



Friends World Committee  
for Consultation  
EUROPE & MIDDLE EAST SECTION

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**Exec Sec: Marisa Johnson**

## FWCC/EMES Annual Report 2016

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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.

In 2016 a World Plenary Meeting (formerly the Triennial/International Representatives Meeting) was held in Pisac, near Cusco, Peru, from 19-27 January. The theme was *Living the Transformation: Creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of God's children (Romans 8:19)*. See <http://www.fwccworld.org/fwccworld/>. These plenary meetings will be less frequent in future for sustainability reasons. The next is likely to take place around 2023.

## 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

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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, cooperate within the Section but remain fully autonomous.

### Some Quaker Addresses in Europe

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### Clerk's Report on the Work of the Trustees/Executive Committee for 2016

FWCC EMES is a charity registered in Scotland. The members serving as Trustees of the Registered Charity for 2016 are Sue Glover Frykman (Clerk), Martin Touwen (Treasurer), Dag Hovda Sture, Lee Taylor, Paul Sladen (EMEYF) and 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 Coordinator.

In 2016, Annual Meeting sessions were held on 21<sup>st</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> January in Pisac, Peru, in conjunction with FWCC's World Plenary Meeting (International Representatives Meeting). The first Executive Committee meeting of the year was held at Jordans Friends Meeting House (UK) from 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> March. An Executive Committee meeting was held via Skype on 14<sup>th</sup> May to discuss the application to the Joseph Rowntree

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Charitable Trust (JRCT) for the funding of a further three year Ministry & Outreach programme. The Executive Committee also met via Skype on 10<sup>th</sup> July. In September (23<sup>rd</sup>-25<sup>th</sup>) we met at Svartbäcken, Sweden Yearly Meeting's Retreat Centre nr. Rimbo. The final Executive Committee meeting of the year took place via Skype on 14<sup>th</sup> November.

The Executive Committee meets in different parts of the Section each time in order to connect, worship and socialise 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, please contact the Executive Secretary.

**Finance:** We are grateful to the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust (JRCT) for funding the Ministry & Outreach Programme for a further three years, until the end of 2019. Support for core activities from Yearly, Monthly Meetings and individuals enables us to continue the work of FWCC EMES and we are very grateful for this. As our Treasurer reminds us, increases in contributions and additional donations to support the work of EMES are always welcome. The independent examiner of our accounts, Sheila Fletcher of Enigma Business Solutions, retired in 2016. A new examiner, Haines Watts Huntingdon, has been appointed to examine the accounts for the year 2016, which will be presented by our Treasurer, Martin Touwen, at the Annual Meeting in May 2017.

**Small Grants Fund:** In 2016, the Small Grants Fund, also financed by JRCT, made grants to the Europe and Middle East Young Friends Living Archives Project (a three year commitment), the Polish Publication Project and to Toulouse Friends for a Conference for Peace. Details about the various projects, together with information about how to apply for a grant, can be found on the FWCC-EMES website.

**Amari Play Centre, Ramallah:** At the Annual Meeting in 2016, in Peru, Representatives were informed about the precarious finances of the Amari Play Centre in Ramallah and the possibility of closure in August 2017 if enough funds were not raised. Thanks to generous support from a number of Trust Funds in England and Ireland, Quaker Service Committees, Yearly Meetings, Quaker groups and individuals in the Section, enough money has been raised to ensure the continuation of this work, at least in the short-term.

**Staff:** Marisa Johnson (Executive Secretary) and Julia Ryberg (Ministry and Outreach Coordinator) continue to work closely together. Kim Bond provides part-time assistance from the FWCC World Office in London. Marisa is regular contact with the FWCC World Office. We value our links with the FWCC World Office and the other FWCC Sections. The EMES Executive meets once a month by Skype for a half-hour Meeting for Worship as a way of deepening spiritual fellowship.

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**Intervisitation** is important and we are pleased that the Executive Secretary was able to visit Ramallah Meeting and the Amari Play Centre in October. 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 also been developed and strengthened with Friends in the other Sections.

**FWCC Central Executive Committee:** The EMES Executive Secretary and Clerk are members of the FWCC Central Executive Committee, which meets face-to-face once a year and, when appropriate, throughout the year via Skype or telephone conference. In 2016 we met in Peru, in conjunction with the World Plenary Meeting – one day before the WPM in Pisac and several days after it in Cusco. We had a telephone conference in July. In November the Section Clerks met via Skype and, later that month, the FWCC Clerks and Section Clerks met via Skype. These occasions for talking about our work, sharing our experiences and planning for the future are very valuable and help us to support each other in the work we undertake.

It is a privilege to serve as Clerk to FWCC-EMES. My hope is that Friends in our Section, and indeed around the world, will continue to grow in love, compassion and care for one another and our planet, and to sow the seeds of peace in our own lives and communities.

*Sue Glover Frykman, Clerk*

## Report from the Executive Secretary

Beginning 2016 in Pisac amidst a large and vibrant community of Friends from all over the world, in most beautiful majestic surroundings, I asked myself what the rest of the year could possibly bring that would match that experience. But service for Friends through EMES is full of gifts and special moments, and 2016 had many of these.

As Sue has already mentioned in the Clerk's report, the Executive Committee met at Jordans Meeting in March. This was my first visit to the historical Meeting, and we enjoyed wonderful support and hospitality from local Friends.

At the end of March I attended **Ireland Yearly Meeting**, albeit briefly, to give a prepared reflection on “The Gift of Conflict” to the opening session of the Yearly Meeting, arranged by the Ministry and Oversight committee. The text is available from the IYM website: <https://quakers-in-ireland.ie/2016/04/02/the-gift-of-conflict-marisa-johnsons-talk-at-iyml/>. The reflection was well received and several visitors from other Yearly Meetings asked for it to be translated in their languages.

In April the Clerk and I attended the Britain Yearly Meeting's **Quaker World Relations Committee Forum**, which brought together the clerks and senior managers from the

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main committees of BYM (Sufferings, Trustees, Quaker World Relations, Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations) as well as FWCC/EMES, QCEA. The gathering also benefited from a pre-recorded talk by Diane Randall of AFSC and a live Skype questions & answers sessions with Diane, who had been prevented from travelling to London for the event by ill-health. This worked really well, and gave substance and depth to the day.

In May I travelled for the first time ever to Poland, to Opole/Niwki, to attend the **Central European Gathering**. This was a very happy and relaxed occasion, in lovely quiet wooded surrounding, and gave me an opportunity to meet some Friends I had not yet met, from Poland and Ukraine in particular.

The late May Bank Holiday was taken up by **Britain Yearly Meeting**, which gave me the opportunity of meeting Friends from almost every other Yearly Meeting in the Section, as well as Friends from other parts of the world.

In early June I travelled to Bologna to attend the **Italian Friends Retreat** in the beautiful foothills of the Apennine range. It was a truly heart-expanding occasion, with around 20 Friends who had gathered from Bologna and more distant places. It was particularly nice to see my predecessor Franco Perna again and his family, and it is a special treat to be amongst Quakers in my birthplace.

Later in the month, I ran the gauntlet of strikes on the French Railways to attend **Church & Peace AGM** in Loisy, near Paris. The theme: "... and they shall live secure" (NRSV) Micah 5:4 - Common security on the basis of nonviolence and justice " was very topical, and explored to great depths by the representatives of many churches and countries that had gathered together. Immediately after the AGM I travelled to Paris, with many of the Church & Peace participants, to take part in the protests in Villepinte where the **Eurosatory Arms Fair** was taking place. It was really impressive to see how much planning Friends from France, Belgium & Luxembourg, German and Netherlands YM had done, and what big support there was from the other Church and Peace faithful.

I turned 60 in 2016. The EMES Executive Committee surprised me by treating me to a truly wonderful course led by Tim Peat Ashworth on the Resurrection at Woodbrooke during the summer. It was an amazing course, which made me look afresh at my own relationship with this challenging story, and the faith issues that surround it.

Later in July I travelled to Nantes for France Yearly Meeting. It was a smaller gathering than usual, with few younger Friends or families. It was a lively and uplifting gathering, with deep consideration of Friends' place in French society, and an excellent letter sent to the media to put forward a Quaker perspective on current events, challenging the prevailing anti-Muslim and anti-refugee mood. My contribution to the gathering was a

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presentation on the work of FWCC-EMES – in French (!) and participation in a panel offering personal perspectives on living out our faith.

From Nantes I travelled by train to Bonn-Venusberg, where I joined the extremely vibrant and joyful All-age Gathering organised by EMEYF to commemorate the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its foundation. I ran a workshop using the biblical word game I devised as my Equipping for Ministry project. It was very affecting to see the archive materials that document the history and life of the network, and to participate in the many activities on offer.

Visiting Svartbäcken in Sweden in September for the meeting of the EMES Executive was akin to a retreat, and refreshing.

In the Autumn I set up an on-line Forum for Friends engaged in Children & Young People work. This has proved a successful initiative, with Friends making use of it to keep connected and share news of activities.

QCEA Council in October was a very positive and uplifting experience, conducted in a very disciplined and worshipful manner. The process of restructuring QCEA has felt like hard pruning, and there is every hope that good flower and fruit will follow.

The Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations of Britain Yearly Meeting invited me to lead a reflection on the future of Europe after the Brexit vote. I gave a very personal perspective, as an immigrant myself to the UK from Italy. I arrived in 1974 just as Britain joined the then Common Market, and the referendum result in June 2016 has distressed me greatly. In my role as Secretary to EMES I was prompted to research the beginning of our organisation back in 1938. I went to the Library at Friends House and got out the minutes of the early meetings of the European Section of FWCC, as it was then called. It was a poignant and moving experience, especially as Friends could meet only twice before World War II broke out. The next meeting in 2016 opened with a minute full of the pain of that disaster, and indicated a firm commitment to work closely together. Recent political developments in Europe and the USA raise complex issues of identity, faith and trust. In an environment of increasing racism and xenophobia we need to underline the importance of community cohesion and clarify areas of common purpose.

Travel to Jerusalem & Ramallah in late October was another highlight for the year. In spite of the very stressful start – four hours in immigration at Ben Gurion airport, being “interviewed” repeatedly by different people, it was a great visit. I visited the AFSC office and met the staff, working on the Palestinian youth programme, and the Israeli programme, supporting conscientious objectors. I travelled to Ramallah and visited the Meeting, the Amari Play Centre, enjoyed the wonderful hospitality of Jean Zaru, and

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also visited the Friends Schools, looking in particular at their Learning Support services, which are supported financially by Quaker Service Sweden.

On Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> October I attended the Church & Peace Conference arranged in Birmingham to try and revive the English-speaking network of this organisation. The conference's theme was "Re-thinking Security: the moral and theological challenge". The keynote speaker was Simon Barrow of Ekklesia. His talk can be found on Youtube: <http://bit.ly/2fDwDEa>. There was a good attendance from a number of churches and peace organisations, and very good panel discussion and workshops.

The FWCC Secretaries met in a working retreat in The Hague in November. This very special event was sadly marred by the absence of Churchill Malimo, Africa Section Secretary, who had not been able to obtain a visa to travel to the Netherlands, and by the result of the elections in the US, which took place while we were gathered. In spite of these difficulties, we were most warmly welcomed and supported by local Friends, especially Saskia Kuhlmann, Wilem Furnee and Marlies Tjallingii. We also worked with Leo Wieldraajer-Vincent, who attended to explore the work on Quaker Youth Pilgrimage.

The Peace & Service Consultation 2-4 December 2016 was very successful and generated a great deal of positive feedback. Since then I have been involved in preparing a Quaker response to the Open letter on the Future of Europe published by the Conference of European Churches. It is hoped to have a draft to take to the Annual Meeting in Bonn-Venusberg in May 2017.

During the year three editions of *Among Friends* were published. The FWCC International Membership Application Committee met twice during the year and accepted applications for membership from Martyna Trzcińska (Poland), Witold Michalowicz (Poland), Kristyna Petra Matějková (Czech Republic). Three more applications are in different stages of being processed. The committee recorded the death of Bedzina Orjonikidze (Georgia).

As I look back at 2016 the new year is well underway. In times that can feel very dark I am encouraged by all the blessings that I experienced, and prepare for fresh challenges and opportunities. This is my 10<sup>th</sup> year of service, and I can only give thanks that my life has been so enriched by Friends being willing to share their faith, wisdom, hopes as well as struggles in all corners of our Section, and well beyond.

*Marisa Johnson, Executive Secretary*

## Ministry & Outreach Development

The highlight of 2016 was the World Plenary Meeting in Peru at the very beginning of the year. The run-up to it included intensive work with Ruth Homer to create the study booklet and the 19 Home groups that were encouraged to interact online with each other, some in three languages, prior to and after the gathering. During the gathering, Ruth and I coordinated and supported around 80 Friends in their service as Home group facilitators. It was meaningful to help organise and contribute to the EMES worship session during the Plenary. There are ongoing contacts with Friends worldwide as a result of the Plenary.

A focus of the Ministry & Outreach programme is support of the current growth of Quaker presence in Central Europe, and of the process Central European Friends are undertaking to become a Regional Meeting. Support has meant visits, teaching about Quaker process, roles and outreach efforts. There has been synergy with Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre and in conjunction with Bader Philanthropies funding made available to Friends in the Czech Republic and more widely.

Support of Quaker groups and individual Friends is ongoing. This happens necessarily mostly via technology and upholding, and occasional visits offer the special richness of worship, table fellowship and learning first-hand about the various contexts in which Friends live, work and witness. An example of this was a November visit with Czech Friend Roman Branberger to Friends in Moscow. We met with Friends for worship and fellowship in various constellations and places. We attended sessions of Friends House Moscow Board meeting and heard of exciting peace projects as well as deep concern as political tension increases.

It is heartening to witness an increase in applications for International Membership, primarily in Central Europe. Part of the Ministry & Outreach work is to arrange for interviews that bring Friends together in meaningful and memorable meetings for clearness.

The second half of the year focused on the application for renewed funding, which we thankfully have received, from Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust. The preparation for this included discernment about the focus for the next few years of work. We want to consolidate what has been done since the beginning of the Ministry & Outreach programme in 2008 (including the Quaker in Europe online course, learning materials generated through various residential gatherings, the Companion programme resources, guidance for Visiting Friends). We also look ahead to what can sustain Quaker presence in the Section.

To these ends, we have begun gathering the experience of Friends in the Section into an EMES-wide Faith & Practice that documents how Quaker groups carry out their church affairs, care for each other and witness in the world. It will include narratives of how Meetings were formed and developed in a rich variety of political, cultural and church

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contexts. It will include testimonies to the lives of Friends who have contributed especially to their Meetings. All of this material, in various languages, will be gathered in an online Information Resource that has been set up and is openly available to everyone through Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre. The Information Resource is dependent upon contributions from Friends across the Section and can be accessed at <http://moodle.woodbrooke.org.uk/course/view.php?id=215>. We are therefore encouraging Quaker groups to make use of the Small Grants Fund and undertake projects that can help Friends become stronger and more vibrant communities, regardless of size and situation.

Within the online Information Resource is a limited-access interactive forum for Friends who are currently serving their Meetings in Nurture and Care (traditionally known as Eldership and Oversight).

At the end of 2016, we began exploring the possibility of an EMES-sponsored event for young people 16-18 years old. It is being planned for late summer 2017 in Sweden. Watch this space!

*Julia Ryberg, Ministry and Outreach Co-ordinator*

### **Amari Play Centre, Ramallah**

The 2016-2017 academic year has been and still is a challenge for the Amari Play Centre. There are financial issues about getting money to pay staff salaries and the expenses of the Play Centre. We have tried hard to solve these problems by money transfers and managed to solve them temporarily through FUM's account in Ramallah, which is also still a Temporary Bank Account. The rules and regulations in Palestine are becoming very strict and money transfers are more controlled for political reasons. Therefore we are dealing with this issue on a day-to-day basis.

On the bright side, the Amari Play Centre is still operating and serving children aged 5 from the Amari Refugee Camp. Despite all the difficulties the teachers are still committed to working and providing the best possible service.

The economic situation is difficult for so many families in the camp and outside the camp in general. Jobs are limited and the unemployment rate is high, which makes the Amari Play Centre a unique place for the families to engage their children and prepare them to join the United Nations Basic schools in the camp. The Amari Play Centre is rated as one of the best preschool in the area and in other camps in Palestine. At the same time it provides jobs for 4 families, including me personally.

The services the Amari Play Centre provides are still the same and the objectives are those applied since its establishment in 1974. The children learn the Arabic and English alphabets and some English words and learn the numbers from 1-12 and can understand

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groups. Playing is the key activity, which includes drawing, singing and storytelling. The children are also taught how to take care of themselves, to pay attention to their bodily hygiene and how to take care of the environment.

The Amari Play Centre follows the school calendar and operates from the beginning of September until the end of May. In the spring, picnics are very important. Two picnics each year are organised to take the children to play in the fields or to leisure places in Ramallah. They also learn about the seasons through songs and storytelling. The children participate in the olive harvesting season by taking them to the nearby olive tree fields. They also learn about festivals: Christian and Muslim festivals. To make them feel the importance of and have a sense of solidarity with other communities and accept the other, Christmas is very important for them. They receive presents and light and decorate the centre.

FUM managed to secure some funds to refurbish the Play Centre and we are waiting until the summer to start work: paint and improve the play area and buy some new chairs and tables.

Continuous support and donations help the Amari Play Centre to remain in existence and continue its mission and vision. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who gives money or any kind of donation to enable us to continue the service. Thank you all for keeping us in your thoughts and prayers.

*Muna Khleifi, Supervisor*

## Church and Peace

In June 2016 Church and Peace held its annual meeting in Loisy, just outside Paris. We could not have predicted during the planning last year just how relevant the chosen theme "...and they shall live secure" from the book of Micah and the meeting place would be – only a few kilometres from the Stade de France, where three suicide bombers struck during the November 2015 attacks. Maria Biedrawa shared experiences from her nonviolent trainings in African countries like South Sudan, Congo, Burundi and Central African Republic, and Christine Schweitzer, president of War Resisters International, urged for a paradigm shift from a prevailing logic of security to a logic of peace. Security will only exist if it is for all and will only come about if it is pursued by nonviolent means and includes justice. In order for this transformation to happen we need to develop deep spiritual roots and the trust that comes with spiritual discipline. In his sermon, Mennonite Neal Blough reminded us that we are not resisting human beings but "the forces of evil" that manifest themselves in structures and in relationships. The arms of Christians are described by Paul in his letter to Ephesus – prayer, faith, truth, righteousness and the gospel of peace. Our communities can be schools of peace, pardon and reconciliation, and be places of practice and training to grow these spiritual roots.

The decision to meet at this place and time was intentional. Eurosatory, one of the world's largest international "defence and security" exhibitions is hosted in Paris bi-annually and also in 2016. Half of the participants from the conference joined the Quaker-led vigil and nonviolent witness at the Paris Bourse and the entrance of Eurosatory short conversations were possible with many passers-by and people coming to check out the latest in weapons technology and talk about a logic of peace: security through nonviolence.

How to intervene and protect people in danger of violence? How to make sure that people can feel and be safe? These are not only practical questions but theological as well. The World Council of Churches struggled with these questions at its last General Assembly in 2013. The Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace, which was decided on during that Assembly, is a concept to continue exploring in practice what it might mean. The Evangelical Church in Germany took up this question and organised a consultation in September 2016 on what would it mean to become a Church of Just Peace. Church and Peace was invited to meetings to prepare the consultation and eight members of Church and Peace network were invited to the consultation, especially people from post-conflict societies like Croatia and Kosova. Also the churches ecumenical partners from Sri Lanka, South Africa, Togo, Ireland, Ukraine, and USA made it clear that there does not only need to be an absence of violence and war. Justice and peace calls for economic structures that allow everyone to live without fear of deprivation and hunger. It needs rule of law, justice and peace and a vision of how to live together in our broken world and learn how to forgive and be forgiven.

Besides the daily business of building and maintaining our network, re-launching our newsletter, visiting members, publishing press releases on European topics and working in cooperation with partners within the faith communities, we organised two regional meetings. In Germany the topic was "Economy and Justice". In Birmingham, United Kingdom, Simon Barrow, director of the web-based think-tank Ekklesia, looked at security at local and global levels under the heading of "Rethinking Security: the moral and theological challenge".

Christianity disarms security by offering a new way of living – sharing rather than hoarding, offering shelter, valuing vulnerability, speaking and living truthfully in a dissembling culture, which rests on the lie Walter Wink called the 'myth of redemptive violence': "We are clear that our ultimate security is with God; the Christian way of revenge is called resurrection, death is not the final word." The meeting in the UK had a good turn-out and Church and Peace hopes to host another one in autumn 2017, before the next International Conference is held at High Leigh Conference Centre from June 7-10, 2018. The next AGM meeting will be in Strasbourg, France from June 9-11, 2017.

