

Among Friends

No 115: Summer 2009

Published by the Europe and Middle East Section of Friends World Committee for Consultation
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Dear Friends,

*“Building bridges, across our divisions,
I reach out to you as you reach out to me.
With all of our voices,
And all of our visions,
Friends we can make such a sweet harmony....”*

On the last night of Britain Yearly Meeting many of the 1,700 Friends who had attended, gathered around the lake at the centre of York University campus. We held hands in the dusk as gentle rain fell, and the haunting song moved around the lake like a Mexican wave. We watched lit lanterns float gently into the cloudy sky, bearing our messages of hope, our prayers, and our pledges of commitment. This was the latest of a number of special moments I was fortunate to share with Friends, as they gathered in their Yearly Meetings around Europe.

Netherlands Yearly Meeting in May was the first, a joyful and thoughtful gathering, exploring conflict prevention. The testimony of David Niyonzima of the Quaker work being done in Burundi to heal the memories of war and to build alternatives to violence inspired us all.

I was unable to attend Switzerland Yearly Meeting, but visited soon afterwards for the Church and Peace conference on the theme of “Lead our feet into the path of peace”, which Kees Nieuwerth writes about in this issue.

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Kungälv, venue of Nordic Yearly Meetings Gathering in June

Nordic Yearly Meeting brought together Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden in wonderful sunshine at Kungälv near Göteborg. The theme of “Deep Ecology” was explored through talks, worship and meditations, as well as work in the world, with shocking images of the violence in Kenya after the election in 2008, and the good news of the difference Friends can make through initiatives such as the Change Agents Peace Programme (CAPP).

Friends in Ireland met at the King’s Hospital School, the venue of the FWCC Triennial in 2007, and took as their theme “The fruit of the Spirit”, from Galatians 5:22-23, the ultimate standard against which to test our leadings, testimonies and behaviour towards each other.

Whilst looking forward to France Yearly Meeting in August and German Yearly Meeting in October, my thoughts turn towards our Friends in the Middle East, who have not been able to come together as a Yearly Meeting for many years. Let us uphold them in love.

Marisa Johnson, Executive Secretary

The future of Friends in Europe: Themes for a conversation

Extracts from a paper by Johan Maurer of Northwest Yearly Meeting written for the Quaker Theological Discussion Group, Barnesville, Ohio, USA, June 2009. The full text is available on our website: www.fwccemes.org

Two visions...

I think Quakers could be for the majority of the population to be honest. We are practicing speaking to each other and to our non-Quaker friends. We're pretty good at having non-Quaker friends so the outreach possibilities are great as we gain confidence in our faith. In twenty years? A Meeting in every street? Could be the foundation for democracy and human response to the threat of runaway climate change.

We do not teach or train our children in the Quaker faith. We do not have a clear message for newcomers. So we are an elderly socio-cultural group that is dying out. The numbers are falling and the changed social and economic circumstances make it difficult to find people or money to do the essential work. As a whole generation dies off (the 75-90 year olds) there will be a drastic drop in numbers.

These are the voices of two different British Friends, anticipating very different futures for Friends in Europe. Which of these visions of the future is more likely? And to what extent are the insights of both voices valid, and mutually instructive?

My purpose is not to provide answers but to provoke a conversation—and even to enlist your help in conducting this conversation. Part of the problem in answering the question may be a lack of shared definitions and assumptions among those who are participating in building the future of the European Quaker community. This paper's audience might be able to play a role in building a common language to aid this conversation.

The questions...

Twenty Friends from nine countries agreed to help me with this paper by responding to a set of questions. I drew their names from a variety of sources, including Friends active in the European and Middle East Section of Friends World Committee for Consultation; a few were nominated by others interested in this project. As a group, they represent a thoughtful and very well qualified sample of the Friends movement in Europe. However, a sample of 20 is far too small to draw firm

conclusions. Instead, I simply want to make a few modest observations to keep the conversation going.

I deliberately gave my questions a flat, deadpan voice, trying my best to load them with as little emotional, cultural, or theological baggage as possible. I had, after all, set myself the limited task of opening a conversation on the future of Friends in Europe, rather than asking how likely it was that this future would match my own theoretical ideal. Furthermore, I did not want a polarized conversation based on unintended hints that I had a correct answer in mind. However, the one question that had overt theological content—According to your own belief or intuition, what does God want to do in Europe (or in your country) specifically through Friends?—did reveal something of the challenges awaiting future conversation partners. More about that when we get to question 3, below.

