

# Among Friends

No 116: Autumn 2009

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## Dear Friends,

Autumn colours warm my heart as I look out of my window. This is definitely my favourite time of the year. It is a season for looking back, for thanksgiving, and for preparing for the challenges of winter.

I give thanks for all the opportunities of sharing worship, learning and companionship with Friends all over Europe during the summer. *Vivre l'expérience de la lumière en France au jour d'aujourd'hui* was the theme of France Yearly Meeting in August. The gathering had the feeling of a retreat, with one Friend, who is a Muslim as well as a Quaker, fasting because it was Ramadan. An experience that spoke very directly to the theme of German Yearly Meeting – *Interreligiosität – Die Suche nach der Einheit in der Vielfalt*. The Cary lecture on the theme, given by Eberhard Küttner, was extremely well received: “Mensch, dass war stark!” was the reaction from the gathered Meeting. I hope the lecture will be translated into other languages, so that it can be shared more widely around the Section. Keep an eye on the website [www.fwccemes.org](http://www.fwccemes.org) for developments.

Quaker witness and service is highlighted in this issue. Coming from the Silence, a book just published, recounts the ways in which the Quaker community responded to “the troubles” in Northern Ireland between 1969 and 2007. And QCEA celebrated 30 years of “speaking truth to power”. We remember

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*Autumn Colours*

Marianne Boelsma-Studinger and the Light that shone through her life.

And what about the future? Johan Maurer's article on the Future of Quakers in Europe in the last issue has excited much interest, as attested by the fact that it has been downloaded 168 times from the website. We would be very pleased to receive responses, and publish these too in due course.

Many Friends are asking themselves and each other how we can tread more lightly on our Earth, as the Copenhagen Summit approaches.

As the days shorten, I remind myself of the words of Ralph McTell's Impala Song, which encourages us not to be afraid of the dark: “The moonbeams and the shadows they will be your friends, another world begins when the daylight ends...” Let us look forward with faith to the coming of the Light, trusting the promptings of Love and Truth in our hearts.

*Marisa Johnson, Executive Secretary*

## 2009 Borders Meeting

Report by **Melissa Dey Hasbrook**

The 2009 Border Meeting Residential Weekend “Silence and Mutual Openness: a Quaker approach to interfaith understanding” was organized by the Belgium and Luxembourg Monthly Meeting. Forty-five of us, ages spanning five-months to eighty-some years, gathered at the Kortenberg Abbey and brought together Meetings from across Belgium, Germany, Luxemburg, the Netherlands, and the UK.

Jim Pym who is a Buddhist and a Quaker was the main speaker, and Friday evening he invited us to listen to where the sound and silence became one after striking a singing bowl. He also shared what Native American chief Papunehang said after attending a Quaker meeting, “I love to hear where the words come from.” So it is in this Border Meeting report that I consider where our words and silence came together and from where our words come.

Saturday morning Jim Pym offered three practices for interfaith interaction:

- mutual irradiation, to absorb by listening to another person fully while being aware of one’s self and appreciating the implications of this process;
- creative listening, to listen without commentary, and to give feedback only for clarification;
- and the untitled third, to be true to who you are and the path which you travel.

The following sessions on God, prayer and healing provided opportunity to try out these approaches. Piqued by an honest challenging experience, our shared sincerity



*Jeremy and Naomi Lester and Paul Holdsworth*



*Paul Holdsworth and Jeannette Delgado*

and tension was evident across words and silence. On Sunday f/Friends shared reflections, some desiring more interaction in small groups, some grateful for being pushed beyond our comfort zone.

The Border Meeting gave us the chance to meet old and new f/Friends. In the mornings some of us walked trails in the nearby forest. We enjoyed an evening of music accompanied by flute and guitar. Saturday afternoon we had hard choices to make: sharing coffee on the abbey terrace, attending a workshop on death and dying, singing in the chapel, or taking a solitary spell. Sunday morning we held Meeting for Worship.

During the weekend Jim Pym encouraged us “to be open to the Light, from wherever it comes,” and he suggested “in the silence we can come to expect something else, something new.” As one f/Friend pointed out, perception is key to our understanding – for instance, miracles happen all the time. By being open to the Light, “something new” in our individual and collective experience of the Spirit is possible. And so, as another f/Friend reminded us, “nothing is ever finished.”