*Davorka Lovrekovic, General Secretary of Church and Peace*

## Reports from Yearly Meetings, Monthly Meetings and Groups

### Belgium and Luxembourg Yearly Meeting

We are a small but thriving Yearly Meeting with currently 39 members, 52 attenders and 10 children. Meetings for Worship are held every Sunday and Wednesday in Brussels and approximately once per month in Luxembourg for a small group of Friends and attenders. We are also delighted that during the year a new group of Friends and interested attenders has begun and regularly meets in Ghent.

One of the main activities in which Friends participated in 2016, alongside QCEA, Mennonites and other Christian and peace groups, was the Stop Fuelling War protest against the biennial Eurosatory arms fair in Paris. The group distributed over 12,000 postcards, featuring cartoons of Dutch Friend Erik Dries; they addressed common myths about the arms trade such as 'we only sell arms to countries which don't abuse human rights'. BLYM supports this action financially as well as through its physical presence at the action.

We have been very concerned about the migrant situation in Europe in general but specifically in Calais, France, to where several Friends have been to volunteer in 'The Jungle'. This concern was one of the motivators behind the theme of our Residential Yearly Meeting, held in June at Madeghem, near Brugge, where the topic was: 'Who am I as a Quaker in this rapidly changing world?' During the gathering, at which 30 Friends and attenders were present, we discovered the 'Open Space' method of programming, which proved to be a success, although some did find it somewhat disconcerting not to have a fixed programme awaiting us on Friday evening.

This year's Border Meeting was organised in Strasbourg, France on the theme of 'Border Meeting – At the Borderline' and several Friends from BLYM attended.

A number of study groups take place within the Meeting, including a regular *Deepening our Spirituality* group, the most recent of which looked at *Quaker Mystics and the Mystic Tradition*, and another group that meets regularly to study selected paragraphs of *Quaker Faith & Practice*. In addition, after Sunday Meeting for Worship, *Stepping Stones* are worship-sharing meetings where we explore issues relevant to Quakers.

Our Children's meeting is held approximately once per month, sometimes coinciding with the bring and share lunch organised on the first Sunday of the month. We also hold All-Age Meetings for Worship several times per year and a candle-lit Meeting for Worship on 24 December.

Our Ministry & Oversight Group meets regularly and considers the spiritual well-being and right ordering of our meeting while our Meetings for Business are well-attended.

Among the more informal activities we have organised, there are regular bring and share suppers followed by a movie night or other activity (such as chocolate tasting!). During the summer we organise a picnic and there are periodic suppers or social events.

*Ruth Harland and Chloé Tan*

## Britain Yearly Meeting

Britain Yearly Meeting's 2015 report to EMES started as follows:

*“Events in Britain and around the world have made Friends in Britain increasingly aware of the need for international and global collaboration”.* The events of 2016 only seem to have reinforced this sentiment. We have again been challenged not to be overwhelmed by setbacks, but to work to bring about the Kingdom however we can.

Our yearly meeting was held at Friends House, London, the second of a three year cycle on living out our faith in the world. The focus was on gifts and concerns. We considered what it means to speak of gifts of the spirit, and how we can identify and act on our gifts. We asked ourselves how we are impelled by God to give service, how we can support others acting under concern, and how we might know to lay concerns down. We heard from Friends of their personal experiences of discovering their gifts, and being impelled to act under concern. We learnt of the variety of individual and corporate concerns and witnesses held across the yearly meeting, collated by Meeting for Sufferings. These ranged from holding peace vigils, to supporting prisoners and refugees, to divesting from fossil fuels and greening our meeting houses. Building on the concern for affordable housing that emerged at our 2015 Yearly Meeting, BYM has seconded a member of staff to the organisation Housing Justice, emphasising the seriousness of the issue. We hope that these efforts will serve to inspire Friends to do more.

Collectively we came to the realisation that gifts of the Spirit can be recognised by how they are used, rather than what they are: even our brokenness can be a gift if it can serve the promptings of love and truth in our hearts. We returned home to our communities feeling the urgent need to be more faithful, bold, and open, taking heed of the promptings of the Light, sharing our leadings with our meetings, and testing these concerns together. You can find more on Yearly Meeting 2016 at this address: <http://quaker.org.uk/ym/all-meetings-1/yearly-meeting-2016>

The Swarthmore lecture was prepared by two African Friends and peaceworkers: Cecile Nyiramana of Rwanda and Esther Mombo of Kenya. Sadly only Esther was able to be at Friends House to deliver the lecture, “Mending broken hearts, Rebuilding shattered lives” and she did so admirably in the disrupted circumstances. She, and Cecile through her, spoke of their experience of building peace, sharing examples of their work and stories of their friends. They emphasised the need to address root problems of conflict, and not shy away from historical injustices. You can listen to the lecture here: <http://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/pages/swarthmore-2016.html>

More widely, as we consider revising our book of Faith & Practice, Friends around the country are participating in a study programme, with monthly sessions exploring it chapter-by-chapter. Engaging with it in this deliberate and detailed way has reminded us of its riches and fostered community within these groups.

The affairs of our own yearly meeting can be rewarding and absorbing, but we are reminded of the importance of our wider communities – both in Britain, and in the wider world.

Many British Friends were blessed to share fellowship with Friends from across the world at Pisac in Peru at the start of 2016. In the beautiful surroundings of the Andes, we forged a loving Quaker community, seemingly full of Friends with open hearts and optimism. It was both a spiritually refreshing and challenging experience, another nourishing watering hole along our spiritual paths. BYM's representatives brought back a number of key learning messages that we hope to encourage and promote in our yearly meeting; reaffirming and furthering our commitment to sustainability; hoping to better include Young Adult Friends in our yearly meeting; thinking creatively about our engagement with world Quakerism; and recognising the value of being discomfited by our differences.

The outcome of June's EU referendum and the campaigning that led up to it have shown up and sometimes exacerbated divisions within and between communities. We feel the strong need to reaffirm our love for all our neighbours in Europe, especially our sense of the unity between Friends across the whole of EMES. After the painfully divisive campaign in the UK, we as Friends are concentrating our hearts and minds on the great need for bridge-building, both within our country, and across our continent. To emphasise the importance of remaining connected to Friends in Europe, Meeting for Sufferings decided to appoint two BYM representatives to the governing General Assembly of the Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA).

Our Recording Clerk Paul Parker, and Clerk Deborah Rowlands travelled in the ministry to the USA, visiting Friends and Yearly Meetings there to learn from their experiences, especially on issues of common interest such as engagement of Young Adult Friends, governance and structures, and how we engage with our shared Quaker history. This enriching visit reminded us of the benefits of intervisitation and how much we can learn from, and support, each other.

The Quaker World Relations committee of BYM has been working with renewed focus on fostering intervisitation between British Friends and Friends around the world. Now more than ever, we see the need to build and maintain fellowship with Friends across the section, and globally, regardless of political divisions. We hope to welcome, and visit,

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many of you over the next year. Technology also offers the possibility to build fellowship, and maintain supportive contact, which we hope to harness more effectively. In August 2017, Warwick will host our residential Yearly Meeting Gathering where we will focus on movement building. We look forward to hearing the perspectives of representatives from EMES yearly meetings, and those of other international visitors, enriching our discernment and strengthening our movement building.

*George Thurley, Quaker World Relations Committee*

### **Czech Republic, Prague Meeting**

2016 has been an exciting and active year for Czech Quakers. Our lively children's group has benefited from new materials after Pavel Marusinec attended a workshop at Woodbrooke. The Plzen Meeting has a new adult member, bringing our total number to 5 and the Prague Meeting has moved to new premises in the heart of the city where we have a dedicated room for our library, children's group, EwL and other sessions, as well as a shared room for Worship. From November the Prague group has been meeting weekly instead of fortnightly and also took the decision to become a legally recognised body with several members and attenders taking official roles.

Our bid for funding from the Bader Philanthropies Foundation ([bader.org](http://bader.org)) was successful and we now have a part-time outreach coordinator, Roman Branberger, and are working hard to make our presence more known, especially by updating our website and Facebook pages, making the Prague Meeting room more visible and planning social activities such as film evenings. We have also just taken the first steps in creating a Prague Peace Trail, based on those running in other cities e.g. Vienna ([www.discoverpeace.eu](http://www.discoverpeace.eu)). Old favourites still continue - the weekly Experiment with Light and our carol singing in a Saturday market and under the famous Charles Bridge, and meeting with Friends and attenders at the bi-annual CEG planning meetings in Brno.

Several Czech Friends and attenders were at the annual meeting of the CEG in Opole Poland in May, when it was agreed that the region as a whole should move towards becoming a Regional Meeting. This is a momentous step, and we really appreciate the help we receive from EMES on this and other matters, especially from Julia Ryberg and Marisa Johnson.

*Liz Coling*

### **Denmark Yearly Meeting**

We have a new website [www.kvaekerne.org](http://www.kvaekerne.org) (it is a part of the quaker cloud hosted by FGC) and we have a facebook page: kvækerne i danmark.

We have launched outreach programs at some cafes in copenhagen with some success.

*Jessica Klaphaak*

## Finland Yearly Meeting

In 2016 Finland Yearly Meeting met jointly together three times. In addition to the spring meeting for business in Tampere in March and the autumn meeting for business in October in Helsinki, a summer gathering was organised in August in Ilkko, Kangasala, right next to Tampere. The gathering worked around the theme of “Called to Encounter and to Serve” which included topics such as peace mediation and better ways of communication. Friends throughout Finland as well as from Sweden, Norway and Spain attended the event.

During the year 2016, local meetings were arranged in three groups:

*Helsinki* group gathered weekly for meeting for worship and in addition to this, an extra study group gathered in the spring. The first meetings of the month were sometimes held according to the Experiment with Light meditation technique. The group also visited older Friends further away from the regular meetings on a few instances, and also, together with the Tampere group, participated in the spring in Helsinki Pride parade and in Autumn in Peli poikki! anti-racism protest. On average there were 5 to 6 attenders in the meetings and the group was also happy to see many foreign Friends visit them during the year.

*Tampere* group gathered together in meeting for worship every week on Saturdays. During 2016, the usual attendance was 5 to 10 people. On some occasions, also a study group joint together before the silent meeting. From June the group took a summer break and the meetings began again in September. During the year, the group also had some losses. Our dear Friend, the FYM treasurer Päivi Piekka, passed away unexpectedly in the spring. Later in the winter, the group also faced the loss of a long time attender Matti Teerilahti. The group continues to take part in a charity project for children and youth’s education and welfare in Mutura village, Rwanda. The project is organised by a local Friend, Alphonse Hakizimana.