Here is what my twenty collaborators, as a group, seem to be telling us through their answers to my questions:

1. *As you consider the future of Friends in Europe, what factors or trends give you the most hope?* In decreasing order of importance, here are factors or trends mentioned by at least four people:

Increased access to Friends messages, for example via Internet channels, outreach programs, and new translations of Friends material. (6)

Increased numbers of regional and international linkages among Friends, such as cross-border meetings. (6)

In view of social and environmental challenges, the need for the Friends witness is as great as, or greater than, it has ever been. (6)

Friends have a unique message. (5)

A new generation of Friends is coming forward— young people and newcomers to the faith. (4)

Friends are putting resources—human and material— into outreach and community-building. (4)

Recent numerical growth. (4)

2. *What factors or trends seem most discouraging to you?*

These factors or trends were mentioned by at least four Friends:

Scale—lack of sufficient numbers to solve problems or ensure self-perpetuation. (7)

Disinclination or unwillingness to affiliate (sometimes mentioned as a cultural phenomenon). (6)

Unclarity of the Quaker message. (5)

Quakerly diffidence—a concern not to be perceived as “pushy.” (5)

A wider culture unfriendly to overt faith. (4)

Decline in numbers of Friends. (4)

Conflict among Friends (4), sometimes associated with the first factor (scale).

Other factors included distances, language barriers, intellectual rather than spiritual conviction, and class barriers.

3. *According to your own belief or intuition, what does God want to do in Europe (or in your country) specifically through Friends?*

Although stashed in an innocuous third position on the list, this question was the heart of my inquiry. Respondents were by no means united in a vision of God’s mission for Friends, but they rewarded the question with a rich list of ways Friends could bless Europe. The following items were mentioned by four or more Friends—note that the categories overlap considerably:

Promoting tolerance, mutual acceptance. (9)

Serving as reconcilers. (8)

Demonstrating a model of healthy (fair, spiritually vital) community. (8) (Three used the term “Kingdom of God.”)

Providing refuge for those avoiding or recovering from oppressive religiosity. (8)

Revealing God’s nature or will. (5)

Providing a place for spiritual seekers. (4)

Advocating a vision of simplicity or right stewardship. (4)

Advocating a vision of social liberation. (4)

Maintaining or opening a space for an inward, reflective spirituality. (4)

Interestingly, five Friends among these nineteen reacted to the wording of the question. One said, “This isn’t my way of expressing things”; another said, “I would have to say that this is question is formulated in such a way that I find it really difficult to respond to. I was brought up principally in the liberal tradition of Friends in Western Europe and so I would not put the question that way.” Among the “not my language” respondents, three did go on to list visions of Friends’ influence upon Europe.

My questionnaire also included four other questions. To summarize these additional issues briefly:

4. *In the USA, there is a lively conversation between so-called evangelical Friends and so-called liberal Friends. Do such conversations also exist in Europe? Do such conversations (or might such conversations) have any relevance or usefulness for the future of Friends in Europe?*

Most responded that they were aware of such conversations (several mentioned evangelical Friends in Ireland and Hungary) but that such conversations were not frequent or a high priority.

Questions 5 and 6: How many active Friends are there in your own worship group, meeting, or church? In your country? Should these numbers be larger, or are they at about the right level? In twenty years, what might these numbers be?

The numbers reported from continental Europe (and from the conservative movement among U.K. Friends) are, not surprisingly, very small.

Responses to the sixth question (“Should these numbers be larger...?”) generally looked for growth, but not just any kind of growth. Here are five voices:

[The numbers] ... could be larger if all potential and latent sympathisers were brought into the flock. These numbers may well decline unless “liberal” Friends find ways of drawing in more like-minded people.... I have the liberal’s typical ambivalence about whether it is our responsibility to do this....

While I do not think we are quantity-focused, I would certainly hope that numbers can grow, both in the size of groups but also number of groups established. Tiny groups are so vulnerable—it is easy to “burn out” when responsible for a tiny group, and any group will be better

nourished if there are more people in it.

