

Among Friends

No 97: Spring 2005

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The Clerk of EMES writes:

It seems that for many people, Friends included, 2004 has been a difficult year. Speaking from my own experience, I want to express gratitude for all the love and support I received from Friends in Europe and worldwide while struggling with health concerns and bereavement.

The end of 2004 caught me reflecting on of issues of importance in life, like religion, community and a sense of belonging. My parents come from a very pious, Catholic, and well-established, provincial town family. Against all odds, my father became a founder member of the Evangelische Kerk (with structural connections to the Dutch Reformed Church) in Boecheout, a mission church which, against strong opposition from the monopolistic Belgian Roman Catholic Church, was to become the largest Protestant Church in Belgium, running its own (religious) elementary school, a home for neglected children, and a battered women's shelter. In the 1950s "Freedom of Religion" was not obvious even between Christian denominations.

I had formally left the Evangelische Kerk (which has long since been a member of the United Protestant Churches in Belgium) in the late 1960s. In December 2004 my little sister (who as a young adult had reverted back to being an active Catholic) and I put together the liturgy for my dad's memorial service. This had the curious side effect of throwing one back in time, visiting the old home where everybody has known you since childhood, and welcomes you back. Bible on the

table, we considered appropriate texts and psalms to sing, and familiar verses from an old Dutch evangelical mission songbook.

A few weeks later I took my mother, whose mind has been almost completely blank for a few years now, to the Catholic Christmas mass in the home where she is being cared for. We sang the traditional Christmas hymns and - incredibly - she joined in with a crackling voice, but with the right words, all of them. Where do these words come from, when she has not spoken at all for at least two years? Comforting as it was to join in the rites of the believers, the greatest comfort for me was in knowing to be doing the right thing in the spirit of my parents. One's childhood's home has become a concept, no longer a reality.

These past weeks I looked again at issues of Christocentricity and Universalism in Quakerism, at what George Fox actually meant in those early days, and why it provoked accusations of blasphemy. I looked at a broader and vaguer Universalism, which I imagine closer to my heart, with precious traces of Hinduism and Buddhism, and at the merits of a secular humanistic-ethic lifestyle. Many of us in "older" European Quaker Meetings are children of the 1960s, and the 1960s have become a mind space too. Many of us in "newer" European Quaker Meetings feel a need to search for our roots in the traditional churches of our countries. What makes our members in the Middle East stand fast in their Christian-Quaker faith? As some of us reach an age of transition and are passing away, our lives have culminated in a spiritual testimony which is laid down in a memorial service. What would I like my farewell to this planet to look like? How would it express my core values? Would it be spiritually accessible to the Friend from Latin America, from India and from Sweden? Would Friends from Moscow and the Congo be able to rejoice? What would be the ministry?

Dudzile Mtshazo of South Africa, and Clerk for FWCC, invited us at the FWCC Triennial in 2004

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to seek ways to better support the work of FWCC, so that the seed of faith planted by a group of Friends in 1939 will not decay, and die in our time, because we did not water it faithfully, trusting God. The Europe and Middle East Section of FWCC, as well as our local Meetings and Groups, are invited to look at our middle and long term future. Suggestions on how to

do this have been put together in a brochure called SNAP (Strategic Needs Analysis Process). Would it not be exciting if all our Meetings and Groups could work with SNAP for a year or so, and report back to our FWCC Annual Gathering in 2006 with a renewed vision?

Anita Wuyts

Standing in the Truth

Gerald Drewett of Britain Yearly Meeting was one of the participants in the Baltic Friends Gathering in Lithuania in September 2004.

A delightful ongoing email link has arisen out of connections made between those who were present at the Baltic Friends Gathering in Lithuania in September 2004. Friends have kept in touch with one another, sharing thoughts, pictures and even music. "Standing in the Truth" is one of several contributions by Gerald.

In earlier centuries Quakers were also known as 'Friends of the Truth'. And 'the Truth' was a correct understanding of God's message. Even in the seventeenth century that message was both corrupted by human beings and not understood because it was expressed in thought forms appropriate to the first century eastern Mediterranean. Just like today!