*Northern Friends*, have mostly met in spirit this year with meetings for worship being arranged (in Kokkola and Rovaniemi) when Roger has been in Finland. Jane became a member of the FYM executive committee in January when Jaana stepped down as YM clerk. Jane and Jaana are jointly representing FYM on the Nordic YM planning committee (for the gathering to be held in 2017). The highlight of 2016 was the occasion of Jaana and Roger’s marriage in a Quaker meeting in Kokkola at midsummer. We wish them joy and happiness and loving support in this courageous step. The worship group continues to send small donations to the charity Scholarships for Street Kids (S4SK), a Quaker founded educational charity working in Myanmar (Burma).

In 2016, the executive committee started to meet more often online via Skype. After getting accustomed to meetings via video, this has increased the frequency of the

meetings and the ability to react faster to urgent matters, not to mention having the possibility to meet more often for their own sustenance and sharing.

*Ari Karlin, Clerk*

## France Yearly Meeting

Since our last Annual Meeting, Friends and Attenders in France have been very active. The regional groups continue their regular meetings, to which are added events that last for a weekend, like the retreats of the group of Toulouse and the group of Congénies. The latter gathered Friends from several countries in October. It was facilitated by Ed Dommen. The Toulouse group organised a day for peace also in October. The Nantes group is experiencing such a boom that they think they have to look for a place to meet. In Lille, we learned of the founding of the William Penn Association which is doing its utmost to help the Roms.

Of course, we were all very touched by the events of 13 November 2015 in Paris and 14 July 2016 in Nice, for which we received messages of sympathy from Friends around the world, as well as from movements working for peace. Following the Paris bombing and the declaration of the French government “We are at war”, we sent a communiqué to the French press, to all Friends and to the various organisations working for peace, which addressed to the government a request for a more positive response that shows “confidence in the creativity and spiritual depth of man”.

Our presence at Eurosatory 2016 this year was shared by a large number of Friends from Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany.

As for our finances, it was a good year thanks to the generous donation of a Friend, the good work at the Quaker Meeting House in Congénies and a successful appeal for funds to British Quaker organisations. As a result, our debt repayment for the purchase of the Quaker Meeting House in Congénies was greater than usual and we can continue to support the Quaker organisations which work for us as well as others like the Cimade Association working for refugees.

During the course of the year, the future of the Paris Centre was discussed, taking into account a national consultation. This resulted in some development work and produced a management study of the Centre to clarify its needs. Another consultation took place with several Friends who met in Paris to consider how to help our web-master with the management of the website.

At the national level, Friends have the opportunity to share an online meditation “Experiment with Light”. Regarding outreach, there are two facts to mention: a very comprehensive article, accompanied by photos, appeared in the June-July protestant review of “Evangile et Liberté”, including a photo of a Meeting for Worship on the

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cover! We also look forward to the possibility of a documentary for French television that will put forward the idea that many reforms which have founded our present society have their roots in the Quaker movement.

My sincere thanks to all of you who, through your work and contributions, give life to our Society.

*Sylvette Thompson, Clerk*

### **Georgia Worship Group**

The year 2016 was interesting and fruitful for the country and for Friends in Georgia. The Georgian nation was expecting to receive permission from EU to visit the Shengen states without visas. The decision about that was finally made in 2017. Hopefully, this will simplify Georgian Friends' visitations to European Friends wider community. However some sad news took place in the worship group. One of our elderly friends passed away after a long illness.

A representative of Friends in Georgia participated in the World Plenary Meeting in Peru and had a chance to meet many new friends there, receive a wonderful experience, share some thoughts and pass our warm greetings to a wider community of Friends. Later that year, two representatives from our worship group took part in the EMEYF all-age gathering in Germany. For them it was a first in their lives experience of communication with Friends internationally and the possibility to share and receive the testimonies and understand the God-like Light.

A Friend from Ireland (Dublin Peace Committee) visited Georgia in the spring of 2016. Together with a local friend he did some research on IDP's living in Georgia.

With financial support from Quaker Service Sweden, the training project for unemployed people in 2016, which means that several groups of people will learn skills to become florists (flower bouquet design specialists). Georgian Friends would like to express their deepest gratitude to all Friends who have supported them and held them in their thoughts and prayers.

*Georgian Friends Worship Group*

### **German Yearly Meeting**

Throughout the year, Friends in Germany have been looking both outward and inward. As individuals, we strive to make a difference in the world around us, we gather our resources – whether spiritual, practical or financial – to help refugees, to practice sustainability, to influence politicians, to bear witness. At the same time, as a Society, we have been taking a close look at the resources of our community and asking how we can reduce our running costs in order to ensure our future.

Regarding the latter concern, one measure which Friends have enacted this year was to lower our personnel costs. This has had the positive side effect of enriching our sense of community, as we voluntarily take over some of the tasks which have arisen as a result of this change. For similar financial reasons, we have begun to consider the future of our only dedicated meeting house, our community's "home" - Quäkerhaus in Bad Pyrmont. The dialogue about this important issue will continue.

Meanwhile, we turn our attention once again to those who have had to flee their own homes. Along with so many other Yearly Meetings, we deplore the fact that while refugees suffer, Europe is fencing itself in with barbed wire. Many German Friends are involved in helping refugees as individuals and the refugee situation continues to be a topic at many of our area meetings. At the community level, our sense of responsibility for the European context in which we live was expressed during our Yearly Meeting, so we are continuing and increasing our support for the Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA).

The Yearly Meeting was also characterised by concern for our planet, sustainability and climate change, in part inspired by FWCC's call to action. During the Yearly Meeting, Janet Kreysa – in her Cary Lecture "Open to New Light" – spoke to us of important scientists who were Quakers or had a Quaker connection. She reminded us that "we must be well-informed regarding political, technological and economic questions" in order to create a better world. We need science to help us comprehend and religion to help us act.

German Friends were among those involved in the Eurosatory Protest this year in Paris as well as the Central European Gathering in Poland. Not surprisingly, there was a strong German presence at the EMEYF All-Age Gathering in the summer, which was held at Venusberg in Bonn. And at our own Yearly Meeting, also held at Venusberg a few months later, we were very pleased to be able to welcome delegates and guests from several European meetings, including Friends from Belgium, France, Great Britain, Ireland, Poland, Switzerland, Serbia, the Ukraine and the Netherlands.

*Annie Janssen, Representative*

## **Hungary, Budapest Worship Group**

Among the significant happenings in Budapest this past year: We have been nurturing a new meeting in Serbia. We had a border meeting with the Serbian friends in Novi Sad, in November. Since the summer, Vera and Anett have been volunteering at one of the kitchens for homeless and poor people in Budapest.

We have found a regular meeting place: the office of Migrants' Help (MigHelp), which was formerly the space used by Sim Shalom Jewish congregation. Rabbi Katalin Kelemen, the Sim Shalom rabbi, attended one of our first meetings in the space. The space

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still has a sense of the spirit, and the MigHelp folks have added a wonderful children's mural.

Our regular border meeting with Vienna was in Vienna last February 6-7. A real joy, as usual. Other significant gatherings: Brno (CEG planning meeting) March 4-6; Niwki (CEG annual gathering) May 20-23; Brno (CEG planning meeting) Oct 21-23; Novi Sad (border meeting) Nov 12-14.

With the support of the Bader funding from the Prague meeting, we are planning to host an exhibit of the Quaker Tapestry in 2018. Anett Riboczi has taken on the task of organising the exhibit, and we have set up a committee for support and accountability.

Among our regular attenders there are two brand new youngsters: Dorina Nyari's daughter, Kamilla, who was born 4 December 2015 and Philip and Emma Goff's daughter, Hannah Ildiko, born 20 December 2016.

We continue to get energy and inspiration from the Central European Gathering which meets in May, and which has now added two or three planning meetings each year in Brno, Czech.

*Berne Weiss*

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

Greetings in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ!

The Last two months (*December 2016 and January 2017*) were very busy for us. I think you had the same period...

1. We visited every Churches, Mission Stations and Families in our EFC Hungary, Serbia and Croatia Before Christmas. We preached the Gospel in many places together with our pastors, co-workers...
2. We prepared 150 pieces of Christmas gifts for the poor children (Gipsy Children) in our mission.
3. We made many food packets for the poor families in Croatia, Serbia, Hungary.
4. We handed out about 1.200 Christian calendars + many christian writings.
5. We teach our R.E.Lessons at the Primary and High schools. We (*Agi and me*) are very grateful to God because of this possibility. Fortunately, the students enjoy the Bible studies.
6. Every month, we visit our mission stations together with our co-workers, they are a great help for us.
7. We have 3 worship (music) groups in our mission in Tolna, Pécs and Komló. We serve our Lord in the EFC Hungary together with our youth, co-workers and worship groups.
8. Thank you for your prayers for Mihalovics Marika! She is getting better at this time and she is very happy because she can travel with us to Croatia and Serbia...

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9. We would like to buy a younger, seven-seater car for our EFC Mission... Please pray for this project!

10. We are preparing our General Assemble and financial report for the next month in our mission center Tolna.

11. Thank you for your prayers for the EFC Mission in Hungary and in Europe!

Thank you for your love, support and prayers!

God bless You!

Antel Frei

## Ireland Yearly Meeting

2016 was a year of commemorations when we remembered events of the First World War and, especially here in Ireland, the 1916 Rising.

Under the auspices of **Dublin Monthly Meeting Peace Committee**, ( DMMPC) Friends held a vigil on the first Saturday of every month in the centre of Dublin and handed out leaflets as witness to the Quaker Peace Testimony. On Saturday 19th November, which marked 100 years of the end of the Battle of the Somme, DMMPC held an Art event in Merrion Square where they invited passers-by to make and plant white poppies. They finished with a reading of the 1661 Friends Peace Testimony followed by a few minutes silence. 100 poppies were made and 150 people were involved, mainly non-Friends.

**World Quaker Sunday** on October 2nd was marked in **Cork** by an event after meeting for worship entitled 'Conversations on Peace'. Some facets of Friends Peace Testimony were set out and thoughts on the underpinning of peace making were presented, all followed by discussion. It was suggested that this type of conversation could become part of their ongoing calendar.

Two new Worship Groups meet monthly in Co Cork. One in Skibbereen and the other in Bantry.

Twelve Friends from South Frederick Street Meeting, **Belfast** came down to Dublin during the year to meet with some Eustace Street Friends. They had an interesting visit to the Museum of Dublin before lunch and a short Meeting for Worship in Eustace Street Meeting House. This contact between the two Meetings has continued over many years since the idea of Meetings twinning with others in our YM first started.