Some materials mentioned at the Border Meeting include Creative Listening by Rachel Pinney (Friends Fellowship of Healing, reprinted 2009); Mutual Irradiation: A Quaker View of Ecumenism by David Steere (Pendle Hill Pamphlet no. 175, 1975); and What kind of God, what kind of Healing? by Jim Pym (Friends Fellowship of Healing). For any who are interested, Belgium and Luxemburg Monthly Meeting is preparing a fuller list of sources from the weekend.

## News in brief

### Translating in a Quaker Context

How do you explain apparently simple Quaker words and expressions such as concern, ministry, and sense of the Meeting to attenders and enquirers with little or no English? It is a fact that nearly 350 years of Quaker history in the English-speaking world have generated a sophisticated jargon sometimes known as Quakerese. In many countries where English is a foreign language, local Quaker traditions may be absent. In such places today's translators of Quaker literature face the daunting task of having to coin local equivalents of well established Quaker terminology. If few resources are available, to whom can a translator turn for guidance?

To empower Friends and attenders willing to meet this challenge, Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre and the

Catchpool Fund have organised several international get-togethers in recent years (2006, 2008). This has provided experienced and inexperienced translators of Quaker literature with a chance to meet face to face to discuss issues and share concerns. Out of this process arose the idea of making a compendium of helpful ideas, approaches, methods, and practical steps. On the basis of his own professional background and Quaker experience, Kjeld Renato Lings of Denmark Yearly Meeting has compiled a thirty-page manual entitled *Translating Among Friends: A Quakerly Guide*.

These practical guidelines to translation are available for download from the EMES website: <http://www.fwccemes.org/news/help-with-translating-quaker-texts>.



#### Friends World Committee for Consultation

#### Europe & Middle East Section

#### QUAKER YOUTH PILGRIMAGE 2010

**Northwestern United States 14 July - 13  
August 2010**

#### Applications are sought for pilgrims and leaders

Walk on the drift-wood studded beach of Puget Sound; skip through the waves on the Oregon Coast; sleep in a lodge near the slopes of Mt. St. Helens; and spend time with young people from around the world, forming a special community while you get to know the particular complexities of American Quaker churches and meetings in the Pacific Northwest.

The pilgrimage happens every two years and is organised jointly by the European & Middle East Section and the Section of the Americas of FWCC, the world body of Friends. It's an opportunity to promote loving understanding of our diversities within the Quaker worldwide family.

The Pilgrimage brings together 14 Young Friends (aged 16-18) from North America and 14 from Europe with

two adult facilitators from each section on a four week journey of exploration. Pilgrims will come from different cultural, language and theological traditions. During your time together you will travel and learn together and seek to nurture your spiritual lives.

Applications are now open for European pilgrims who must be between 16 and 18 years in July 2010. The cost for pilgrims will be £1900. Some bursary funds are available. Don't let cost keep you from applying.

We are also seeking to recruit two adult leaders who must have experience of working with young people. All leaders' expenses will be paid.

**Closing Dates** for applications will be: 11 December 2009 (leaders), 4 January 2010 (pilgrims).

For more information please contact a member of the EMES QYP Committee:

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\* Janet Entwistle: +44(0)1482 863240 – [janet@entwistle.karoo.co.uk](mailto:janet@entwistle.karoo.co.uk)

**For application forms for pilgrims and leaders, please contact: Rachel Miller, 11 Garth Brow, Kendal LA9 5NN, UK. Telephone & email above.**

## Montreal Conference

**Libby Perkins**, of *France Yearly Meeting*, writes:

This conference was organised in Montreal from 15th - 16th May 2009 by the Quaker Institute for the Future (QIF) as part of the Moral Economy Project. It was loosely based around the recently published book, "Right Relationship : building a whole earth economy" edited by Peter G. Brown and Geoffrey Garver, published by Berrett-Koehler, San Francisco.

As I was already in Canada visiting Friends and relations, I could attend the conference without feeling too guilty about air travel from France! It was a gathering of some 80 people - the great and the good, Quakers and non-Quakers, in the environmental field. The most distant participant, Robert Howell, came from New Zealand. Nancy Irving (general secretary of FWCC) flew in from London and welcomed the opportunity for useful networking, while pointing out that the World Council of Churches has been worrying about these issues for 20 years.

(Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation) Most participants came from the USA and Canada (those from Montreal regretted that English was the only conference language and no French). Akpezi Obuigwe from UNEP in Nairobi briefly addressed us as she was already in Montreal for a UN Environmental meeting at the iconic Montreal landmark, the Biosphere.