In dealing with the affairs of an elderly colleague I have come across one way of understanding what is meant by 'the Truth'. It is to be found in *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*. The writer says that humankind has a great need to be truthful to itself, a great need to understand our true vocation as human beings. To do this we need to project our lives forward to the time immediately preceding our inevitable human death. We then need to explore our feelings as to what we would have wished to have done in our lives; we need to come back to the present with that vision of how we would have wished to have lived and only then do we know how we are to start living tomorrow. Most of us, I fear, will not be living 'in the Truth' tomorrow.

The lives of early Quakers reflected the enormous empowerment they received from believing that they were standing in the Truth. They lived as if the kingdom of God were dwelling among them. Although these Quakers were historical and political nobodies, the Quaker Way swept through England like a bush fire and because it was rightly seen as a threat to the established political and religious institutions, Quakers were viciously persecuted by Church and State. The immediate effect of persecution was to attract more adherents but eventually the number of leaders who died in prison or as a result of their persecution meant that the movement was weakened and this Lamb's War (the Lamb in the Revelation of John) had to go on the defensive. Perhaps it is the one period in history when an entire national society has come the closest to living in the Truth.

Most institutional Christians express their religious beliefs in a religious language which embraces the thought forms of earlier centuries, even other cultures, and which often gets rejected out of hand by the secular world. Quakers express themselves largely in the language of the day and in terms of how we should be living our lives. We endeavour to live by the principles (testimonies) of Simplicity, Truth-telling & integrity, Equality & community, Environment & the earth, and Peace and nonviolence. If we live truly by these testimonies (and the Quaker Way is a very STEEP Way) then we are living true to our vocation as human beings, true to God's message. We are standing in the Truth, even though we may be derided or persecuted for so doing.

Gerald Drewett

World Gathering of Young Friends 2005 – planning update

WORLD GATHERING OF YOUNG FRIENDS - BRITAIN 2005

Europe Based Committee, Young Friends General Meeting office,
Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, 1046 Bristol Road, Selly Oak,
Birmingham, B29 6LJ, United Kingdom

yfgm@quaker.org.uk ~ +44 (0)121 472 1998 ~ www.wgyf.org



It seems incredible that in a few months time we will be meeting together at Lancaster University. Five years of hard work, many challenges and changes of faces have passed since this WGYF was envisaged in 2000.

We have been stretched to our limits, and sometimes beyond. There is a line in our Mission Statement about being 'open to the possibility of transformation' – I don't think any of us could have foreseen the transformation in our lives brought about by WGYF. Whilst challenging it has also been exciting, invigorating and spiritually enriching. For many it is hard to imagine what life will be like after August 24th!

All of this is before we even get the participants to WGYF – what incredible energy is going to be unleashed upon the world of Quakerism in its wake? In order to make the most of this unique opportunity we are trying to help prepare those who will be gathered, and those who won't be there in body but upholding us in Spirit, for what is to take place: a meeting together of all strands of Quaker theology and practice, a diverse set of cultural norms and values - not to mention languages.

We need your support and your prayerful upholding. We still need to do a considerable amount of fundraising to bring together the spiritual riches from around the globe and we need to share within our Quaker communities our hopes and fears to help prepare us, and later share our joys, frustrations and perhaps sorrows.

To assist with this we have some resources available:

- a DVD about the 4 strands of Quakerism found within their hometown made by YFs in Greensboro, USA
- a booklet about Quakerism, its history, diversity and thoughts from YFs about what is important to them.

Both are for sale via our website www.wgyf.org or from the WGYF office, both currently only available in English however a Spanish version of the booklet is forthcoming and we hope to get it translated into other languages too. They make ideal study group resources as well as being useful for outreach and enquirers.

I hope that many of you will venture into the worldwide community of Friends and join with us on our journey, learning about and from each other. WGYF is not just about those who gather in Lancaster in August but about the whole Religious Society of Friends, its past, present and future. Welcome on board!