Dublin Friends co-operated again on Friday 20th September when Eustace Street opened its doors as a part of Culture Night and had about 300 visitors. Friends and attenders from all the Dublin Meetings welcomed visitors

with a cup of tea and an opportunity to learn about our experience of Quakerism. Video and poster presentations were shown and a website & a twitter account were set up for the event which seemed to attract interest.

Immigration is a relatively new phenomenon in Ireland. Concerned Friends activated a **Wecome Refugees Group** which has held a conference, assisted with advocacy, organised social evenings & outings, and are now planning "Coffee and Chat Evenings" on the first Thursday of every month. One of my most enjoyable memories of 2016 is a

warm summer's evening in the garden behind Rathfarnham PM surrounded by Friends and friends from around the world. <https://quakers-in-ireland.ie/>

*Helen Fanning*

## **Italy: Bologna Worship Group**

We meet regularly twice a month (the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 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. Also in 2016 we kept in touch with other Friends in Italy (North of Italy and in Rome) by e-mail, we met them in June 2016. 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> June 2016 we organised a gathering, in La Lodola (Savigno, near Bologna), with Marisa Johnson, from EMES, for all the Friends in Italy and other people interested in a deeper spiritual experience and the Quaker practices in particular. The title of the gathering was “Essere inizio: la voce profetica degli Amici oggi” (“Being Like A Starting Point: The Prophetic Voice from Friends Today”, 14 attended and we were happy to have 6 children with us, too. We focused on the social and environmental crisis, migrations and we had news and feedback on the World Friends Meeting in Pisac, Peru, from Marisa Johnson. We plan another Italian Friends gathering - possibly next 23-25 June 2017 - but we are still waiting for ideas from the other Friends in Italy.

We have a website [amicidelsilenzio.org](http://amicidelsilenzio.org) and a facebook page called: *Società degli Amici-Meeting di Bologna* 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 on by Fabian Lang, once a week, regularly, and in 2016 some of our members (Cecilia Clementel, Mauro Bonaiuti and Lucia Biondelli) have joined in, and participated to several meetings in prison. Every meeting is introduced by 10 minute silence, then a reading from a text (many are the ones selected by Pier Cesare Bori, from different spiritual traditions) and a round of talking.

Also in 2016, on the date of Pier Cesare Bori's death (4<sup>th</sup> November 2012), we organised a meeting (Quaker style, but we are open to different contributions) 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.njiuniverso.yahoo.com](http://www.njiuniverso.yahoo.com), with information and advice point for foreigners, Italian language courses, job search assistance in difficult situations.

Last Christmas (2016) a particularly successful initiative – the Christmas dinner with the refugees in Bologna (with the financial help of the writer Stefano Benni, too), which took place at Centro Sociale Italicus for 130 migrants (many unaccompanied children) – had a local media coverage (RAI TRE) which make us hope in a different approach to immigration attitudes and, maybe, politics.

Our support for the realisation of a Medical Charity Center in Weh, in North-West Cameroon, is going on; in spite of scarcity of funds, the construction of the centre – not completed yet – has reached the roof. The campaign to raise funds is called “Io sto con il lupo” (I’m on behalf of the wolf – clear reference to the “bad ones”, those who are excluded and rejected) and, with creativity, t-shirts, sweatshirts, cloth bags have been sold. Other initiatives are planned to involve people and raise funds. The Centre will be entirely run by locals, with our support (in terms of economic help, collaboration to the construction planning, volunteers). See: [www.wehcenter.org](http://www.wehcenter.org) and the facebook page: Centro Salute.

*Lucia Biondelli*

### **Latvia: Liepaja Worship Group**

The group consists of 6 people (two men and four women) who hold a silent worship once a month. We continued this practice in 2016 as in previous years. We try to keep a balance between silence and sharing, because sometimes somebody wants to talk. But over the years a common feeling has evolved to pay attention to each other and it is the best sign for us as a group of friends. Maybe not so far by becoming a Friend.

*Inese Ansule, International member*

### **Malta Worship Group**

It has been a comparatively quiet year in Malta with the big tides of political disruption yet to be felt on the islands. Few migrants have been stranded here on their way to the mainland while those of us with UK passports are waiting to see what will happen.

Much effort in 2016 was spent planning an exhibition of the Quaker Tapestry in Valletta (cultural capital of Europe in 2018) but after the costs of the project became clear we had to reluctantly shelve the idea. We were likewise frustrated when our efforts to unite church groups to some kind of public prayer meeting while the Commonwealth heads of Government met in Malt prior to the Paris climate summit failed. Stonewalling by the Catholics and extreme security measures made it impossible to get noticed by the gathered world press. I hope however, that our group holding of the Climate Conference ‘in the light’ helped with the positive outcome!

In November we enjoyed a visit from a group (a hush?) of Quakers from Sheffield who pleasantly swelled our numbers for Meeting. At a subsequent meal they mentioned how at home they had been made to feel and I would urge other traveling Friends to make the

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effort to contact and visit local groups. It means so much and is always a rewarding experience!

And so we face 2017 with some trepidation but with the certainty that the light will shine through, no doubt in some unexpected places.

*Piers Headley, Clerk*

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

This year the annual report is very brief. To start off I am saddened to report that attendance of the Sunday meetings of worship has dwindled. Many members of the Meeting are either busy with work or are travelling, making it difficult for them to attend meeting. From time to time we are joined by Friends coming from abroad who bolster our numbers but only for a day or two, albeit imparting warmth and support to the meeting.

Despite their absence from meeting, many members continue to practice Quaker values in their day-to-day lives, in their places of work, or in their communities. To an extent they are like the Disciples spreading the good values through their daily life and work.

Though the situation in Lebanon lends itself to tremendous amount of social and charity work, the enormous number of refugees makes it overwhelming even for governments and large institutions to address the wide spectrum of problems ranging from shelter, to education, to hunger, to employment, to health and social care. Several members of the meeting donate clothes, and/or money to some of the organisations doing relief work, or employ Syrian heads of families.

In conclusion, members of the Meeting are being encouraged to go out and volunteer with NGOs or other groups, with the mission to help those in need and supplant seeds of peace, tolerance, and human values. We call on Friends throughout the world, especially in the influential countries, to persuade their leaders to stop sending arms and stop inflaming the fighting through their rhetoric. Historically this region has received and welcomed many refugees in the last century. Is making its people refugees their reward now?

*Sami Cortas, for Brumanna Monthly Meeting*

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

The ministry of Ramallah Friends Meeting is most evident in its vital and growing First-Day Meeting for Worship, where members and regular attenders (8-15 persons) welcome travellers from near and far -- sometimes up to 20-30 visitors. All are welcome! The tranquil, solid stone meetinghouse, together with its annex and gardens, provides a quiet

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oasis in the heart of the city's main commercial district. In the words of Palestinian-American Quaker Sa'ed Atshan:

“As worshippers gather in silence, they hear the sounds of occupation all around them, and yet their prayers are for a better tomorrow, in which Israelis and Palestinians can live in peace, equality, and with the realization of justice. The Spirit calls on people of conscience to harness the power of that silence towards meaningful social change.”

Following worship each Sunday, the Meeting offers an extended time of fellowship, discussion and networking. Midweek meetings have been held regularly this past year, generally on the third Thursday of each month. On many weekdays, individuals and groups gather in the meetinghouse for lectures, dialogue, and consultation to learn from our witness to the living of a theology of nonviolence in a context of ever deepening oppression.

Jean Zaru continues as Clerk of Ramallah Friends Meeting, a position she will have held for 30 years come 2017. Through her ministry of hospitality and peace-building, Jean leads the Meeting's outreach and its participation in a broad network of both local and global organisations. In addition to her work in Palestine, in 2016 Jean carried out a demanding schedule of writing, international travel and speaking. This year saw her book, *Occupied with Nonviolence*, translated into French. Previously, a Swedish translation had been printed primarily for use in theological schools and other religious circles.

There were many highlights this year, including continued collaboration with Quaker Voluntary Action, Friends United Meeting, Northwest Yearly Meeting, the American Friends Service Committee and EMES-FWCC. Once again, the Meeting received a thorough “spring cleaning” thanks to the work camp faithfully led by Max and Jane Carter of Guilford College; the annual Westtown School group was also received, thanks to the good work of Jonathan Evans. In April, the Meeting held a successful fundraiser for a project that involves sending solar-powered lights to the children of Gaza so they can study at night when the electricity goes out. The Meeting was represented at the December EMES Peace and Service Consultation by Patricia Cockrell and Derek Brett of FRFMQ.

In 2016, the following organisations or representatives connected with Ramallah Friends Meeting through worship, sending a delegation, meeting with Jean or otherwise participating in joint activities:

Quaker organisations: AFSC, FCNL, FUM, FWCC, NWYM, and Quaker Voluntary Action (UK)

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Local organisations: the Jerusalem Office of the AFSC, the World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme, Sabeel Liberation Theology Center, Kairos Palestine, the Swedish Theological Institute in Jerusalem, Holy Land Trust, and Wi'am Center.

Educational organisations from the USA: Westtown School, Guilford College, Swarthmore College, Westmont College, Notre Dame University, Emory University, Pacific School of Religion, the Society for Biblical Studies.

Educational groups from other countries: St. Mary's College (UK), the Swedish Christian Study Centre (BILDA), several study groups from the Swedish Theological Institute (including a group of global theologians), the University of Basel Conflict Management Program (Switzerland).

Additional religious groups: Mennonites, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Disciples of Christ, the UCC and Quakers from France, Scotland, England, Netherlands, USA; Global Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ (USA), Episcopal Peace Fellowship (USA), Living Stones (UK), Friends of Sabeel (France).

Miscellaneous additional groups: the Community Foundation of Greensboro (USA), Swedish journalists, American photojournalists, representatives of a German publishing company.

The ministries of the meeting receive administrative support from the Steering Committee of the Friends of Ramallah Friends Meeting-Quaker (FRFMQ). This is an international group of eight persons, each of whom has a vital concern for the life of the meeting. FRFMQ Steering Committee members come from the USA, the UK and Germany as well as Ramallah.

In 2016, FRFMQ's fund-raising work made it possible to hire a part-time Assistant for Communications and Facilities Management based in Ramallah. Over the course of the summer, renovations took place to the historic 1910 Meeting House and its annex.

Facebook activity increased significantly this year and a new website was launched in September: <http://www.rfmq.org> The FWCC/EMES office in Cambridge, UK, and FRFMQ's office in Philadelphia, USA, are listed as locations for receiving donations.

*Jean Zaru, Clerk*

## Netherlands Yearly Meeting

The theme for our Yearly meeting 2016 was 'living the transformation'.

In our Yearly Meeting we decided to:

- sign a petition against the patenting of seeds ...
- do some guerrilla gardening in our neighbourhoods...