Despite the evidence of Quaker “diffidence,” respondents listed a variety of access points, but one predominated: the Internet, particularly Web sites. Other methods and channels varied widely, mostly according to local factors: signs on meetinghouses and Quaker institutions, distribution of brochures to homes, participation in festivals and

fairs, school students’ research projects on Quakers, listings in newspapers and telephone directories, personal invitation, reputation in the workplace, rentals of Quaker facilities to non-Quaker groups, and so on. One respondent suggested a completely new ministry: a consumers’ evaluation service of translators and translation bureaux, sponsored by Friends as an expression of our concern for clear communication.

Conclusion: Observations and Themes

My first question to European Friends who read this paper is the following: on balance, did I provide an accurate overview of beliefs about your future? What factors might need more emphasis? Which observations simply don’t apply in one or another location? What significant local factors remain unrepresented?

Only one correspondent mentioned social class. However, I believe—based on several decades of observation—that class is a significant factor in Friends’ lack of growth, not just in Europe but worldwide. However, it’s also my experience that confronting class realities calmly, prayerfully, and without defensiveness, is easier advocated than accomplished. How might this theme be examined fruitfully?

Many European Friends are concerned not to offend those who are allergic to conventional religious language. Does this introduce an unintended bias against those who might not have this allergy, yet would still welcome the simplicity, reflectiveness, and integrity of Friends faith and practice?

A related question: The provision of a “refuge” from oppressive religion is clearly a valued ministry of Friends. Are we sometimes in danger of apologizing for (or simply avoiding) any features of Friends faith and practice that might be similar to those other backgrounds for fear of negative reactions? Does this distort our own spirituality? This is a conversation that might require great sensitivity, but I fear that we sometimes take the road of negative

self-censorship rather than searching for a more positive ministry of healing for wounded refugees.

John Punshon once divided Western religious people into two groups with two characteristic questions: the children

of the Enlightenment (“How can I know what is true?”) and the children of the Reformation (“Where will I/we spend eternity?”). In my experience, people in one group often talk right past the people in the other group, and neither has much native sympathy for the other, even though they might actually share important spiritual and ethical concerns. In my questionnaire, I asked what God wanted to do in Europe specifically through Friends.

Several responded that (for example) “this isn’t phrased in language I would use.” To what extent are we talking past each other? Would an inter-Quaker “Enlightenment/Reformation” dialogue increase our capacity to speak to a wider range of non-Quakers?

If we neglect this important dialogue, I worry that we may eventually become, in effect, two streams of Quaker history: a limited chaplaincy for an individualistic, intellectual, highly ethical stream of Quakerism that is weak on transcendent motivation but unlikely to disappear altogether because it is persistently attractive to a tiny sector of the public; and a more public form of Protestant-flavored Quakerism that is more transparent and accessible, with a wider emotional range, yet is poorer for lack of fellowship with the first stream. Is such a bifurcated future to be welcomed, or to be avoided?

Finally, other Christian groups in Europe, descendants of the dominant state-church or Christendom model of earlier centuries, have declined in numbers and influence, even though many of them have a “universalist” wing. At the same time, other forms of Christianity, such as Eastern Orthodoxy and Pentecostals, have taken up some of the space vacated by the older bodies. Both Europe and the United States are becoming mission fields for creative and energetic evangelists from Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Where do Quakers fit into this changing scene? Are we part of the older, declining picture? Or are we part of the answer to that decline? And do visiting or immigrant Quakers from East Africa or Latin America have a role to play in the shaping of Europe’s Quaker future?

Jane Rose of Finland Yearly Meeting reviews:

Iran Awakening by Shirin Ebadi

ISBN 978-1-84-604014-6 Rider

A short visit to the Nobel Museum's shop in Stockholm on the way to the Nordic YM this summer yielded this compelling book. It is the memoir of Shirin Ebadi, the Iranian human rights lawyer who was awarded the Nobel Peace prize in 2003. For anyone seeking to understand something of Islamic life and culture as it has been unfolding in the last 60 years in Iran, this is a powerful read. 'I wanted to write a book that would help correct the Western stereotypes of Islam, especially the image of Muslim women as docile, forlorn creatures'.