Peter G. Brown (McGill University) will visit and speak at UNEP in Nairobi at the end of August.

The Biosphere is worth an aside. It was designed by Buckminster Fuller as the spectacular and innovative American pavillion for the 1967 World Exhibition on the artificial island in the St. Laurence river. Like the Eiffel Tower, it was never meant to be a permanent structure, and was virtually in ruins after a fire and ice-storms. The Canadian government has restored it as an excellent environment museum complete with reed beds for sanitation, and water collection methods, and solar panels. You can also visit a progressive and sustainable environmental house designed by Canadian students for an international competition.

To return to the QIF conference. An opening greeting was given in a Mohawk language by a member of the Mohawk Kahnawa:ke community, which, translated, emphasised

the importance of respect and connectedness with Mother Earth whom we are steadily and ruthlessly destroying by our "DEMOCRAPITALISM". There were three panel discussions on Frontiers of Governance, Frontiers of Policy, and Frontiers of social action, with corresponding workshops. It was relatively easy to see the problems of both the economy and ecology, but Action was a more difficult question.

This needs a real shift in our value system as well as practical action by example. Another layer of global institutions seems over ambitious and idealistic when there are already so many institutions working in the field which need coordinating and with more enforcement powers. To avoid air travel, there were 5 remote presenters including Laurie Michaelis from the UK (Living Witness Group). Technical efforts to link Friends House, London, to Montreal by remote computer and Internet were a bit hit and miss.

Canada Yearly Meeting Friends Service Committee - Quaker International Affairs Programme (QIAP) - has published "The Future Control of Food: a guide to international negotiations and rules on intellectual property, biodiversity and food security". It is the first wide-ranging guide to these issues, and was launched at the UN Conference on Biodiversity in Geneva. The book is available for free on internet or see [www.qiap.ca](http://www.qiap.ca).

So did the conference achieve its aim of moving forward a transformational effort and creating a world wide network and dialogue?

I would say it certainly helped, but it is an on-going task for all of us.



## Update from Georgian Friends

The anniversary of the conflict between Georgia and Russia has brought fresh tensions to the area at the beginning of August 2009. The work of Friends House Georgia goes on, mainly through the provision of food at a soup kitchen, which Friends opened in a Shelter, and medical assistance to refugees still living in temporary accommodation all over Georgia (see pictures). There are sufficient funds to continue the relief work approximately till the end of autumn. Friends around the world have supported this work generously, but the need goes on.

Friends have plans to start two new long term projects in the spring of 2010.

They also want to develop an Alternative to Violence Programme for Georgia. They have invited Friends from New York Yearly Meeting to visit and carry out some AVP training in 2010.

The Friends Meeting in Georgia is slowly growing. As well as seven International Members, and four more who have applied for membership, there are several "friends of Friends" who attend Meetings regularly. Many people in Georgia learned about Quakers through their relief work for refugees and Religious Encyclopaedia that was published in Georgian language in 2008. Five pages with coloured pictures were devoted to the Quakers in that Encyclopaedia.

Georgian Friends plan to register Religious Society of Friends in Georgia, not as an ordinary NGO, as Friends House Georgia, but as a religious organization. Since 2005 Georgian Law gives a permission to Churches



and different confessions to be registered as a religious organization.

Friends in Georgia hold unprogrammed, silent Meetings for Worship in the Clerk's flat. The flat is rather small and located on the 5th floor of a building which does not have an elevator. That makes it difficult for some people to attend. They plan to rent a flat for the Meeting and to accommodate visiting. They hope to raise US\$ 2,400 - that would be enough to rent a flat for 1 year. Georgian Friends can cover the price of electricity, gas, water themselves, but the Meeting is rather small and they do not have enough funds to cover the cost of the rent. They already received £150 (from Jesus Lane Meeting in Cambridge) towards the rent, and have a commitment for approximately 1/3 of the yearly rent from another Meeting, but still need funds to cover the annual charge for the rent of the flat for the Meeting. Anyone who would like to contribute to the rent can do so also through the "FWCC website": <http://fwccworld.org/donate/index.shtml>.

Recently, Representative of the Georgian Friends Worship Group attended Ireland Yearly Meeting and a study course at Woodbrooke. We express gratitude to Friends in England and Ireland for inviting us to these Gatherings. They received a visit by Woodbrooke on the Road in the autumn of 2009.

Georgian Friends would like to express the gratitude to all the Friends for the support, help and the prayers for them and for Georgia. Please continue to hold them in the Light.