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- confirm our involvement in ‘trees for Africa’...
- clean up our neighbourhoods
- change our bank accounts to ‘green’ banks
- appoint a young Friend (Saskia) as our ‘sustainability’ link between the Netherlands Yearly Meeting and FWCC.

We welcomed 8 new members. After 10 years of working, Kees Nieuwerth presented our version of Quaker Faith and Practice: ‘Quaker geloven en werken’, which is still a document in progress! Apart from ‘living the transformation’ as overall theme we also listened to a presentation about refugees and talked about our concern for them.

All Quakers work in their own way, some Quakers are more visible than others. In 2016 the following activities were undertaken:

- One of our Friends was the whole year in Calais. Several other friends joined him for days or weeks. In the Netherlands Friends collected warm clothes and blankets for Calais, and they knitted warm scarves.
- Some Dutch Quakers demonstrated in Paris against the arms trade at Eurosatory.
- 2 Quakers continued their work on nonviolent communication in Israel.
- One of our Friends works as vice president in the Council of Churches and joint in the World Council of Churches in the central committee meeting in Trondheim, Norway. He also works for the pilgrimage of justice and peace. Quite a group of Quakers joined the ‘Walk for Peace’ in Enschede in the Netherlands, organised by Pax (former Pax Christi).
- Some of us visited other yearly meetings like the German, Irish, Britain Yearly Meeting, the Belgium and Luxembourg Yearly Meeting.
- One Dutch Quaker visited the conference of the International Evangelical Friends Church in Tolna, Hungary.
- Our Friend in Vukovar is still working on peace and reconciliation in Croatia.
- Some of us visited the EMEYF ‘All-Age Gathering in Bonn.
- Some of us visited the Border Meeting in Strasbourg.
- Some of us visited FWCC-EMES Peace and Service consultation.
- Joined the weekly demonstration in The Hague in front of the parliament to urge the politicians to work on actions against climate change; it is called ‘grandparents for climate’ and is an action in more European countries

We asked monthly meetings to financially adopt a child in Am’ary Play Centre. We have a close connection with QCEA (Quaker Council for European Affairs) and participated in their action against TTIP and the arms trade. The continuing themes of this year were:

- Ecumenical work
- Peace and safety issues – amongst others the launching of a website about ‘inclusive peace’
- Working for the environment and sustainability

- The houses of Netherlands Yearly meeting, their use, worth and future.

*Erik Dries and Wils't Hart, Representatives*

## Norway Yearly Meeting

Norway Yearly Meeting is still a small meeting, though we continue to grow – although slowly. We enjoy some activities that happen every year – like our Yearly Meeting in June, and we also have a gathering in the mountains in the south of Norway twice a year. Here we meet mainly to have the opportunity to be together without much programme, but to have the possibility to go for mountain walks, talk around the fire in the evenings and to play, both adults and children together. This has been a tradition every autumn for the last 18 years, and in 2016 we had our first gathering at the same place in March, which gave us the opportunity to go cross country skiing or downhill skiing together. The theme for our Yearly Meeting was *Peacebuilding in the local community* and we worked with the theme, adults and children together, through AVP games and exercises. Even though the main groups are in Oslo, Kristiansand and Stavanger, there is also an active group of Friends in Bergen and they organise among other things Quaker Quest. Also in Trondheim there has been a development lately and there are a few active Friends there that are organising Meetings for Worship once a month. We're very happy to see this development and hope that our Society of Friends will continue to grow also in 2017.

*Hanne Hognestad, Clerk*

## Poland, Warsaw & Poznan Worship Groups

Quaker worship in Białystok started its activity in July 2015. In the autumn of 2015, thanks to the help of one the attenders, the group could meet in a room that belongs to the Chamber of Physicians. In May 2016 our Białystok worship group organised the All Polish Gathering that took place in Supraśl near Białystok. Two Woodbrooke tutors, Michael Eccles and Julia Ryberg, came to teach on Quaker spirituality and decision making. The three publications on Quakerism in Polish that have been published in 2016, thanks to the support of the Small Grants Fund, are playing a remarkable role in outreach, since before they were published there had not been any substantial information about Quakerism in Polish.

As the room in the Chamber of Physicians was not always available to us, we could not meet more often than twice a month on average. Thanks to the support of the Small Grants Fund we are now able to meet every Sunday. At the moment 10 people attend the meeting for worship. There are plans to renovate a small building that is situated on a farm belonging to one of our members to become a permanent meeting house for our group.

*Zbigniew Kazmierczak*

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

A few years ago 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 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. However, in 2016 a British Quaker, Pascal Ansell, moved to Portugal. His arrival coincided with the interest of a Portuguese Dominican friar in Quakers. And so we managed to hold about 3 meetings in 2016. At the end of the year, another Portuguese, Bruno Trancas, approached us because of his interest in Quakers. With this group we are intending to hold monthly meetings in 2017, starting with the first meeting on 22 January.

*Matias Linder*

## **Russia, Moscow Monthly Meeting**

This year was interesting and exciting for the Quaker world family and also for Moscow Monthly Meeting. Two of our Friends, Yulia Dvoretzkaya and me, took part in the World Plenary Meeting in Pisac, Peru. This gave us a rare opportunity to meet and to establish friendship with Friends from very different countries. It was good to meet and speak with Friends outside Europe from Latin America, Africa, Australia and the US. Although we are different, at the same time we have the Inner Light inside us!

As I previously mentioned we have in Moscow beautiful premises at the charitable organisation 'Big Change' which provides an additional education for young people coming from orphanages. We give some voluntary help to 'Big Change'. After our

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weekly silent worships we usually have discussions on different spiritual and peacemaking issues.

Over the summer of 2016 a member of Moscow Meeting, Natasha Zhuravenkova, visited the northwest US. She wrote her impressions for this report: “I visited Northwest Yearly Meeting of Friends 18 July - 7 Aug. NWYM currently consists of sixty-two churches in Idaho, Oregon, and Washington. It is not a part of FUM. Instead, NWYM is a founding member of Evangelical Friends Churches International, and is also a member of FWCC. I was a guest at the 2016 Yearly Meeting Annual Sessions in George Fox University 24-29 July. The main speaker was Dr. Miriam Adeney, an anthropologist and missiologist, professor of Seattle Pacific University and a member of the University Presbyterian Church. Miriam is an author of many books and an eloquent speaker. She presented a series of lectures on how the life of specific people in different countries changed as a result of meeting God and meeting with Friends. I experienced programmed Quaker worship, attended services in Friends Churches in Newberg, Silverton and Eugene; and met with Friends Women and Board of Global Outreach of NWYM. I also travelled to Netarts and Vancouver and met with Friends there. It was especially interesting to spend some time in the libraries of George Fox and Oregon Universities. I had enriching meetings with many evangelical Friends, including writers, historians, teachers, ecologists, pastors, clerks, and missionaries who serve in various countries around the world. The trip presented a great opportunity for me to enlarge and deepen my understanding of contemporary Quakerism.”

From October 18 until November 9 I was invited by Andrew Lane to Brussels to do some work for QCEA. In particular I talked twice about current situation of Crimean Tatars and tried to establish good contacts with Muslims in Brussels in order to understand how mutual peacemaking work might be possible.

On November 2 three members of Moscow Monthly Meeting (Kostya Kuzmin in New-York, Natasha Zhuravenkova in Moscow and me in Brussels) took part by Skype in the silent worship at Quaker House, Brussels with Belgium Friends.

At the end of 2016 we got a new attender, a Russian woman Irena Novanska, who lived for many years in Norway and took part in silent worship there and who has now returned to Moscow.

*Misha Roshchin, Clerk*

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

In 2016, we focused our work on two main issues – external social projects and Quaker outreach work among Russian-speaking people. Our projects included Alternatives to Violence Project in Ukraine, School Mediation Project, Help for Children with Special Needs (psychological and medical consultations for children with special needs and their families in Dzerzhinsk, Nizhegorodskaya oblast), Alternative Service Office (the support

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to COs in Kazan, Tatarstan), Distribution of Alternativshchik newsletter (the information for COs and potential COs all over Russia), Chertkov Archive (scanning of more than 1,000 pages from the archive of Leo Tolstoy's secretary for the further distribution), Prison Oversight (by social activists), and Refugee School.

Our outreach work was based mainly on the translation of Quaker literature and other materials into Russian (three books and six big articles in Wikipedia were translated). Another important part of the work was Meditation of friends (sessions based on Experiment with Light).

Social media are important instruments for the outreach activity. The Russian language Quaker Facebook group is the busiest place for the online communication for those who are interested in Quakerism.

*Sergei Grushko*

### **Spain, Barcelona Monthly Meeting**

2016 has been a year full of blessing for our meeting. We have met new friends who now join us in silent worship; may that continue in the years to come. We have also enjoyed joined meetings, such as the one which we held through Skype with Friends from Helsinki on International Quaker day. We also want to mention our Friends from Toulouse, who will be sharing a meeting with us very soon. Warm regards to all of them.

We regret the absence of those who, for one circumstance or another, are no longer part of our group, whether it be temporarily or permanently. Nevertheless, we wish them the best, and hope that some day they can say hello again and share with us another hour of peaceful silence.

We've also had the opportunity of taking part in events together with other religious groups. For example, we shared an afternoon with buddhists, muslims, bahai's and humanists in which we discussed the perspective of peace from these different traditions. It was a good opportunity to share Quaker values and history with other groups. Not to mention the joy that comes from joining very different traditions in the pursuit of peace.

In addition, we are pleased to have found a permanent place in which to hold our meetings. It's located in the core of the city, and overall is a great place to meet.

The spirit of our group continues to grow. Each day we are closer to each other, sharing experiences beyond our spiritual practice, getting to know each other as individuals and enriching our lives with wonderful moments.

*Jesús Espinoza*

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

2016 was a good year for Madrid Meeting. We keep having Meeting for Worship regularly twice a month (1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sundays). We had quite a good number of inquiries

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for information about Quakerism, information that is given to them. These people are disseminated all over Spain so they can't attend our Meeting but when it is possible we arrange to meet them in their own places or just meeting them at the train station if they come to Madrid and stay only for a few hours.

We were very grateful for the visit of Benigno Sánchez-Eppler, clerk of FWCC Section of the Americas and Karen Eppler, his wife, at the end of June and the beginning of July while they were in Spain. A workshop was organised and led by him about Quaker Origins and Quaker Decision Method. Unfortunately Friends from Barcelona and the Canary Islands were unable to attend. Those known to us as interested in Quakerism were invited and we had an attender. It was a good opportunity to revise Quaker literature in Spanish. Benigno left us a good number of booklets on the discussed issues at the workshop and also about Visiting in the Ministry.