Anna Dunford, WGYF Administrator
WGYF European Office, 1 Cluny Terrace, Edinburgh
EH10 4SW Scotland UK info@wgyf.org

Donations in GBP - to the WGYF office, cheques made payable to WGYF or by transfer to IBAN GB36CPBK08929965155042
Donations in Euro - to EMEYF 50 Square Ambiorix, B-1000 Brussels, Belgium, cheques made payable to EMEYF with a note enclosed stating that funds are for the WGYF appeal.

DramaQuest Midlands

15th-19th August 2005

Are you 12-16 years old?

Would you like to have fun with drama and learn about Quaker history?

The Leavers, a performing arts charity affiliated with Britain Yearly Meeting, is hosting 'DramaQuest Midlands'. This event encourages young Quakers to explore Quaker heritage in the heart of Britain using the fun medium of drama! Visits to historic sites include Cadbury World and a Quaker Burial Ground. For many Young Quakers this is the first Leavers activity they have ever attended, and it is a great opportunity to make new friends.

To find out more visit www.leavers.org/events.html or call Alison on 00 44 (0) 121 414 0099

Quaker Youth Pilgrimage, 2004 Part Two

In the Autumn 2004 issue of Among Friends Kees Nieuwerth reported on the experience of Dutch and German Friends who hosted a part of the Quaker Youth Pilgrimage last year and of some fascinating early Quaker history they unearthed. What follows is a second part of the report which tells of visits relating to the second world war: particularly apposite at this time of remembrance of the horrors of the concentration camps.

As far as the history of the second world war is concerned, the Youth Pilgrims started their visit to the Netherlands in Amsterdam where they saw the Anne Frank House. Later they went on to the documentation centre of camp Westerbork in the northern part of the Netherlands from where Dutch Jews were transported to their death at concentration camps elsewhere in Europe. In the neighbouring parts of Germany we visited the documentation centre at Papenburg which is dedicated to some 15 forced labour camps that were situated in the moorlands along the border between Germany and the Netherlands. Here we were confronted yet again by the fact that Nazi authorities were already arresting political opponents (socialists, union leaders, pacifists) long before the war actually broke out. Amongst them, the Nobel prize winner Carl von Ossietzky, after whom the University of Oldenburg has been named. The staff at the documentation centre recalled that at a very early stage Quakers from the United Kingdom addressed themselves to the German authorities asking them to release these political prisoners. The prisoners were even visited by a Quaker delegation led by our well-known Friend Corder Catchpool....

Eventually these forced labour camps were used to imprison prisoners of war and resistance fighters from all parts of Europe, even from Russia. These prisoners were forced to do heavy work during daytime: digging peat in the wet moorlands. Often they were literally worked to death: we held a brief meeting for worship at one of the cemeteries where thousands of nameless victims are buried.....

In the camps a song was written which later became world famous and has been translated into many different languages and versions, the "Peat Bog Soldiers Song". It is a protest song against the treatment in the camps in particular and the Nazi regime in general which was spread from these camps to Auschwitz and later went the world over.

Sunday the 8th of August at a meeting for worship the young Friends were joined by quite a few Friends from Groningen, Oldenburg and even Amsterdam, amongst whom some small children and even a baby... On the table there were Bibles and Quaker literature in many different languages...

After meeting Helmut Hoffman, a Friend from Oldenburg, showed photographs and told about his years as an army photographer at the Russian front; of how young people in his days were slowly and deviously manipulated and incorporated by and in the Nazi movement; and how, because of his work, he became opposed to the war and the regime, and became a pacifist and a Quaker; how even now in old age he demonstrates against weapons of mass destruction and waging war. An impressive testimony.

These different journeys and contributions helped the group to reflect and led to intense discussions on the theme of persecution, resistance and liberation. They looked at the need to detect the early stages in the gradual development of a repressive political system that violates freedom of conscience and human rights; and at the need for action and resistance to such developments and to side with the victims. The parallels were seen with the persecution by the Red Khmer, the genocide in Rwanda Burundi, the war in Congo, the imprisonment without any rights of prisoners from Afghanistan and Iraq... The need to continue to resist war as an instrument to end conflict...

