to feed over a thousand people, of mainly women and children, during the war.

The Meeting was bereaved by the passing of its oldest member, Renee Baz. Renee and her husband Najib, just like her parents before her, served the school for very many years. Renee hosted many visiting Quakers from all over the world whenever they came to Brummana. She was a second mother to many students who were away from home, and all of them have fond memories of her. After meeting we always went to her house for a cup of tea and delicious cakes. Even at 97 she came to meeting regularly and was extremely knowledgeable about the school's history. She was the anchor of our meeting, took care of the graveyard, and was loved by all those who knew her. She will be dearly missed and we are thankful for her life.

Our heartfelt wishes for Peace on Earth and Goodwill to all mankind.

*Sami Cortas, for Brumanna Monthly Meeting*

## **Middle East Yearly Meeting, Ramallah Monthly Meeting**

Ramallah Friends Meeting continues to hold Meeting for Worship every Sunday at 10:30 a.m., followed by fellowship. Our numbers have continued to hold steady with perhaps a small increase. Average attendance is from twelve to forty people. Clerk Jean Zaru offers an orientation to newcomers, making all feel welcome and emphasising that worship is a place where we encounter one another and God. The local group is joined by a steady stream of visitors, including students, teachers, delegations, international accompaniers, staff of humanitarian organisations and persons engaged in cross-cultural

ministry. After worship there are lively discussions, frequent presentations by Jean Zaru and others, and dialogues with noted visitors. Occasional midweek gatherings are also held. Ramallah Friends Meeting is characterised by a deep concern for peace and justice. Diverse people from many different countries and backgrounds keep coming back to the meeting, including Quakers from around the world and fellow travellers who appreciate the Quaker perspective. Visitors come to Ramallah to learn from the Palestinian people – their culture, their values, and the ways in which Palestinians (and others who share their world) are coping with the excruciatingly difficult challenges brought about by the injustices of the occupation. In addition to FWCC-EMES, Ramallah Friends Meeting is also supported by an international committee: Friends of Ramallah Friends Meeting, Quaker (FRFMQ).

*Jean Zaru, Clerk*

## **Netherlands Yearly Meeting**

In 2015 most of our work was dedicated to the problem of refugees in Europe. One of our Friends spent a long time helping in the ‘jungle’ camp in Calais.

The NLP courses in Israel, the West Bank and Kosovo are continuing. Several Friends are involved in voluntary work for refugees, such as language lessons.

We joined in a project organised by the Mennonites making and filling school bags and hygiene bags for people arriving at the refugee camps in Syria. It was a pleasure to do this with people from all denominations. The containers from four European countries arrived in January in the refugee camps in Syria. We also have the Quaker Aid Fund for financial help when this is needed.

*Erik Dries and Wils't Hart, Representatives*

## **Norway Yearly Meeting**

Norway Yearly Meeting experienced a membership growth rate of over 6% in 2015, with ten new members. Three of these had graduated from our youth programme for 13-15 year-olds. The youth programme gave an exuberant report to the annual gathering of their trip to central Quaker sites in England, including Yorkshire and Woodbrooke. Our theme for the 2015 gathering, our 197<sup>th</sup>, was “Sustainability for Life – in spirit and practice”, where we shared regarding participation in local sustainability initiatives, and the importance of community participation both to make a difference and to resist the sense of powerlessness. Our monthly meetings and worship groups (preparative meetings) continue to work on edits and commentary to a draft of a “faith and practice” for Norway YM. In 2015 we lost our close friend, the poet/author Martin Nag, who gave us such inspirational lines as: “the inner light never burns down”, and “give us this day our daily courage”.

*Stephen Collett, Clerk*

## **Poland, Warsaw & Poznan Worship Groups**

Polish Quakers took part in a number of events in 2015. First of all, we took part in the Central European Gathering in Novi Sad (Serbia) in May (6 people). We always have a good time: learning, meeting with friends, enriching experiences.

A very important thing for all of us was the welcoming of Zbigniew Kazmierczak (Białystok) and Andrzej Krej (Poznan) as International members. Following in their footsteps, some other friends have also applied for membership. Zbigniew created a new group of friends in Białystok – the first meeting for worship was held in July.