In June, while Carmen was staying near Barcelona, she was able to meet only Jesus Espinoza when she went to Meeting for Worship. In November we travelled to the southeast part of Spain and we had the opportunity to visit a British Friend, Sheree Burgess, living in Las Alpujarras (Granada). We chose to go on Sunday and join in Quaker worship with her and two attenders in a nice and cosy rented room in Orgiva. We are thinking of going to the southwest of Spain to meet some enquirers there.

In December Carmen, while staying in Navarra (northeast part of Spain) was able to meet a young Basque lawyer who has created a Facebook page about Quakers and when enquirers contact him for information about Quakerism he directs them to us or Barcelona Friends. He has a great admiration for Quaker Values. Mary Bluestocking from New York attended our Meeting while she was living in Madrid for six months and now we also have two American Young Friends, temporarily residing in Madrid worshipping with us.

*Carmen Alcalde*

### **Spain: Gran Canaria Worship Group**

We have a small meeting in the south of Gran Canaria and we.....3 to 6 persons.....meet once a month at Barrie's and David's home. It is a real gift we have got and very often it reminds me of what we can read in the Bible: For where two or three are gathered in my name, there I will be among them. It is great to be with others joining this experience and having the same beliefs. Come and join us when you are here on our beautiful island! We would be happy!

*Astrid Bruhn*

## Sweden Yearly Meeting

This has been a year of many weekend and day retreats both at our Quaker retreat centre Svartbäcken and in Stockholm. Often this is the first contact for newcomers and possibly new members.

Other activities held include the English literature course at the Stockholm Quaker Centre, Kväkargården. The group has met regularly in the spring but more seldom during the autumn due to sickness. A study group around Ingmar Hollsing's book about Jesus at the beginning of the year was very much appreciated, as is the ongoing Bible study with a former minister, now attender. Kväkargården continues to hold an Open House twice a year for the wider public. This includes a programme of Quaker-related activities and talks.

Twelve worship groups exist nationwide under the care of Sweden Yearly Meeting. Information is shared through our website, e-mails, a quarterly newsheet called VänNytt and an annual yearbook with articles on Quaker topics.

Our 82<sup>nd</sup> Yearly Meeting was held in May at Svartbäcken on the theme, "Non-violence: Possibilities and Limitations". Our keynote speaker, Jalka, from Austria, talked about learning to quarrel, so that we meet in the conflict and become more human – "This is just as important as learning to brush your teeth".

Swedish Quakers are engaged in national and international work. Quaker Service Sweden (QSS) actively supports projects in Bangladesh, Burundi, Ethiopia, Georgia, Ramallah and Russia, while collecting contributions for Quaker Service Norway's preschool projects in Gaza. Two members of the QSS committee attended the Peace & Service Consultation in Belgium in December 2016 – an annual event organised by EMES. The Swedish Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Israel and Palestine, where Swedish Quakers are included in the steering group, is active in these two areas and supports both sides in the work for peace. Members of the yearly meeting also attended the World Plenary Meeting in Peru, where participants from different Quaker traditions found a kinship beyond outward forms.

During the year we lost a very active and dear Friend, Sarah Rowland. We were however also happy to welcome six attenders into membership.

We are looking forward to the gathering of the four Nordic Yearly Meetings in June 2017 outside Gothenburg and hope for a good gathering with many old and new F/friends from near and far.

*Annika Hollsing and Patricia Nilsson, Representatives*

## Switzerland Yearly Meeting

Our yearly retreat in February had the theme “Detachment – Gelassenheit”. 22 Friends met for a weekend in the beautiful old buildings of the Montmirail Community near Lake Neuchatel and explored the theme from the views of Master Eckart up to today.

Our Yearly Meeting had the theme “Out of Sight and Out of Mind? Refugees and us in Switzerland today.” As we wrote in our Epistle, “we were gifted that Patrick Taran, member of Geneva Monthly Meeting, shared his expertise having worked on migrant issues for the past four decades, leading an interactive keynote address on the present situation in Europe and Switzerland.” Patrick also led us in the process of putting together an epistle on refugees which is to be found on our homepage ([www.swiss-quakers.ch](http://www.swiss-quakers.ch)) and which was sent to a great number of newspapers and some other organisations.

Currently our Yearly Meeting is searching for new Co-Clerks and so far has been unable to find even one.

In the German speaking part of Switzerland we now have four worship groups of which Zurich is the biggest. Zurich took over some organisational work for the other groups, one of them, the very small group in Romanshorn, became entirely part of Zurich Meeting.

One Friend and three attenders have left us this year: Elizabeth Booz †31 October (F), Edith Joss † 26 August (f), Magdalena Rüetschi †16 March (f) and Rolf Wilhelm † 16 February (f).

*Anne Lotte Heyn-Cossalter and Michel Mégard, Co-Clerks of Switzerland Yearly Meeting.*

## Europe & Middle East Young Friends (EMEYF)

For many EMEYFers 2016 began in Peru, at the FWCC plenary in Pisac. European Young Friends took part in all four consultations, and were involved in drafting the minute on sustainability that the plenary session adopted. We also met many young adult Quakers from all the other sections, and together with them formed a worldwide committee of Young Friends, to strengthen the links between Young Friends within and between the sections and to share experiences of international cooperation with each other. At Pisac we also took part in the EMES Annual Meeting, the second EMES AM in a row with a large representation of Young Friends.

From 30th July to 6th August we met in Bonn, Germany for the European All Age Gathering, celebrating EMEYF’s 30ish birthday. This was an event long awaited and planned for, and we were very proud to host it. Over a hundred Friends from all over Europe (and beyond) participated, with ages ranging from a few months to nearly nine decades old. For many this was the first EMEYF event they had ever attended, but there

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were also many who had played a part in EMEYF's earlier history and who were glad to meet their peers again and find links to the past and future.

One of those links is the Living Archive Project, which presented its first concrete results at the AAG. The LAP is making our history accessible and is intended to show us both the big changes and the surprising continuities in EMEYF's existence.

In November we met for EMEYF's Annual Meeting in Bad Pyrmont, Germany. We spoke about the work various Young Friends are doing for refugees in Europe.

From 10th-17th April 2017 we will meet in Poznan, Poland for our Spring Gathering. It is our first gathering in Poland, and we are looking forward to meeting up with Polish Friends. We will speak about sustainability, the theme we have adopted for this gathering inspired by the plenary in Pisac. We will redouble our efforts to enable Friends to travel to gatherings sustainably, by providing financial support for more eco-friendly methods of travel and by encouraging participants to travel together.

*Renke Meuwese*

## **Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA) - A European Quaker contribution to politics**

Quaker House Brussels was a busy place in 2016. We are a place of worship for Quakers, Jews and Unitarians. In addition to the QCEA team, we also host the Brussels offices of the European Network Against the Arms Trade and Non-violent Peaceforce.

Thank you to everyone who has supported our work, whether financially, sharing our Around Europe newsletter beyond our normal circulation, or keeping us in your thoughts.

Thousands of people have taken part in events at Quaker House during the year. This included QCEA events on issues such as human rights in Crimea, violent masculinity, and militarisation. The year also saw thirteen fund-raising dinners for Syrian refugees and one for the Amari Play Centre.

It takes many hours of work each week to bring our Quaker vision of just relationships to European-level politics. Much of this takes place far from Brussels. For example, when European governments quietly proposed to move development budgets to military projects - members of the QCEA network contacted the European Commission and made up 80% of all responses to the Europe-wide public consultation. As a result, the consultation was not used for its intended purpose, to demonstrate public support for the proposals to MEPs.

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Our work would not have been possible without many other examples of Friends giving up their time, whether it be processing small donations, providing IT support, or catering for our new quiet diplomacy meetings. Many other Friends are busy serving on QCEA's various governing and support committees, a heavy commitment that underpins all that we do.

In 2016 we said good-bye to Tim Harman and George Thurley after almost two years of excellent work on peace and sustainability. We said hello to Olivia Caeymaex, our new Peace Programme Lead and Kate McNally who is building a network of European Friends working to support asylum seekers and refugees.

Please contact us through facebook, or our website [QCEA.org](http://QCEA.org) to find out more. We'd love to see you on our Study Tour in June.

*Andrew Lane, Representative*

## Quaker United Nations Office and Committee (Geneva)

QUNO Geneva has had a productive year of work in its four linked programmes, Food & Sustainability, Climate Change, Human Rights & Refugees, and Peace & Disarmament.

In 2016, QUNO's Food and Sustainability programme continued raising awareness of the importance of small-scale farmers to global food security and agricultural biodiversity. At the World Intellectual Property Organization in May, we organised a half-day workshop on farmers' rights, and in October, co-hosted a panel discussion on "*Who Will and How Will We Feed Humanity*" at the Committee on Food Security in Rome. QUNO also brought together small-scale farmer organisations, economists and experts in public administration—people who don't commonly sit at the same table—for an expert consultation on the role of governments in supporting small-scale farmers and ensuring the long-term food security of their populations. The November event included farmers from around the world, and experts in public administration, food system policy and public-private partnerships. Our goal is to keep these conversations going—asking critical questions and bringing together different perspectives—with the long-term objective of achieving more just and sustainable food systems. To that end, we published a policy brief on the relationship between intellectual property rights and small-scale farmer innovation, and another examining how the history of the "access to medicines" debate can inform efforts to protect farmers' access to seeds.

The Paris Climate Change Agreement in 2015 was a remarkable and ambitious multilateral achievement, but maintaining momentum as countries negotiate its implementation is critical. This was a main focus of QUNO's Human Impacts of Climate Change programme in 2016, as we continued our quiet diplomacy work at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). In May, we hosted

negotiators from a diverse group of 23 countries in an off-the-record setting to discuss their hopes and concerns following adoption of the Agreement. We also invited civil society representatives, climate scientists and negotiators to speak about the role of ethics and human behaviour in climate change action. In support of this, we published "*Climate Justice and the use of human rights law in reducing greenhouse gas emissions*," a booklet on how climate justice, rights-based approaches, and international norms can be used to strengthen local, national and international climate action. At the November negotiations in Marrakesh, we co-hosted an event exploring how rights-based and "transitional justice" approaches, alongside faith based and ethical perspectives, can address complex ecological and humanitarian challenges exacerbated by climate change.