What do I really believe and am I prepared to hold on to that whatever the costs? Will I continue to work for freedom of conscience and religion?

Kees Nieuwerth

Quaker work sheds light on the children of imprisoned mothers

For some time, the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) in Geneva, jointly with the Quaker Council for European Affairs and other Quaker partners, has been working on women in prison. Our research quickly led to an awareness of particular problems of children whose mothers are in prison.

Many countries (including Spain, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Finland, the UK, Hungary and Ireland) permit babies and/or young children to be in prison with their mothers. Whilst there are arguments for not separating a very young child from its mother, particular care must be given to ensure that facilities in prison are adequate for a child's physical, mental and emotional development. However, in all the international law concerning imprisonment, there are no specific standards regarding children in prison with their mothers.

Even when children are 'on the outside', their mother's imprisonment affects every aspect of their lives, often causing lasting harm to their relationship with their mother. UK research has found that children of women prisoners tend to have quite serious emotional and behavioural problems (whereas children of male prisoners tend to have relatively minor problems).

In international law, the Convention on the Rights of the Child sets out the rights of all children: including their rights to development, not to be separated from their parents against their will unless in their best interests, and to special assistance when deprived of their family environment. However, there have been no specific standards or even recommendations as to what States must do to ensure these rights for the children of imprisoned mothers.

QUNO thus began with the Committee on the Rights of the Child: the UN body that monitors implementation of the [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#). It regularly examines States on their practices in relation to children, issues recommendations, and publishes interpretation of the content of human rights provisions. Last year, QUNO participated in the Committee's discussion day on early childhood development, making a submission on the children of imprisoned mothers. The Committee's final recommendations highlighted the vulnerability of "children living with mothers in

prisons". In the Committee's January session, QUNO provided members with more detailed information about the particular needs of children of imprisoned mothers. The Committee's concluding observations included specific recommendations regarding children of imprisoned parent(s) and children in prison with their mothers.

For QUNO, this represents progress in moving the children of imprisoned mothers onto the international human rights agenda. We plan to continue our work with the Committee on the Rights of the Child through 2005, as they examine the rights of "children deprived of parental care".

QUNO and QCEA are continuing their research into women in prison and the children of imprisoned mothers. If you can assist, please contact quno2@quno.ch.

Megan Bastick, QUNO

Would you like to take part in a Quaker Voluntary Action project?

QVA invites friends from around Europe to join the following projects. If you would like to be a volunteer, or know someone interested in volunteering please contact QVA on mail@qva.org.uk or write to Friends Meeting House, 6 Mount Street, Manchester. M2 5NS, UK. for more details.

Type of Project	Place	Date and Length	Number of Vols
Working Retreat	Swarthmoor Hall, Cumbria UK	End June 2005 - 5 days	10
Gardening	Community resource Residential centre Northern Ireland	10 days July	up to 10
Fast for Peace and wall mural painting	Peace Community Coventry, UK	2 weeks August	5
Long term - 1 year Community work Children's activities	Salford UK	2005-06 flexible	1

Trees for Africa – an update

At the New Hampshire Triennial in 2000 Friends concluded that meeting as a world-wide family of Friends involves travelling, travelling involves CO-2 emissions and contributes to climate change. To counteract this and compensate for the emissions, Friends decided to raise funds to plant trees. In the Europe and Middle East Section of FWCC we decided to use our funds raised to enable Kenyan Friends to plant trees. During the past decades serious deforestation has taken place in Kenya, largely to the population and land-pressure.

As a result only about ten percent of the country is still covered by forest, whilst ecologists reckon that at least ten percent would be needed in order to attract and retain sufficient rainfall for agriculture. For less than ten percent of the trees cut down in Kenya replanting is guaranteed. So the need to (re)plant trees is quite obvious.