Ebadi interweaves recent political history in Iran with the events in her own life. We can only be amazed at how this woman manages to combine the tasks of being a wife and mother, as expected by the society she lives in, with the demands of her personal calling as a human rights lawyer. When Ebadi realised that paid legal work would constrict the honesty of her work as a lawyer she decided to choose her cases (especially taking on cases for women and children) and offer her services for free. The family would be able to manage on her husband's

income as they had done when the system decreed female judges were un-Islamic and forcibly sacked her.

Shirin Ebadi is regretful that so many intelligent Iranians have made the choice to leave Iran permanently, but although her life has been and still is in danger (since being awarded the Nobel prize the Iranian government has appointed 'twenty-four-hour' bodyguards for her protection) she has felt it important to stay in her own country and work for human rights using the increasingly limited channels available to her. Ebadi remains intensely loyal to her culture as an Iranian, and her last words to her daughter leaving to study in Canada were: 'but know your heart will be more comfortable in a country that is your own.'

I find this book interesting on many levels, particularly as an example of someone who despite the odds against her never gives up using her skills for the benefit of others while at the same time maintaining her close-knit family.

And this film:

Recipes for Disaster

Obtainable from: Deckert Distribution, DmbH Marianplatz 1, D04103 Leipzig, Germany 24€ (No text for the English parts, English subtitles for the Finnish sections) (also in shops selling DVDs in Finland- however there are no subtitles for the Finnish bits!)

This is a thought-provoking film/documentary made by a Finnish-British couple with two young sons living in Espoo, Finland. The film is in both English and Finnish, depending on whether the husband or wife is talking. Following the husband's concern about the effects and causes of climate change they decided as a family to give up oil and oil-based products (notably plastic) for the period of one year to see if they could reduce their carbon footprint. This film is their documentation of their experience.

They set themselves up to try and do without anything made from or packaged in plastic, and we follow them as they try to do this: searching, and eventually finding, toilet paper which is not packaged in plastic, making

their own toothpaste and hair gel, wrapping Christmas presents without tape or pretty paper. At the beginning of their 'oil diet' they say goodbye to their car, and we are privy to their discussions about whether or not they should allow themselves to accept lifts from other people. They can still use their motor boat to get to their cottage, but they have to row it rather than use the motor!

The film challenges us to think about what we are or could be doing in the face of climate change on a very practical level. It is down to earth and real, and the couple's young children feature prominently. The husband, John, is full of missionary zeal about what they are doing, but his wife, Anu, is more reluctant; less about the project itself as it affects their family, but more about sharing what they are doing with the wider world. The choices that this family made may not be ours, but the film is certainly an excellent starting point for discussion, and would be suitable for any viewers from 11-12 years upwards.



EMEYF Events

Annual Meeting

Venue:
Brussels, Belgium

Dates:
6-8 November 2009

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Beside the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus

One of those moments that when undocumented is easily forgotten.



In the sun a cluster of girls curl their feet beneath themselves on the steps behind the Umayyad Mosque.

Shops sell oriental souvenirs, cut shells and scarves, or coffee; men sit smoking ornamental water-pipes their eyes following the trail of the few tourists on the street that afternoon.

Colourful lanterns are hanging from door frames and trellises, and across are draped vines and blue and white striped cloth. A venture down the main street at night transforms this bustling path of cobbles and uneven paving slabs into a different, magical world flushed with colour.

The steps are warm and smooth beneath us, behind us a man chips gold into intricate patterns upon plates, and blows a glittering dust from his hands.

It would seem the tranquillity from within the mosque had quietly leaked onto the street outside, amid the flurry of the souq calm resides, and I felt that peaceful beauty also grow within me.

Justine Taylor



The above are from EMEYF's Spring Gathering Anthology put together to share our memories and experiences of the Spring Gathering in Damascus with the wider Quaker community. To see more take a look at it on our website at: <http://emeyf.quaker.eu.org/documents/spring-gathering-2009-anthology.pdf>

“Vi skal ikkje sova bort sumarnatta”

Vi skal ikkje sova bort sumarnatta,
ho er for ljøs til det.

Då skal vi vandra isaman ute,
under dei lauvtunge tre.

Då skal vi vandra isaman ute,
der blommar igraset står.