In August the Quaker Voluntary Action CASUBIA took place on Krzysztof Galiński's farm. From 8-15 August, in the village Trzebiatkowa province Pomeranian, a meeting was held within the framework of Quaker Voluntary Action. It was attended by Czech, Russian, British and Poles. The work on the farm during the year activates people with intellectual disabilities and is mainly focused on improving the infrastructure (painting, minor repairs, renovations etc), collecting firewood, raking hay etc. Leisure is talking, walking, splashing in the lake, board games, badminton, listening to live music, horse riding for Quakers children. Meetings in silence were held as planned.

In November for 7 weeks we took part in the Polish version of the online Quaker in Europe course from Woodbrooke. More than 20 people were on the list, but only 10 were active. It was a great experience because we had a few new participants interested in Quaker ways. We still have contact with them. Some of them are participants of Warsaw meeting.

At the same time we organised the third Polish gathering for 2 days. Mainly, we discussed our plans for the publication of some articles in Polish and about the organisation of CEG in Niwki planned for May 2016.

Some friends took part in meetings in Germany, Britain and Sweden. This has given us ideas about how to organise our meetings and trainings. It seems that more and more people are getting to know about Quakerism in Poland and are interested in knowing more.

*Jola Grabowska, Warsaw*

## **Portugal, Lisbon Area Informal Worship Group**

Portugal, Lisbon Area Informal Worship Group. We were 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 enjoyed very much the Quaker experience. We received a lot of support from EMES and one of our members went through a Companionship programme with a specifically trained and experienced Quaker based in Britain. Meetings were usually preceded by reading one excerpt from Quaker Faith and Practice

in order to stimulate the act of listening and waiting. Following the meetings, there was always some time for sharing a cup of tea or coffee, and for talking about the Quaker way, or just general socialisation.

In the beginning of 2013 we continued our monthly meetings and one of our members attended EMES Meeting for Exploration between 1 and 3 March in 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 about the possibility of organising a Border Meeting.

From June on, and because one of our members started spending long periods of time away from Portugal, Meetings hardly took place. Several attempts to organise Meetings were made, but for different reasons members could just not coincide on the same day.

We have not had meetings since early 2014. In order to start meetings once again, it would probably be necessary to get new group together. My ongoing half presence in Portugal makes this difficult.

*Matias Linder*

## **Russia, Moscow Monthly Meeting**

Moscow Monthly Meeting is a small Quaker community. It is international at this moment, with Russian, American and Bulgarian Friends. We have our silent worship on Saturdays at 14.00. We meet at the premises of the Russian charity foundation “Big Change”, which helps to complete the education of former residents of orphanages. Our small Quaker community contributes to this foundation with voluntary help. We are very glad that Johan and Judith Maurer returned again to the Moscow area and joined us. Our main concern in 2015 was the crisis situation in Eastern Ukraine. We prayed for peace in our neighbouring country. In April I visited Lugansk and Donetsk in Eastern Ukraine and again Donetsk at the end of September. My reports about the situation were distributed among European Friends. I also talked about my impressions to the Board of Friends House Moscow.

On 4-6 December 2015 I took part in the QCEA conference “Castle or community? Quakers' role in building a new Europe” where with Friends from Ukraine, Estonia, Georgia and Poland we drafted a peace project “East-Central European initiative for participation in the new Europe”, with the aim of contributing to a peaceful dialogue in the East-Central European area. We are planning to organise our first gathering in Belarus sometime in 2016.

*Misha Roshchin, Clerk*

## **Russia, Friends House Moscow (Dom Druzei)**

### **Current Situation in Russia**

This current reactionary period is finally stabilising. The regime has decided not to increase its pressure on civil society, so things are bad, but they could be worse. About 70 NGOs are on the “Foreign Agent” list, and these organisations are under constant scrutiny. However, the government has not added more well-known organisations to this list. The government appears to have included all the groups it wants to suppress at the federal level and local authorities now use the list for suppressing local independent organisations.

This year we continued the process of closing our social organisation (NGO). It was, as expected, a very difficult bureaucratic process. Some NGOs decided to close completely, including *Family and Law*, the one we supported in Dzerzhinsk.

### **Outreach**

Our goal of outreach is difficult because of the suppression of all religious organisations in Russia. We must be more inventive and cautious.

Social media has become increasingly important in our outreach work, especially Facebook and Vkontakte, the biggest Russian social network.

We updated the *Quakers.ru* website 2 or 3 times a week this year. The number of visitors increased by 3-4 times over last year. Our vision of the technology of outreach work is to use the website as a stable place, an archive, a digital library, and a resource centre for Russian speakers who want to know about Quakerism. In the Facebook and Vkontakte Quaker groups people can discuss Quaker materials, ask questions and communicate with each other.