## Celebrating 30 years of Quaker advocacy in Europe

**Martina Weitsch and Liz Scurfield** write:

On 24 October, United Nations Day – among other important anniversaries – QCEA celebrated its 30th birthday. It was in 1979 (and after some 5 years of deliberations and discernment among Yearly and other Meetings in a number of different countries and in consultation with AFSC) that the Quaker Council for European Affairs opened up for its important business of calling to the attention of EU and Council of Europe decision-makers the concerns of Friends.

Some 70 Friends – many of whom had more than 30 years' involvement with QCEA and its development – gathered in Brussels to hear a roll-call of those who had made this service possible. Described by one former Clerk as a miracle, QCEA started from very small beginnings and has developed into a well-known and visible part of civil society representation at the European level. We heard from Friends who work for other civil society organizations at that level that the leadership and commitment of QCEA over these years is welcomed and respected.

Jeremy Lester, a Friend who works for the European Commission, gave a keynote address suggesting the many ways in which organizations such as QCEA help to hold the European decision-makers to account and to provide the grit in the system that ensures that complacency does not set in.

Juliet Prager of the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust reflected on the 30 years of support JRCT has given to

QCEA – she had uncovered all the applications QCEA has made over those years and reflected both on the changes these revealed and on the consistency of the focus of the work.

The current Joint Representatives, Liz Scurfield and Martina Weitsch, had undertaken a survey of former Programme Assistants. There have been over 60 of them and their work has greatly enhanced the impact of what is and always has been a very small organization. QCEA's 30th anniversary was an opportunity to celebrate their contribution. QCEA has published over 60 reports, over 300 editions of its newsletter *Around Europe* and has run over 50 Study Tours. Much of this is work done by Programme Assistants and is the backbone of QCEA's visibility with Friends and with the Institutions.

QCEA has also had a number of Representatives over the 30 years. Including the current incumbents, there have been 14, some working in couples and some not. Not all of them were able to come to Brussels for the celebrations. But it was lovely to see some, including Pat Stapleton, who, together with Brian Stapleton (who sadly died in 2006), was the first Representative in Brussels.

QCEA has a clear vision of how we envisage Europe should be. There have been a number of different expressions of this vision in print, each reflecting the primary concerns of their time. 30 years seems a good point at which to review and renew such a vision and the new version was launched at the end of what was a full and enjoyable afternoon.

The evening saw a dinner, organized and served by members of Brussels Meeting and the current Programme Assistants, for over 60 guests in Quaker House. Every inch of our four reception rooms on the first floor were used; the volume of conversation and laughter left us pondering again on the amount of noise Friends from the 'silent'



tradition can make. Two short interludes of singing reinforced the message that we may be from the 'silent' tradition but not short of a word to say or sing!

QCEA's founder members were a small group of far-sighted Friends who worked tirelessly to bring about their dream of a Quaker voice at European level. Some of them could not be with us any more; one of the founders, Marianne Boelsma, well known to many readers of *Among Friends*, died earlier this year. We completed this weekend of celebrations by holding a Meeting for Worship on Sunday afternoon to give thanks for the grace of God as shown in her life. Marius, to whom she would have been married on that day for 55 years, (Sunday was their wedding anniversary,) and their daughter, son and one of their grandsons were all present for this.

We feel privileged to be able to continue the work set in train by the founders, the former Representatives, the Programme Assistants and the many Council and Committee Members who have served QCEA since 1979. It was a joy to be able to celebrate this with at least some of them and to look forward to many more years of seeking truth with power in Brussels, Luxembourg, Strasbourg and the member state capitals.



*Nick, Pat, Richard, Margaret, Liz, Martina*

#### **Representatives:**

Nick McGeorge from 1986 to 1989 - with his late wife Ena

Pat Stapleton, the first Representative from 1979 to 1983, jointly with her husband Brian, who sadly died in 2006

Richard and Margaret Seebohm from 1998 to 2001

Liz Scurfield and Martina Weitsch, the current Representatives, in post since November 2002.