Vi skal ikkje sova bort sumarnatta,
som kruser med dogg vårt hår.

Vi skal ikkje sova frå høysåteangen
og grashoppespelet i eng,
men vandra i lag underbleikblå himlen
til fuglane lyfter veng.

Og kjenna at vi er i slekt med jorda,
med vinden og kvite sky,
og vita at vi skal vera isaman
like til morgongry.



We should not sleep away the summer's night,
it is too light for that.

Then we shall wander together in the open
under the trees that are heavy with leaves

Then we shall wander together in the open
where flowers in the grass are standing

We shall not sleep away the summer's night
which with dew our hair does fuss

We shall not sleep away from the smell of hay
and the singing of the grasshoppers in the fields
but wander together under the pale blue sky
till the birds lift their wings

And feel that we are of the same kin as the earth
with the wind and the white clouds,
and know that we shall be together
all the time till dawn

Poem by **Hanns Dieter Hüsch**

an inconvenient poet

translated by Fritz Renken

Persönliche Empfehlung

Wenn die Krieger kommen

Lock sie aufs Dach der Taube

Lock sie ins Nest der Schwalbe

Lock sie in die Höhle der Löwin

Lock sie in den Wald der Rehe

Geh ihnen entgegen

Mit offenen Händen

Voll Brot und Salz

Obst und Wein

Dass sie sich verlaufen

Im Knüppelholz deiner Tugenden

Dass sie sich verirren

Im Labyrinth deiner Freundlichkeit

Mach sie staunen

Beschäme ihre Generäle und Präsidenten

Lass ihre Handlanger ins Leere laufen

Sei eine Tiefebene voll Höflichkeit

Dein Gewehr sei die Klugheit

Deine Kraft sei die Geduld

Deine Geschichte sei die Liebe

Dein Sieg sei dein Schweigen

So dass sich die Landpfleger sehr verwundern

Personal Recommendation

When the warriors come

Lure them to the roof of the dove

Lure them to the nest of the swallow

Lure them to the cave of the lioness

Lure them to the wood of the doe

Approach them

With open hands

Of bread and salt

Fruit and wine

That they may lose their way

In the undergrowth of your virtues

That they may flounder

In the labyrinth of your kindness

Astound them

Shame their generals and presidents

Make their minions face a void

Be an expanse of courtesy

Prudence be your gun

Patience be your strength

Love be your story

Your silence be your victory

So that the governors will be most astonished



QUNO
 Quaker United Nations Office
 Geneva • New York



Andrew Tomlinson, Director and Representative, Quaker United Nations Office, New York, writes:

Dear Friends,

The Quaker United Nations Office in New York sends warm greetings to Friends everywhere.

2008 marked the 60th anniversary of Quaker accreditation at the United Nations. Over six decades, the Quaker UN offices in New York and Geneva have steadily worked to represent Friends' principles and values, as the world of the UN has changed significantly around us.

Our aims are as they always have been: to provide a space away from the microphones for quieter and more reflective discussions on the challenges that face the international community, a place for Rufus Jones' "quiet processes and small circles" in which he hoped that "vital and transforming events" would have an opportunity to flower; to represent voices that are insufficiently heard in the corridors of power; and to work quietly to foster approaches to international problems that are informed by Quaker insights.

As befits an anniversary year, 2008 saw a re-affirmation of purpose. The office is fully staffed for the first time in several years, and we have undertaken a strategic planning process which has taken us back to re-examining the roots of our work in Friends' spiritual practices and social action. Together with our engaged and knowledgeable committee, and the support and advice of AFSC, FWCC, QUNO Geneva and other stakeholders, we have confirmed our focus on the UN's role in peacebuilding and the prevention of violent conflict, and are in the process of aligning our program work accordingly. In addition we continue to act in support of Quaker agencies in their work at the UN, and to reach out to Friends everywhere.

Our peacebuilding work includes engagement with the UN Peacebuilding Commission, in particular in its work in Burundi, where our links with the local Friends church and the AFSC country office enable us to forge linkages between in-country activity on reconciliation, trauma healing and the consolidation of peace and the intergovernmental work of the Commission in New York.. This area of work also leads us to engage more broadly with the discussion at the UN on how best to foster sustainable peace in societies in and emerging from violent conflict.