### **Projects**

#### **AVP Ukraine**

This work continues to blossom, with our support of 2 of their programmes. They offer workshops for refugees, as well as the general population and detention centres.

#### **Help for Children with Special Needs (Dzerzhinsk)**

The first year of the project was the academic year 2014-15, which was the first project for the new coordinator, Irina Rodchenko, a retired militia officer. The project involves a team of psychologists from the Pedagogical-Medical Support Centre.

#### **Alternative Service Office (Kazan)**

Gyerman Alyotkin, its coordinator, holds about 40 individual consultations monthly for people who do not want to serve in the army, for conscripts who have problems in the army, and for their relatives. Gyerman is part of the editorial team for *The Alternativshchik* newspaper, where he also includes articles about Quakers.

### **English Club, in Big Change (Moscow)**

The programme for Russian youth committed to orphanages was conducted during the academic year, 2014-2015. The orphanages are large, holding up to 300 individuals with no possibility of leaving except for the support of Big Change. Teachers, mentors, volunteers, and administrators all work to instil in these young people the self-esteem, initiative, motivation, and joy for life that is most often destroyed by institutional life.

### **Quaker literature**

This year we completed the translation of three large texts: *Rethinking War and Peace* by Diana Francis, *Elizabeth Fry, a Biography* by June Rose and *The Norwegian Diary* by Myrtle Wright Radley.

Vitali Adamenko, whose committed pacifism is the centre of his life, arranged for the printing of two Quaker pamphlets, *The Generals and Twenty-First Century War* and *Christ in Catastrophe*, and helped with their distribution.

*Sergei Grushko and Natasha Zhuravenkova*

## **Spain, Barcelona Monthly Meeting**

### **History of the Meeting**

Barcelona Meeting was founded by an American couple, Nancy and Gerard Negelspach, in the mid-1960s. In recent years attendance has fluctuated, with an average of around 6 or 7 (but sometimes only 2 or 3), a mix of local people and expatriates, usually with more of the latter.

### **Current Status of the Meeting**

Barcelona Meeting has seen a drop in numbers in 2015. Some members have moved away to other countries or returned home after a long stay here. We have had some new members joining us recently though. We still try to meet regularly twice a month with typically 5 or so attendees. We have had to find a new meeting place, which has been a bit unsettling, although we think we have now found our new home.

### **International Non-Violence Day**

We were invited by Pepe Gómez from Espai Humanista to an event where we gave a talk about our Peace Testimony and showed a video produced by South Wales Area Meeting about Jenkin William James, a man imprisoned as a conscientious objector during the First World War. Other speakers included members from the Bahá 'í

Community, Centre Suf'i Naqshbandi, Casa del Tibet and the Humanist Movement (Silo).

### **Jesus Espinoza's Trips to other Meetings**

Over the last three months, a member of our group, Jesús Espinoza, has been very blessed to have the opportunity to travel and enjoy the company of our Friends in Toulouse (France), Svartbäcken (Sweden) and Brussels. In Toulouse, he had the opportunity to attend the Meeting for Worship on October 5th, World Quaker Day. Jesús was impressed by the tremendous dynamism of Friends in Toulouse, who are, individually and as a group, involved in many different social causes and a lot of interesting endeavours.

At Svartbäcken he attended a seminar on the concepts of Eldership and Oversight. During the seminar there was also a conversation about the needs for small groups to grow and develop. This resulted in a brainstorming exercise to generate ideas about how to stimulate interest in Quakers in the wider society of our respective cities.

Finally, in Brussels, he participated in the conference "Europe, Castle or Community", organised by the Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA). The purpose of this conference was to reflect on the visions of Europe shared by European Quakers and how we could act to make those visions a reality.

All these experiences, which are of great interest for all the smaller groups of Quakers in Europe, help us to face the New Year 2016 with great enthusiasm, giving us the knowledge that with the support of FWCC, EMES and our Friends in Europe and the World, we are not as alone or as small as we thought.

*Nigel Harris*

### **Spain, Madrid Worship Group**

The Madrid Worship Group continues to hold Meeting for Worship twice a month, on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sundays, with a Bible study before the silent worship.

We are normally three, one Friend and two attenders, and from time to time some Friends from abroad attend Meeting while visiting or temporarily residing in Madrid. We had Madelaine Davis from Australia for a short period of time and now Mary Bluestocking from New York Yearly Meeting has joined us. She plans to be in Madrid until June.