We now have a project agreed with Kenyan Friends. We envisage a direct and small-scale project approach involving Friends' meetings and families; aimed at planting indigenous trees as well as fruit trees that can be managed sustainably. We will work through the Rural Service Programme of the former East Africa Yearly Meeting. This programme came into being with the support of European Friends in the past and avails of a network of existing tree-nurseries as well as trained field officers to carry out tree planting schemes. Our project will involve thirteen Kenyan Yearly Meetings. Where there are no tree-nurseries yet these will be established. In each of these Yearly Meetings two monthly meetings will be given the opportunity to participate. In these monthly meetings five village meetings will be involved. Village meetings will plant at least 20 trees at the grounds of their meeting house. Moreover Quaker families will also be encouraged to plant trees in their own compounds, aiming to involve at least 650 families in this project. The implementation of the project has started, so 'Trees for Africa' is underway now!



Tree Nursery

Our Section's Quaker Peace and Service Consultation recommended to the Executive Committee that—since Quakers keep travelling (in the Ministry and otherwise...)- the project should not be seen as a one-off but should be a more continuous effort to contribute to sustainable development. So we *do* envisage to plant trees in Africa for a number of years and we do hope that you will continue to make contributions. So far we have received some 4000 Euro's. The project proposal was reformulated with this figure in mind, hoping that Friends in EMES will be willing and capable of generating 4000 Euro's for this purpose each year the coming three years! So for those amongst Friends who already donated, please do so again and for those who did not yet contribute: please join!

Donations to be marked: 'Trees for Africa' and sent to:

Quaker Hulp (NL), Giro Account 220644, Bergen op Zoom, The Netherlands.

Contact person for money transfers: Martin Touwen (e-mail: pnm.quakerhulpfonds@zonnet.nl)

Contact person for the project: Kees Nieuwerth (e-mail: k.nieuwerth@wxs.nl).

Kees Nieuwerth

News from Woodbrooke

Temporary closure of the Woodbrooke Library

This unique part of the building is home to half of all 16th Century Quaker literature, including some rare early writings of George Fox. It will be closed from 1 April to 31 August this year so that crucial restoration and refurbishment can take place. Please do not plan to come to access the library during this time.

The Corder and Gwen Catchpool Fund

This Fund provides financial assistance to Friends living in mainland Europe who would like to participate in any of Woodbrooke's courses. Trustees are also willing to assist European meetings who want to undertake work in conjunction with Woodbrooke to further their understanding of Quakerism. Susan Seymour is the European Project Coordinator for the Fund, and can give more detailed advice and support: email on susan@woodbrooke.org.uk or write (see address below)

Some courses to consider:

- Margaret Fell: 'speaking truth to power' 29 April - 1 May 2005.

- Music and Meditation: an inward journey. 17-19 May 2005.
- Juicy Quakerism. 6-10 June 2005.

For more details on these and many other courses see the web-site or contact Woodbrooke for a course brochure. Remember you may be eligible for a Catchpool bursary.

Coming to Young Friends World Gathering?

A warm welcome awaits you at the pre-gathering event at Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, Birmingham, between August 11th and 16th. Come and learn about the range of theological and cultural diversity of young Friends around the world.

Contact details: Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, 1046 Bristol Road, Birmingham, B29 6LJ, UK Tel: +44 (0)121 472 5171

Email: enquiries@woodbrooke.org.uk **Web-site:** www.woodbrooke.org.uk



Two Opportunities with QCEA

Interested in Europe and the EU?
Want to Learn More?

Sign up for the QCEA Study Tour
(2-10 July 2005)

The QCEA Study Tour provides the perfect opportunity to learn, discuss and reflect on what Europe means to you. The Study Tour will include visits to the various European Institutions in Brussels & Strasbourg; meetings with MEPs; NGOs; interactive discussions about security, peace, justice and human rights.

The study tour is open to Quakers or those in sympathy with the Religious Society of Friends who are aged 18 and over. Deadline for applications: 2 May 2005

For more information and to download an application form please visit: <http://www.quaker.org/qcea/studytours.htm> (E-mail: studytours@qcea.org)

QCEA Programme Assistant,
Brussels, 2005-2006

QCEA is looking for one young person (age 21-30) to work as Programme Assistant from September 2005. This new post has been made possible through the generous support of German Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). This is an opportunity to:

- work on one of QCEA's programme areas: human rights, economic justice and peace-building
- to assist in the day to day tasks of QCEA and Quaker House
- to gain work experience in an international Quaker setting.