Our other programs include work on the Responsibility to Protect, which is to be debated in the General Assembly later this year. Our position is to emphasize prevention and non-violent response, with recent events including a presentation and discussion on the important contribution of civil society in containing the outbreak of violence in Kenya at the end of 2007. We are also initiating a program on the UN's use of political engagement and preventive diplomacy, with the objective of supporting such processes as mediation before resorting to coercive or violent methods.

We thank Friends for their faithful support of our work, and ask you to pray for us in the year to come.

In Friendship,

News from Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre

An update from **Julia Ryberg**



Our **10-week e-learning course** called Quaker in Europe, run in the Czech language, has come to an end. Since most of its participants have found the course very inspiring, we have decided to pass some of the inspirational observations on to the other Friends. Well, it is easier said than done. How to select the best contributions out of hundreds? What we are presenting here are just unrelated pieces of a huge mosaic.

“When I was young, I thought that rituals and ceremonies were useless (or rather, they existed to be broken down, and then replaced by new ones) and prevented me from going direct to the point. Now however, when I am old and start forgetting, I realise that as long as a ritual does not become an objective, but remains a tool, there is nothing wrong about it. Quite the contrary – it enables you to get to know God, the others etc., and provides a certain security (especially within families some rituals are important, and not only for children)”

“In the religious surroundings I was part of, I also met with an emphasis on God in the past (creation, His famous activities in the history of Israel and in the early Church) and the future (when the book of Revelation is fulfilled and when Jesus returns). Then it dawned on me that I had sort of dismissed God here and now, that the present moment is the only period of time when I can change what is going on around me, and when I can live. Since some time ago I have rather been a person living spiritually at present, while handing over to past historians, and the future to God.”

The Quaker in Europe on-line introductory course has now been run in Czech, Norwegian, French, Hungarian and Finnish. We are gathering experience of what it is like to work on-line in various contexts. Russian, Danish and Dutch will hopefully be the next languages ready to run. We are also prepared to offer the course in English for Friends in the Middle East and Europe who prefer to work in that language. If you would like to take part in the

10-week course in a particular language or might be able to help with translations, please contact Julia Ryberg, who is co-ordinating the project, at julia.ryberg@woodbrooke.org.uk. She can put you in contact with Friends who are responsible for the course in various languages.

Two European Friends have recently completed Equipping for Ministry (EFM), a two year course on living as a Quaker in the world today. “The program did not only lead to personal growth and increase of practical and theoretical aspect but also fostered community among British and German friends” said German Friend Marianne Bundrock, “I personally find it very important to have younger people from Europe and Britain attend this program thus building a community of people with a strong sense of ministry for further Quaker service.”

Peter Dyson, a Russian Friend, also completed the course in April. “The process of growth can be subtle, almost catching one unawares with a realisation that, at the end of the two years, a journey has taken place; one in the company of other seekers such that you have moved on from where you started - more rooted and routed” said Peter, “The joy is the sharing – that of being pilgrims together. So beware, you won’t be quite the same person afterwards! Woodbrooke and EFM is not an experience to miss. Worth the journey from Russia every time!” Interested in finding out more? Contact Judith Jenner by emailing judith.jenner@woodbrooke.org.uk or call +44 (0)121 415 6781. Applications for the January 2010 induction need to be received by October.

Woodbrooke’s **2009/2010 course brochure** is now available. Packed with over 130 courses and events from singing to sustainability, clowning to Christian meditation, it is sure to have something to suit everyone. As well as the events, the brochure also features Woodbrooke on-the-road, conferencing, a chance to meet the tutors and trustees and details on longer term opportunities such as the Eva Koch Scholarship and Postgraduate Quaker Studies. To request a copy, call +44 (0)121 472 5171, visit www.woodbrooke.org.uk or email louise.vizor@woodbrooke.org.uk

Stay with Friends when you come to the UK. Did you know that you can visit Woodbrooke as a residential guest without attending a course? Bed & breakfast, half board and full board are offered. Use the Centre as a base for a

visit to the Midlands, or as a tranquil space in which to take time out for a personal retreat. Woodbrooke is easily accessed by air, road and rail. Please visit our website for more information.