In 2015 Carmen Alcalde attended the EMES Annual Gathering at Woodbrooke. It was wonderful to be in contact with so many Friends and specially to meet Jesus Espinoza from the Barcelona Group and Astrid Bruhn from the Canary Islands. We had the opportunity of doing some planning about the gathering of Iberian Friends. The idea in

mind is to gather once a year. We are working towards this and hope that in the near future it will be a reality.

*Carmen Alcalde*

## Sweden Yearly Meeting

Sweden Yearly Meeting was held at the end of June at Wendelsberg Folk High School, near Gothenburg. This year's theme was "Equality – Approach and Application", with Martin Wilkinson from Britain Yearly Meeting at the keynote speaker.

A Yearly Meeting (YM) representative and alternate were appointed as members of the SEAPPI steering group in the spring. SEAPPI is the Christian Council of Sweden's Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel. Earlier in the year a member of Sweden YM took part in this programme as an accompanier and on her return from the Middle East gave talks and led workshops related to her experiences.

Communications in various forms are being worked on and improved. The YM's website is regularly updated. A news sheet with information about the YM's activities is produced four times a year, and a Yearbook containing in-depth articles on Quaker topics is published annually.

The Quaker Retreat Centre at Svartbäcken, near Rimbo, continues to offer a programme of weekend retreats and meetings for learning. The traditional 'all-age' camp was held at Svartbäcken in August. This is an opportunity for people to get together in a relaxed atmosphere and have fun. As well as twice weekly Meetings for Worship and worship sharing on a theme, the Friends Centre in Stockholm offers one-day retreats, bible study and study evenings on various topics. It also opens its doors twice a year to the wider public in the form of Open House, which includes a programme of Quaker-related activities and talks.

A new worship group in Värmland has been formed, with meetings held once a month in Karlstad. There are now 12 worship groups – of varying sizes – under the care of Sweden Yearly Meeting.

Quaker Service Sweden continues to actively support projects in Bangladesh, Burundi, Ethiopia, Georgia, Ramallah and Russia. It also acts as a clearing house for contributions to Quaker Service Norway's preschool projects in Gaza.

Annika Hollsing represented Sweden Yearly Meeting at a conference arranged by Finland Yearly Meeting from 2-4 October in Rovaniemi. The conference, *Remembering Quaker relief work in Finnish Lapland 1945 – 47; looking at current and future challenges*, was organised to commemorate 70 years since the start of the relief and reconstruction work in Finnish Lapland at the end World War II.

During the year Sweden Yearly Meeting appealed to the Swedish Government to not enter into any agreement or alliance with NATO, but to instead remain a neutral country.

*Sue Glover Frykman and Annika Hollsing*

## **Switzerland Yearly Meeting**

The 2015 annual gathering of Switzerland Yearly Meeting (SYM) was held on 22-25 May again at the Haus für Bildung und Begegnung, in Herzberg near Aarau. The theme was “Imagine a world without war - living for a world in peace” and included music, personal testimonies about working for peace, and activities for children. The weekend was enriched by guests from Russia, Britain, Germany, France, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Another significant gathering was held from 20-22 February at Montmirail near Neuchâtel on the theme “Promptings of the Spirit” and was conducted in both English and German. The autumn meeting of German speaking Friends was held on 8 November on the theme “It’s difficult to find the middle path: to harden one’s heart for life and to keep it soft for loving.” What has now become an annual tradition for Geneva and Lausanne Friends, the Mystery Tour, took place in September with 10 participants enjoying meeting for worship in an old chapel in the Swiss Alps followed by a traditional raclette lunch and a visit to an alpine garden. The spiritual life of the 3 German-speaking groups continues to be enriched by regular visits of an Elder who leads talks on spiritual themes.

There are now almost 90 Friends and 100 friends of Friends on our mailing list, which is a slight increase from the previous year. The average age remains high (over 70), though the Children’s Meeting held each month by Geneva Monthly Meeting continues to have good attendance. Thanks to the renovation of storage space in the basement of Quaker House, the children now have their own dedicated room for gathering and displaying their art work. Once a month they join Meeting for Worship for the last 15 minutes, allowing them to experience a settled meeting.

There are four regional groups (Bern, Basel, Geneva, and Zürich) following the integration of the Lausanne group with Geneva Monthly Meeting two years ago. Contributions to service projects are now delegated to the local groups to reduce the number of SYM committees and administrative tasks and for the same reason organising the SYM Annual Meeting is rotated between the German-speaking groups and Geneva Monthly Meeting.