## Remembering Marianne Boelsma-Sudinger

23 Jan 1925 – 30 April 2009 – An “Internationalist” Quaker

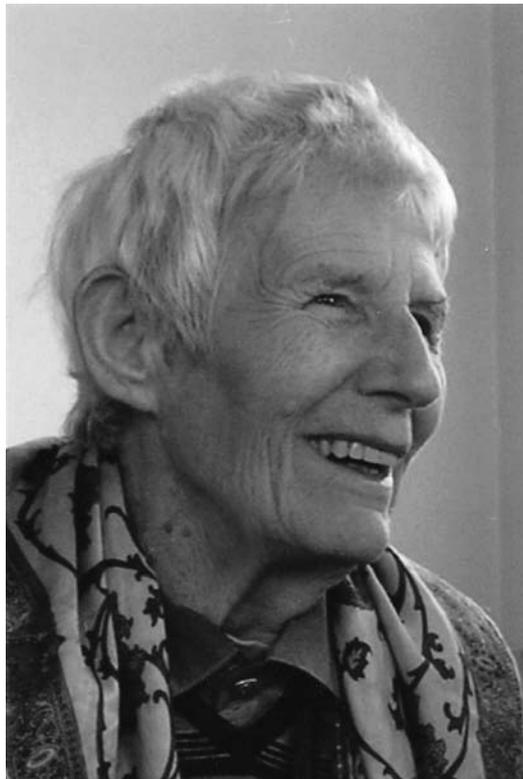
Marianne was born in Basel. She had a difficult childhood, losing her mother to TB when aged only 9. She had an older brother and a younger sister (a baby brother had died, also of TB, at the age of two), and the position in the family brought early responsibilities for the welfare of her siblings.

Marianne trained to be a kindergarten teacher. When her step-mother contracted polio after the birth of her fourth child, Marianne’s was once again responsible for looking after her brothers and sisters. In spite of the heavy load, Marianne still found time to involve herself in the youth movement of the Blue Cross, taking part in singing, bible studying and camping.

She took part in camps organised by the Service Civil International (SCI), where she first encountered Quakers and learned about their silent meetings and peace testimony. She was later sponsored by Swiss Quakers to visit Friends in England and Ireland. This led to the award of a Unesco Youth Travel grant, which took her to a rural agricultural school in South India for a few months. Later she participated in an SCI long term work camp in Pakistan. There, in March 1953, she met her future husband, Marius Boelsma, from the Netherlands. They married in 1954 and returned to Europe in 1955. The couple eventually settled in Eindhoven, and brought up four children.

A trip to Zambia in 1968 led to a concern to help African women lead more independent and healthy lives. There followed work camps and support for Lusaka Quaker Meeting. Marianne was delegated to attend a meeting, in Madagascar, of Quakers living in Southern Africa, and this resulted in the establishment of a new Yearly Meeting.

Marianne had a great love and respect for children, and saw to it that at Yearly Meetings children got their own programme. A Swedish Friend, Annike Hollsig, recalled how Marianne had called her on the phone after the then Secretary of EMES had told her that there would be no child-care provision at the EMES meeting due to take place in the Netherlands: “Of course you must come, and bring your little boy. Everything has been made ready”. And indeed it had – cot, pushchair, toys, and many Friends on stand-by to take turns entertaining the little lad.



Already active on the international Quaker stage, and deeply concerned that the Quaker Peace Testimony should be heard in European politics, it was natural that Marianne should be one of the founder members of the Quaker Council for European Affairs. And throughout the 30 years since she remained deeply and tirelessly committed to its cause.

Marianne and Marius also lived for periods of time in the Czech Republic, China and Vietnam. Everywhere they made friends, and their home in Bennekom was a welcoming place to many Friends who travelled there.

Franco Perna, former EMES Secretary, said: “Once Marianne and Marius helped host a meeting of the EMES Executive Committee in their home/town. Marianne was always eager to make and promote linkages between QCEA and EMES. She was one of those Friends I would go to whenever I felt ‘lonely’ in my work, as I did not have any local support group. Marianne for me was a great ‘internationalist’ Quaker.”

*Based on the biographical note prepared by Yvette and Marius Boelsma, October 2009.*

# News from Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre

An update from **Julia Ryberg**



The **Quaker in Europe** on-line course is being run for a second time in Finnish, with the second run in French beginning soon. The course is also due to run in Russian soon, with translations in Danish and Dutch on their way. We are prepared to offer it in English, as well in early 2010. Please contact Julia Ryberg if you are interested in taking the course in English. It is also possible to take the course in English or any of the European languages even if you are not a native speaker of that language. The third round

of Facilitation Training for the on-line course will begin in November, with Friends who speak Danish, Russian, Georgian and Latvian.

The Watford Meeting DVD is being translated and subtitled in various languages and will be available as an outreach resource, both for European Meetings in general but also as a resource within the on-line course. Please contact Julia if you are interested in making it available in your language.