Our Human Rights & Refugees programme worked to identify opportunities to improve the response to the ongoing refugee and migrant situation. The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, adopted in September, set in motion a series of processes at the United Nations (UN), which aim to improve global governance of large movements of people across borders. Recognising our history of providing space for off-the-record dialogue, there have been requests for QUNO to play a similar role. We have also been convening a small informal group of civil society organisations working on ensuring the rights of migrants and refugees are upheld in these processes and their outcomes. This work is still in an exploratory phase, but we believe this role will be an important one for us in the coming year. We also continued our work in other key areas, including the rights of children of incarcerated parents. In September, we launched an online database cataloguing all of the recommendations on this issue to date by the UN's Committee on the Rights of the Child. We developed this database for our own use and made it public, so that it can be a resource for others working on these issues.

Much of our Peace and Disarmament work over the past year was focused on integrating peacebuilding approaches with the work of our other programmes. In August, together with QUNO's climate change programme, we hosted a lunch at Quaker House where a diverse range of participants discussed how the international community is addressing climate change as a peace and security concern and the links to natural resources and prevention of destructive conflict. We also organised a number of events during Geneva Peace Week in November, an annual event seeking to break down divisions that tend to characterise the international community. QUNO moderated an event for the Food and Agriculture Organization that explored the linkages between food security and sustainable peace. We are also working for an increased understanding of the preventive role of human rights in sustaining peace and on the role of peacebuilding methods in making human rights implementation more effective. Improving interaction between international peace and security institutions at the UN in New York with human rights institutions in Geneva will be a significant part of our work in the coming year.

*Stephen Schenck*

## **Quaker United Nations Office in New York**

At the end of 2016 QUNO is now fully staffed again with its director Andrew Tomlinson, Representatives Rachel Madenyika and Megan Schmidt, who joined QUNO in December, programme assistants Hafsa Maalim and Anne Mijnlieff, and part-time office coordinator Elisabeth Halliday-Quan. After many years of excellent work at QUNO we sadly said goodbye to Camilla Campisi in August, understanding her decision to move out of New York with her growing family.

QUNO's priority area of work continues to be Peacebuilding and the Prevention of Violent Conflict. After QUNO's involvement in the Review of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals, QUNO is now focusing on the important follow-up process. As a result of its efforts in the reviews and contributing to the success getting the sustainable goals approved, in particular goal no.16, staff are now being invited into discussions about their implementation.

Fellow Linda Kitenge complemented the focus on prevention with a year's work culminating in her report: Prevention of Violent Conflict: Strengthening the United Nations-African Union Relationship, A role for The Quaker United Nations Office. The report was presented to the committee at the October meeting.

Another area of opportunity is emerging with American Friends Service Committee's (AFSC) global Shared Security initiative.

In early October the Security Council agreed in recommending António Guterres for Secretary General of the UN, in a process more open than in previous years. Guterres has experience as a former head of state, and has deep knowledge of the UN system. With his emphasis on prevention of violent conflict and sustainable peace his appointment has been greeted with enthusiasm.

The election of Donald Trump as President of the US and Britain's decision to leave the EU has shocked many. There is now a growing concern that the new US administration is working on a plan to withdraw funding or even withdraw entirely from the United Nations. QUNO will work closely with colleagues at Friends Committee on National Legislation (FNCL) in Washington and AFSC on the likelihood of such actions moving ahead, and what the impact could be for the US and globally.

In October the committee approved moving QUNO to one face-to-face meeting a year, not two, the second meeting will be a virtual meeting. We are learning from QUNO Geneva who has been using this system for some time.

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As QUNO starts to focus more on external fund-raising, a recent highlight was partnering with QUNO Geneva and AFSC as part of an AFSC-led proposal for the MacArthur Foundation's "\$100 million and change" competition.

I hope you will join me in supporting this important work. QUNO needs our help, both in prayer and in financial assistance.

*Penny Heymans, Oslo*

## Quaker Voluntary Action

In 2016 the theme of our Working Retreats has been "Truth and Transformation", with the call "Let your lives speak" and we have been happy to welcome many Friends old and new to involve themselves in this witness. Retreats have run at our well-established venues – Bamford, Swarthmore and Ramallah. At Swarthmore connections were made with Quaker History with visits to places of historical importance.

Frاندley Quaker Meeting in Cheshire invited us to spend a weekend working in their garden and there was a special outing to the magnificent Anderton Boat Lift, which joins the Trent and Mersey Canal to the River Weaver, linking this with the Industrial Revolution and its Quaker connections.

We are glad that once again a group has been able to visit Israel and Palestine to see for themselves the tensions in the area, but also to discover the work for peace which is constantly taking place. We are receiving regular news from Ramallah Friends Meeting about their witness in the area.

We have plans to expand our work further into Europe in the coming year, following successful retreats in previous years. Our worker Jasmine Piercy is now resident in Slovenia and is well placed to develop this work.

Our webpage [www.qva.org.uk](http://www.qva.org.uk) has been updated and we invite all to look at it for further insight into our activities. We are also in the process of updating our database of supporters – do let us know on [mail@qva.org.uk](mailto:mail@qva.org.uk) if you would like to receive updates from us by email.

Our work could not continue without the help and support of many Friends both in the UK and abroad – we do greatly appreciate this. If you feel you can help us in any way please get in touch.

*Jane Robinson, Clerk*

## Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre

Woodbrooke remains committed to widening the access to our learning, which we know can be transformational. We do this in the hope that our learning can support and inform Quakers as individuals, and as a community. We do this in the hope that this enables Quaker work in the world and in our local communities, from a place of understanding and spiritual renewal.

Here are some of our highlights from 2016:

- We ran a Woodbrooke On-the-Road in Poland on Discernment and Quaker Spirituality which was supported by The Catchpool Fund.
- The Catchpool Fund also gave £5,204 in bursaries for Friends from Europe to come to Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre for courses, including participants on Equipping for Ministry and the Young Adult Leadership Programme.
- In terms of courses at Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre and online courses, we were joined by participants from: Ireland, Poland, Germany, Italy, Czech Republic, Hungary, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland. We were saddened that a participant from Ukraine was prevented from attending courses at Woodbrooke, having been denied a visa.
- We started exploring the possibility of recruiting and training a pool of bi-lingual Associate Tutors to run Woodbrooke On-the-Road events across EMES.
- And one of the most stunning events of last year, was the online course run in partnership with Lancaster University using the Future Learn platform. This 3 week free course on Radical Spirituality: the Early History of the Quakers, attracted Friends from all over the world. The final count for the overall number of participants was 8,542 and it will run again, beginning on May 22 2017.

We are currently working on a new website for Woodbrooke which should be up and running by the end of March 2017. Do not worry about not being able to find us, as our address will be the same: [www.woodbrooke.org.uk](http://www.woodbrooke.org.uk)

Look out for our online courses in 2017 which include these two:

- **European Quaker voices** is a six-week online retreat for European Quakers, using devotional and inspirational material by European Quakers. It runs from Monday 18 September to Friday 27 October and the tutor is Julia Ryberg.
- **Being a Quaker Clerk** is an online course for clerks around the world and runs from Monday 5 June to Sunday 16 July. The tutors are Michael Eccles, Oliver Robertson and Sue Glover Frykman.

And lastly, Friends from France, Switzerland, Ireland, Britain and Norway have already taken part in our research degree programmes, and we are now taking applications for

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the wholly online PG Certificate and MA Quakerism in the Modern World which we run with Lancaster University.

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

Sandra Berry, Director

## Yearly Meetings in 2017

| YM                         | When                                  | Contact   |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| Denmark (Nordic Gathering) | Kungälv, Sweden 29 June – 2 July 2017 | <a href="mailto:post@kvaekerne.dk">post@kvaekerne.dk</a>  |
| Ireland                    | 20-23 April 2017                      | <a href="mailto:office@quakers-in-ireland.ie">office@quakers-in-ireland.ie</a>  |
| Britain                    | 29 July – 5 August 2017               | Paul Parker, Recording Clerk, Friends House, 173 Euston Road London NW1 2AX<br><a href="mailto:ymg@quaker.org.uk">ymg@quaker.org.uk</a> |
| Belgium & Luxembourg       | 12-14 May 2017                        | <a href="mailto:quakerclerk@gmail.com">quakerclerk@gmail.com</a>  |
| Netherlands                | 19-21 May 2017                        | <a href="mailto:secretariaat@dequakers.nl">secretariaat@dequakers.nl</a>  |
| Switzerland                | 2-5 June 2017                         | <a href="mailto:symclerk@swiss-quakers.ch">symclerk@swiss-quakers.ch</a>  |
| Sweden (Nordic Gathering)  | Kungälv, Sweden 29 June – 2 July 2017 | <a href="mailto:kvakargarden@kvakare.se">kvakargarden@kvakare.se</a>  |
| Norway (Nordic Gathering)  | Kungälv, Sweden 29 June – 2 July 2017 | <a href="mailto:kveker@kveker.org">kveker@kveker.org</a>  |
| France                     | 21-24 October 2017                    | <a href="mailto:assembleedefrance@gmail.com">assembleedefrance@gmail.com</a>  |
| Finland (Nordic Gathering) | Kungälv, Sweden 29 June – 2 July 2017 | <a href="mailto:lampelanleena@gmail.com">lampelanleena@gmail.com</a>  |
| German                     | 2- 5 November 2017                    | <a href="mailto:clerks@quaeker.org">clerks@quaeker.org</a>  |

**Other events in 2017 (fuller details on <http://www.fwccemes.org/calendar/>)**

| Event  | When                   | Contact   |
|--|------------------------|---|
| Grenztreffen<br>Switzerland/Germany/France             | 21-23 April 2017       | Grenztreffen  |
| EMEYF Spring Gathering                                 | 10-17 April 2017       | <a href="mailto:emeyf@qcea.org">emeyf@qcea.org</a>  |
| Central European Gathering                             | 19-21 May 2017         | Jola Grabowska  |
| Border Meeting   | 8-10 September<br>2017 | <a href="http://grenztreffen.be/index.php/en-GB/">http://grenztreffen.be/index.php/en-GB/</a> |
| Peace & Service Consultation<br>in Kortenberg, Belgium | 10-12 November<br>2017 | <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:**

**Bank** – HSBC City Corporate Banking Centre, 60 Queen Victoria Street, London EC4N 4TR

**Correspondent SWIFT BIC Code** – MIDLGB22XXX

**Beneficiary Bank SWIFT:** CAFBGB21XXX

Beneficiary's Bank name and address:

CAF Bank, 25 Kings Hill Avenue, Kings Hill, West Malling, Kent ME19 4JQ

**IBAN No** – GB03CAFB40524000025578

**Account Name** – CAF Bank Ltd

FWCC EMES

**Account Number** – 00025578

**Sort Code** – 40-52-40

**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.