There are three business meetings a year, the principle one taking place during the Yearly Meeting, which is attended by about 40-45 members and representatives of other

Yearly Meetings and Quaker organisations. The two other business meetings are held in the spring and autumn and are attended by about 10-15 members. The spring meeting focuses on planning the Yearly Meeting and acceptance of the accounts from the year before. The autumn meeting deals mainly with the budget and nominations for the next year.

Two publications continue to be produced several times a year, *Entre Amis* and *News and Views of Geneva Friends*, which contain much information about the activities of Swiss Friends. Similar to the multiple languages used at SYM, these publications contain articles in German, French and English, reflecting the multilingualism that is both a strength and a challenge for the Quaker community in Switzerland.

*Swiss Friends*

## **Europe & Middle East Young Friends (EMEYF)**

Thinking back on EMEYF's year 2015, lots of events (e.g. our participation at EMES Annual Meeting), involvements (e.g. with QCEA), communal and individual journeys (e.g. of EMEYFers engaging with the humanitarian crisis in Europe) are part of the EMEYF story, which is one of a dispersed worshipping community. Two images of a gathered community come particularly to mind. The first is a jumble of shivering Young Friends from all over the Section, holing up under blankets in a room in a guest-house in Ureki, Georgia. Earlier, there had been hours of discernment about bringing EMEYF Spring Gathering to Georgia, of planning to make our leading possible, and finally of looking around this guest-house for a room that would be big, warm, quiet and light enough to hold us all. Our Epistle reads: "Our community came into being while huddled under blankets at our very first Meeting for Worship, as it poured with rain outside", and suddenly there was enough space, warmth, quietness and light. "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 were blessed with finally being able to meet with those Friends who had been prevented in past years due to visa problems, and to be welcomed to their country by them. Even though the process had been difficult at times – all was right as we found our place as a community.

The second image is of a group of EMEYFers looking through the first box of our lost and re-found archives during Annual Meeting in the autumn at Quaker House Brussels. Rummaging through minutes, epistles, notes and letters of those who were EMEYFers 30 years ago, we recognised the differences due to technical and political changes, but even more we recognised the similarities of community, commitment, concerns and desires to find our voices and our place in Quakerism and the world. We recognised the struggles, the doubts, the trust and the humour, the grand moments and the shortcomings. We felt connected, part of a bigger story and community, encouraged and challenged.

All in all, it was a year that started by going to the outer edges of our geographical grounds to be more complete, and ended with discerning and adopting two major projects for 2016 and beyond, that will hopefully help EMEYF explore its historical depth and envision its future. In the summer of 2016, we are going to celebrate 30 years of EMEYF with an All-Age-Gathering in Germany, to which all Friends are invited. We are also starting to transform our archives into a living archive, by linking it up with people and stories, feeding it back into our journeys as Young Friends.

*Esther Köhring and Renke Meuwese, Clerks*

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

QCEA brings a Quaker vision of just relationships to European institutions. In 2015, peace and sustainability were the strongest themes. Our 2.5 advocacy staff focused their efforts on:

- Building an advocacy network against **armed drones** in the EU
- Proposing that **peacebuilding** and restorative tools be used to address insecurity and hate, including advocating against **military responses to migration**
- Building a **circular economy**, in right relationship with creation, and
- Opposing the **TTIP** trade deal that threatens social and environmental legislation.

**Our method of working changed in 2015.** We are spending far more time meeting people in the institutions, having found more efficient ways to produce our supporter publications. Our confidence has grown as we have been blessed by positive engagement with policy-makers.

The European Forum on Armed Drones has grown quickly from Tim Harman's initiative (tharman@qcea.org). 15 NGOs now take part, resulting in a draft EU policy to be considered in the Parliament. George Thurley (gthurley@qcea.org) held a series of meetings with national Member State governments in faith that they hear our call for an ambitious circular economy agreement.

Our **largest ever QCEA-QPSW conference** involved 115 Friends from 23 countries. It discussed the Europe that Friends would like to build. The tide of militarism, xenophobia and injustice seemed to be against us, but the conference reaffirmed our commitment to try what love can do. Thank you to all who contributed.

We have struggled to have an impact in some areas in 2015. The lobbying of Europe's arms trade and the corporations supporting the TTIP trade deal have been too powerful. The chaos surrounding the EU's refugee and migration policy is also of great concern.