For more information and an application form please visit: <http://www.quaker.org/qcea/pa.htm> (email: mweitsch@qcea.org) or contact Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA) Square Ambiorix 50, B-1000 Brussels Tel: +32 2 230 30 62

Diary Dates 2005

20-26 March EMEYF Spring Gathering Information is now up on the Europe and Middle East Young Friends website: <http://emeyf.quaker.eu.org/> Or contact the organising committee through Chloe Tan, Gerestraat 24, 2311 NW Leiden, The Netherlands. Tel +31 71 5230952.

24-27 March EMES Annual Meeting, Bienenberg, Switzerland. Contact Bronwyn Harwood, emes@fwcc.quaker.org

31 March - 3 April Ireland YM. Contact C Rosemary H Castagner, Quaker House Dublin, Stocking Lane, Rathfarnham, Dublin 16, Ireland. quakers@gofree.indigo.ie

29 April - 2 May Eastern Baltic Friends Border Meeting. "Exploring Quaker Faith and Practice" Jurmala, Latvia. Contact Ivars Abelis via Ivars43@yahoo.com

5 - 8 May, Sweden YM, contact Julia Ryberg, Sweden Yearly Meeting, Kväkargården Box 9166, S-102 72 Stockholm Sweden

6 - 8 May Netherlands YM. Contact Hadewijch Touwen, Quakersecretariaat, Postbus 989, NL-4600 AZ Bergen op Zoom, The Netherlands. secretariat@quaker.dds.nl

13 - 16 May Switzerland YM. Contact Derek Brett, Maison Quaker, 13 Ave du Mervelet, CH-1209 Genève, Switzerland. dubrett@talk21.com

3 - 5 June Central Europe Regional Meeting, "The Distinctive Features of the Quaker Tradition", Hungary. Contact Zsuzsa Eastland, 1112 Budapest, Töröcsvár utca 20, Hungary.

23 - 26 June Norway YM. Contact Marit Kromberg, Venneses Saamfunn Kvekerne, Skovveien 20, 0257 Oslo, Norway. kveker@kveker.org

26 June – 8 July QUNO Geneva, Annual Summer School for young people (aged 20-26) Closing date: 16 March 05 See web-site www.quaker.org.uk for application form or contact Helen Bradford, QPSW, Friends House, 173-177 Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ.

30 July - 6 August Britain YM. Contact Elsa Dicks, Friends House, Euston Road, London, NW1 2BJ, UK. rco@quaker.org.uk

16 - 24 August World Gathering of Young Friends, Lancaster, UK. Contact info@wgyf.org

24 - 28 August France YM. Contact Axel Jenson, Poutet d'en Bas, 09350 Castex, France. axena.jenson@wanadoo.fr

August Finland YM Contact Jane Rose, jhsptrose@mail.suomi.net Karhantie 130, SF-91500 Muhos, Finland.

30 September - 2 October EMEYF Annual Meeting, Brussels. Contact emeyf@qcea.org

29 - 30 October Denmark YM. Contact Kvækerne, Drejervej 17-4, DK-2400 København NV, Denmark. m.clausen@post.tele.dk

3 - 6 November German YM. Contact Quäkerbüro, Planckstraße 20, D-10117 Berlin, Germany. buero@quaeker.org

2-4 December EMES Peace and Service Consultation, Brussels. Contact Bronwyn Harwood, emes@fwcc.quaker.org

Among Friends is the newsletter of Europe and Middle East Section of Friends World Committee for Consultation.

Also available at: <http://www.fwccemes.org>

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.

There is no set subscription fee for Among Friends. We depend on voluntary subscriptions. Costs of printing and distribution are rising and we hope those who are able to pay will consider an annual donation of around 10 Euros.

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