Looking ahead:

- *September Sing: a choral singing weekend 25-27* September led by British/Swiss conductor Monica Buckland Hofstetter

- *In the Fullness of Time: a seasonal retreat 8-10* December led by Julia Ryberg

Thinking of attending a course? Catchpool Fund bursaries are readily available if financial help is needed. Contact Julia Ryberg, European Project Co-ordinator julia.ryberg@woodbrooke.org.uk or +46 (0)175-715 30. See www.woodbrooke.org.uk for general information and to request a course brochure.

News in brief

Calling all Quakers who will be in Copenhagen in December 2009

This is a call to coordinate – the Climate Summit in December 2009 in Copenhagen will attract a large number of people for different reasons – some will be there to represent their governments, some will represent intergovernmental organizations, yet other will be there are NGO representatives or simply to be there.

There will be Quakers among them (we assume); FWCC/QPSW/QCEA are trying to find a way of assessing whether there is any scope/interest/enthusiasm for a Quaker presence and a Quaker voice.

To discern the scope for this, we need to know who among Friends is going to be there and what you are willing to participate in. Ideas that have been thrown into the ring are: an official presence under the FWCC banner (depends on whether we can agree on what we

would say if we got the chance to say something), a worship sharing event as a side event for delegates to raise our concerns in a Quaker context.

Please help us with coordination. If you are going to Copenhagen, please tell us the following:

Your name

Your contact details

Your Meeting/YM/other Q body you belong to

Your role in Copenhagen – who are you going for/with

Would you be willing/able to participate in some Quaker presence in Copenhagen?

Would you be willing/able to uphold a worship sharing event?

Please send your response to mweitsch@qcea.org

From **Tony Weekes**, of Ireland Yearly Meeting:

In mid May, we met at Friends House in London, hoping to participate electronically in a conference in Montreal promoted by the Quaker Institute for the Future and inspired by the book *Right Relationship: Towards a whole earth economy* (see below for details). Unfortunately, in spite of considerable efforts from the technicians on both sides of the Atlantic, the communication systems let us down: we saw and heard no more than fragments.

But all was not lost! Challenged by the title, and by the urgent need to find an alternative to the conventional “neo-classical” economic paradigm, we started a lively ‘local’ conference of our own. We found that we had much in common as well as different insights and emphases to share.

We wish to hear from other Friends who share this concern, whether to offer thoughts and insights or to learn more. We are therefore asking for comments on the book and the matters it raises and suggestions as to how to promote debate and better understanding among Friends.

Please respond by e-mail to ecoq@gn.apc.org

Information about the book *Right Relationship* can be found at website: www.moraleconomy.org; presentations from the Montreal conference at website: www.moraleconomy.org/events_symposium.html.

The website of the Quaker Institute for the Future is www.quakerinstitute.org

Celebration of Church and Peace 60th anniversary

Kees Nieuwerth writes about the celebration of Church and Peace 60th anniversary

As EMES' representative, I took part in this year's Annual General Meeting (AGM) of Church and Peace (C&P) held at and the Mennonite Theological Seminary in Bienenberg in Switzerland. Both arose from the deeply felt need for reconciliation and peace in Europe after World War II. Being close to the German and French borders, the fighting could be seen from the site where the Seminary of Bienenberg was built. The international conference on the theme "Guide our feet into the way of peace: 60 years Peace Witness and Ecumenical Dialogue, followed the AGM.

In 1949 Robert M. Ziegler, then director of the Brethren Voluntary Service and a member of the joint committee of the (North American) Peace Churches, called a meeting in Geneva. Its aim was to 'form a committee in Europe with representatives of Mennonites and Quakers with the purpose of developing a community of peace churches'. At the same time the meeting was a response to the invitation of the World Council of Churches (WCC) to participate in the post-war dialogue on the theology of war and peace. After this first meeting

the movement that later was to be known as C&P gradually developed, beginning with British Quakers and the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR) becoming members. Today C&P has members from 11 European countries and many different denominations. The membership list also includes the Seminary at Bienenberg itself. Alongside FWCC-EMES some 'larger' continental Yearly Meetings e.g. German YM and Switzerland YM are members in their own right.

The ecumenical nature of the organisation is also reflected in the composition of its Administrative (= executive) Committee: one member from the Netherlands who is Mennonite, three from Germany (a Quaker, a Lutheran, and a Catholic), one from Croatia who is a Baptist and one from Great Britain who is a member of the Reformed Church.