QCEA's Council met in April and November, initiating a wholesale review of our organisation. Paul Musiol (pmusiol@qcea.org) joined us from Oxfam in South Sudan to lead this work. Paul has worked closely with our dedicated Executive Committee - Oliver Robertson, Rorie Nazareth, Phillip Spencer, Jeremy Lester, Sally Sadler and Hans Weening.

**Quaker House also got busier** in the second half of 2015 with an increase in its use by the local Quaker Meeting, other faith groups and NGOs. In November, the European Network Against the Arms Trade appointed Laetitia Sedou as its first member of staff, and is based in the QCEA office.

**Around Europe and our blog** continue to inform Friends about our work. Please also contact us if you are interested in our policy publications, submissions to formal consultations, and joint statements with other NGOs.

The staff team are very grateful for the way that other parts of the QCEA family have upheld us in 2015. Our work in Brussels would not be possible without the service of more volunteers than we have space to mention, but particularly including Andreas Schulze and Simon Bond. Finally, we were delighted that in 2015 Ireland Yearly Meeting established a QCEA Support Committee, taking its place alongside the wonderful support we receive from equivalent groups in Britain and the Netherlands.

*Andrew Lane, Representative*

## **Quaker United Nations Office and Committee (Geneva)**

In 2015, QUNO's Human Impacts of Climate Change programme continued its quiet diplomacy work at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Following the Conference of Parties (COP 21) in Paris in December, many participating negotiators credited QUNO as playing a significant role in promoting an atmosphere of higher purpose, in otherwise difficult negotiations. For the COP 21, we published *Preparing for Paris*, a series of four briefing papers on the history and current challenges facing the UNFCCC, the critical role of grassroots action, questions for policy makers, and a summary of recent climate science. The resulting Paris Agreement achieved remarkable global support, yet in the absence of legally binding emission targets, we are prioritising calls for urgent action and continuing quiet diplomacy at the UNFCCC. We are also engaging international organisations and civil society with the latest climate science, its ethical implications and our responsibility to act.

Our Human Rights and Refugees programme has continued its work to ensure that the rights of children of prisoners and especially those whose parents are sentenced to death or executed are recognised. A positive development in this area in 2015 was the establishment of an international network for those working with children of

incarcerated parents. There was also cause for celebration with the adoption of the Revised Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (to be known as the Nelson Mandela Rules). The revision process has brought the original rules from 1955 into line with human rights standards. We continue to work with conscientious objectors and their organisations to help raise these issues at the UN. This past year resulted in recommendations through the Universal Periodic Review process and the Human Rights Committee. The steady advancements in the recognition of the right to conscientious objection to military service led us to publish an updated overview of the international standards in January 2015.

QUNO's Food and Sustainability programme has been developing an online tool to help explain the complex relationship between food security measures and the World Trade Organisation's (WTO) trade rules. In April, we brought together participants from eleven countries, including academics and members of civil society, as well as representatives from UN bodies and small-scale agriculture, for a third consultation to discuss the design and content of such a tool. On the basis of their suggestions and technical work with developers, we now have an advanced prototype which will be further refined, based on feedback from events held at the WTO and the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in October. To provide a detailed overview of the issues, we also published *The Relationship between Food Security Measures and WTO Trade Rules*. Our work is also examining small-scale farmers' roles as innovators, linking this to current developments within the field of intellectual property. We have published a policy brief, *Small-scale Farmer Innovation* on this topic, as well as *Realising the Right to Food in an Era of Climate Change*, which highlights farmers' crucial role as custodians and innovators for maintaining resilient food systems.

In our Peace and Disarmament work, QUNO is collaborating with our colleagues in the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) in East Asia to raise awareness, and encourage the adoption of conflict sensitive approaches to business. In November 2015, QUNO and AFSC organised successful off the record expert exchanges in Geneva between business people from China and the West, academics and NGO representatives working in this area. We also continue to monitor developments around nuclear disarmament and the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). Additionally, QUNO is supporting the efforts to achieve a strong regional agreement on environmental rights in the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) region, based on Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration. Our publication, *Building Peace through Principle 10*, which included good practice examples from the region, stressed the importance of such legal frameworks for equitable, peaceful and sustainable natural resource management, and was distributed to country delegates and civil society representatives involved in the negotiations.

*Stephen Schenck, Communications Coordinator*

## Quaker United Nations Office in New York

It has been a busy year at the UN, celebrating the 70th General Assembly opening, seeing an unprecedented number of significant UN and UN-led processes on peace and security, development, climate change, women's issues, disaster relief, and humanitarian action, the planned Humanitarian Summit in 2016 and of course including the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals approval, and the recent Paris Climate Change Summit.

The programme plan for 2016 will consist of two strategies: Peacebuilding and the Prevention of Violent Conflict. Although QUNO believes that these are integrated goals, it makes sense to conceive of two different strategies in order to speak to different audiences at a variety of entry points within the UN system.

An important piece of work over the last three years has been getting, and then keeping Goal 16, the so called "peace goal", which calls for peaceful, just and inclusive societies, into the final agreement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. It is resonant for Friends, as is Goal 10, which calls for a reduction of inequalities within and among countries, addressing internal and external drivers of violence.

Fellow Rachel Singleton-Polster finished her work looking at how QUNO could tackle promoting change through peaceful means at the UN.

Her review of historical material yielded five main insights into what Quakers do best, working in an international context.

- Active listening, which includes asking the right questions at the right time.
- Caring for the UN community, a pastoral care function.
- Convening and bridge-building, including bringing together parties that don't normally talk with each other.
- Recognise that crisis response includes conflict prevention, conflict transformation, and peacebuilding. (The UN may tend to treat these dimensions in isolation, but they are inter-related.)
- Building a narrative of non-violent solutions to crises. We need to collect and share the stories that we have to demonstrate the alternatives to violent conflict.

Her paper *Grounded in Faith*, was well received at the March meeting.

Rachel F. Madenyika took up her post as representative in early 2015 and will be looking at, among other things, a more organised approach to fundraising.

At present there is little media coverage of the planned Humanitarian Summit to be held in Istanbul in May 2016. One of the themes of the summit relates to the needs of people impacted by violent conflict. There is a strong desire to amplify the Quaker voice with the realisation that we are working on these issues from many angles and among different organisations. The Quaker United Nations Committee urges leaders of Quaker organisations with worldwide reach, including QUNO, to seek ways to make meaningful contribution to international policy discussions about humanitarian work.

It is not possible to report on all the excellent work being done in our name at QUNO in a short report, but you can read more about QUNO work in New York and Geneva on their website [www.quno.org](http://www.quno.org) . You can also sign up for their monthly updates.

*Penny Heymans, Oslo*

## **Quaker Voluntary Action**

2015 has been a busy year for Quaker Voluntary Action. We have benefited from a new wider European perspective as our worker Jasmine is now resident in Slovenia.

We held a new work camp in Poland, preparing a training centre for young adults with disabilities, clearing land and preparing activity areas. We successfully ran a visit to the green city of Freiburg (a project initiated by the late Martin Smith) where participants were given a guided tour of the city and able to see the very practical way in which that city is responding to Green concerns. We also organised our usual visits to Congénies in the South of France, the Quaker Community in Bamford, and Swarthmoor Hall where the input from QVA volunteers is always welcome. All these Retreats included time for reflection. We have also begun a new initiative – “Head, Hearts and Hands” workshops in various Meetings, drawing on our experience of running working Retreats over the past seven years and looking at how this model might support local Meetings and the wider Quaker body. We are hoping to hold a conference on this theme in 2016. In addition, we supported a new holiday project for children of different ethnic groups, which was run by Hungarian Friends with the aim of enabling the children to share their different cultural heritage.

As always, a highlight of our programme was the retreat held in Ramallah with visits to Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. This was again successful and thankfully passed without incident in spite of the rising tensions in the area in October. One of our Trustees, David Grundy, was able to visit Ramallah Meeting House beforehand and spend some time there paving the way for the retreat. We work closely with Friends of Ramallah Friends Meeting and, while still hoping to place some longer term volunteers there, are waiting for the right time to become apparent.

We owe much to those donors who continue to support us on a regular basis and also to the facilitators who so competently manage the day to day business of Retreats. If anyone would like to receive our newsletter and updates on our programme by email, please contact us on [mail@qva.org.uk](mailto:mail@qva.org.uk).

*Jane Robinson, Clerk*

## Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre

I am so glad to be able to share with Friends some of the Woodbrooke highlights from 2015 and some of our hopes for the future.

As Friends will hopefully know, we offer Woodbrooke learning at our Study Centre in Birmingham, at Swarthmoor Hall, at Meetings and other locations through our Woodbrooke on-the-road programme, and anywhere through our online courses and events. All of that can be summed up as '**Woodbrooke where you are**'.