C&P works through a number of regional groups: French-speaking region (including France and part of Switzerland), Britain and Ireland (including the London Mennonite Centre and the Anglican Pacifist Fellowship) the Dutch-speaking region (including Netherlands

and part of Belgium), the German-speaking region (including Germany, Austria and part of Switzerland) and the South-East Europe region. The latter region that was prominently present at the AGM: many young people engaging in peace education and reconciliation projects in the Balkan states until recently troubled by civil wars. Very impressive and encouraging for the rest of us! They also organised two large interreligious peace conferences recently and a third one is planned for 2010. They expressed their hope that their theme: "Renouncing violence: the path of co-existence" 'will be heard in every corner of the region'....

C&P discussed at length the position taken by the WCC on the so-called Resolution to Protect (R2P) by the UN. This would condone the use of deadly violence whilst protecting people threatened by civil war and ethnic violence within failing nation states. Members felt we should oppose it and challenge the WCC on it. At last year's AGM Guillermo Kerber of the WCC presented the WCC view on R2P and I was invited to give a Peace church perspective on this UN resolution. Following that meeting several regional groups took up the theme. This resulted in a statement drawn up at the year's AGM to –as Friends say- 'lovingly disagree' with the WCC and 'invite all churches to resist together with us the temptation of justifying the use of deadly weapons even as a last resort'!

C&P was started partly to enter into dialogue with the WCC on the theology of peace. Secondly therefore it was decided that C&P will respond to the document entitled 'Initial Statement on Just Peace' published by the WCC recently and may serve on the working group drawing up this response.

Let me conclude with a quote written on one of the walls at the Bienenberg Seminary:

"What is a Peace Church?

- to spread the Gospel of Peace
- to welcome enemies
- to resist injustice
- to resist violence
- to practice non-violence
- to live in solidarity with victims of violence
- to celebrate community"

And as for celebrating community: we certainly did that!

Diary Dates 2009

We are short of space for full postal addresses and phone numbers. Please contact the EMES Office if you need this information.

18th – 20th September 2009 Border Meeting The Border Meeting of Friends from the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, France, and Germany (and a number from the UK) will be held in Kortenberg, Belgium (near Brussels). Contact border.meeting@telenet.be for more details.

15th – 18th October 2009 German Yearly Meeting: In Bonn – Tagungshaus Venusberg. Contact: quaekerbuero.berlin@web.de

6th – 8th November 2009 EMES Peace and Service Consultation: Open to all Quaker Peace Committee and Peace and Service organisations based in, or working in Europe and the Middle East. In The Old Abbey, Kortenberg, Belgium. Contact: emes@fwcc.quaker.org

6th – 8th November 2009 Europe and Middle East Young Friends Annual Meeting: In Quaker House Brussels. Contact: Anya Whiteside awhiteside@qcea.org

More dates for 2009 available on the website: www.fwccemes.org Please send items for inclusion in the diary to Marisa Johnson at emes@fwcc.quaker.org

Paint, write and reflect at Assisi in 2009

From Oct 8th to 15th 2009 there is an opportunity to join with Friends for a week's retreat at Assisi - organised by Pax Travel at a guesthouse in the old town of Assisi, and led by two members of the Quaker Retreat Group: Peter Varney and Frances Crampton. For further information and a Pax Travel booking form please contact Peter Varney: 1 Thomas Wyatt Close, Norwich, NR2 2TB, UK or email: QuakerRetreats@waitrose.com

July 16-August 13, 2010 Quaker Youth Pilgrimage 2010: This bi-annual event will take place in the Northwestern United States. General information on the pilgrimage may be found on our website <http://www.fwccemes.org/emes/quaker-youth-pilgrimage>.

Australian Quaker Centre: Australian Quaker Centre is a new initiative. For the next three months it will be held at the Silver Wattle Retreat Centre, about 15 km from Bungendore NSW. In this spacious landscape you will have time for private contemplation, browsing the library, bush walks and the very special experience of a learning and worshipping Quaker community. Visit in person, or at <http://www.aqc.quakers.org.au/>.



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

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Deadline for Among Friends 116: 1 November 2009