It is wonderful that Friends across the world have been able to participate in our learning and here are some of the highlights from last year:

- We welcomed course participants to Woodbrooke from Ireland, France, the United States of America, Australia, Russia, Norway, Botswana, South Africa, New Zealand, Canada, Zimbabwe, Italy, Germany and Switzerland.
- We held Woodbrooke on-the-roads in Ireland and France.
- Our Equipping for Ministry (EfM) Programme has attracted participants from Italy, Norway and the United States, and in 2016 we have two Friends from Norway and Germany starting the 2 year Programme.
- One of the participants on our Young Adult Leadership Programme this year has come through Europe and Middle East Young Friends.

We were delighted to host the FWCC EMES Annual Meeting in 2015 which was enriched by the presence of the Central Executive Committee. We were glad to be able to provide some financial support for some Friends to attend the Annual Meeting through the use of the Catchpool Bursary fund. This fund is available for any Friends within EMES outside of Britain, to assist in the cost of accessing Woodbrooke learning opportunities.

We are gradually expanding our online learning programme and we welcomed Martin Layton to the Woodbrooke staff team in January 2016. Martin will be leading the delivery and development of both our Woodbrooke on-the-road programme and our online learning.

We have already seen the global appeal of our online clerks course and we are planning to offer other roles courses online over the next few years. Other e-learning successes include our online postgraduate taught courses in partnership with Lancaster University, where we now have 20 students enrolled. Adding this to the 20 enrolled for the research degrees through our partnership with the University of Birmingham means that we have the most postgraduate students studying with Woodbrooke in our 113 year history. This includes students from Eire, Norway, France, Canada, USA and South Africa as well as from Britain. More information about our online postgraduate learning can be found on our website <http://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/pages/taught-degrees.html>

Wherever you are able to experience the rich learning that Woodbrooke has to offer we hope that it will enrich your Quaker life. Our mission remains faithful to the original purpose of Woodbrooke: *Fostering of a vital Friends' ministry, where ministry encompasses faith, witness, love and service.*

Sandra Berry, Director

## Yearly Meetings in 2016

YM	When	Contact
Denmark	2-3 April	<a href="mailto:post@kvaekerne.dk">post@kvaekerne.dk</a>
Ireland	31/3 - 3/4	<a href="mailto:office@quakers-in-ireland.ie">office@quakers-in-ireland.ie</a>
Britain	27-30 May	Paul Parker, Recording Clerk, Friends House, 173 Euston Road London NW1 2AX <a href="mailto:ymg@quaker.org.uk">ymg@quaker.org.uk</a>
Belgium & Luxembourg	10-12 June	<a href="mailto:quakerclerk@gmail.com">quakerclerk@gmail.com</a>
Netherlands	3-5 June	<a href="mailto:secretariaat@dequakers.nl">secretariaat@dequakers.nl</a>
Switzerland	13-16 May	<a href="mailto:symclerk@swiss-quakers.ch">symclerk@swiss-quakers.ch</a>
Sweden	5-8 May	<a href="mailto:kvakargarden@kvakare.se">kvakargarden@kvakare.se</a>
Norway	23-26 June	<a href="mailto:kveker@kveker.org">kveker@kveker.org</a>
France	28-31 July	<a href="mailto:assembleedefrance@gmail.com">assembleedefrance@gmail.com</a>
Finland	12-14 August	<a href="mailto:lampelanleena@gmail.com">lampelanleena@gmail.com</a>
German	13-16 Oct	<a href="mailto:clerks@quaeker.org">clerks@quaeker.org</a>

**Other events in 2016 (fuller details on <http://www.fwccemes.org/calendar/>)**

Event	When	Contact
Grenztreffen Switzerland/Germany/France	1-3 April	Kerstin Mangels
EMEYF All-Age Summer Gathering	30 July-6 August	<a href="mailto:emeyf@qcea.org">emeyf@qcea.org</a>
Central European Gathering	20-23 May	Jola Grabowska
Border Meeting	9-11 September	<a href="http://grenztreffen.be/index.php/en-GB/">http://grenztreffen.be/index.php/en-GB/</a>
Peace & Service Consultation in Brussels, Belgium	2-4 December	<a href="mailto:emes@fwccemes.org">emes@fwccemes.org</a>

**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:**

CAF Bank

**Bank** – HSBC City Corporate Banking Centre

**SWIFT BIC Code** – MIDLGB22XXX

**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

**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

### **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, Martin Touwen, for further information or to inform us of bank transfers you are making.