In the next issue of *Among Friends*, Michael Eccles and Julia Ryberg will be able to report from the **Woodbrooke-on-the-Road** in Tbilisi, Georgia, which is being held 24-25 October.

**The Good Lives Project** is a brand new online blog updated by Pam Lunn, Good Lives Programme Leader. Pam aims to update the blog weekly or fortnightly; topics already covered including the recent *Zero Growth Economy* conference in London, the question of global population, and spiritual and theological questions that arise from sustainability work. Access is not limited to people in Britain - please join in from wherever you are, if you can read and write English. If you haven't got one of the online accounts that permits you to post comments, you can email your comment to Pam (pam.lunn@woodbrooke.org.uk) and she can post them for you. The blog can be accessed by visiting [www.woodbrookegoodlives.blogspot.com](http://www.woodbrookegoodlives.blogspot.com)

Late October saw us welcome Sister Annabel Laity back to Woodbrooke for what is becoming an annual autumn Buddhist retreat with members of Thich Nhat Hanh's community from Plum Village, France. Taking place on 19-23 October this year, **Mindfully Together** was run as a residential course where guests practiced mindfulness and meditation. Sister Annabel has become director of the new *European Institute of Applied Buddhism* in Germany, a practical initiative that will be of real interest to Friends. This retreat is one of many run during the year at Woodbrooke. Visit [www.woodbrooke.org.uk/retreats](http://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/retreats) for full information.

In 2009, Friends from Germany and Russia completed the 2-year **Equipping for Ministry** course. We are pleased to have Friends from Sweden and Finland joining the 2010-12 group. The course requires a lot of commitment, including travel to Birmingham 3 or 4 times a year, but the rewards are high - for the individual Friends themselves, for their local Quaker groups, and for the British participants in the course who benefit from wider European perspectives. The framework of the course helps people to deepen their understanding of Quaker belief and witness, to deepen their personal spiritual practice and to share with others in seeking how to live faithfully as a Quaker in their own context.

Highlights of **Courses & Events 2010** include: *Early Quaker History: a Friendly introduction* (26 – 28 February), *The Easter Story: unfolding the drama* (29 – 31 March), *Encountering the Seed: a time for reflection* (12 – 15 April), *The Challenge of the Peace Churches* (21 – 23 May), *'Once a Catholic'...now a Quaker* (10 – 13 June) and *Leading from Within: spirituality and leadership* (13 – 18 June). To view the full course programme or to request a brochure, visit [www.woodbrooke.org.uk](http://www.woodbrooke.org.uk)

## Looking ahead:

*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](mailto:julia.ryberg@woodbrooke.org.uk) or +46 (0)175-715 30. See [www.woodbrooke.org.uk](http://www.woodbrooke.org.uk) for general information and to request a course brochure.*



## EMEYF Events

### Annual Meeting

Venue:  
Brussels, Belgium

Dates:  
6-8 November 2009

#### Contact:

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# European and Middle East Young Friends

<http://emeyf.quaker.eu.org>

## Silence



In the silence the outward differences between people lose their meaning. It gives everyone a space to stand up and speak (and, ideally, another friend has time to translate it to the others...). When we gather in a circle our noses inwards, we turn to each other and to the Light.

The same goes for Quaker business meetings. I feel that the worshipfulness is important in order to get the business done successfully. The silent moment gives a chance to each of us to shake off the heavy burdens we maybe carried on our shoulders when arriving, and to turn our eyes to each other and to our common

God, who hears our knocking and answers in His way to who has some patience to see and hear... There's hope that the loving God will guide us as a community always back to the track of love, even in the everyday decide-making of a business-meeting.

On a personal level I most clearly recognize the value of the silence when it lacks from me the most. Useless thoughts keep wondering in my mind, it's difficult to concentrate, and negative feelings gain more ground in me. Trust in life in the hands of my Lord is replaced by unnecessary worrying. But in the silence I can let all those burdens go, and let peace, trust and thankfulness increase in their place, and maybe for a moment stop contemplating my own navel and instead remember warmly those present and my relatives, friends and further neighbours and pray for them. To search, knock, hear answers and notice where the door opens.

*Aino Versanen*

Date for your diary

**EMEYF Spring Gathering 2010**

**2-9th April 2010**

Moyallon Centre, Northern Ireland

# The Way of the Child

*Jaana Erkkilä of Finland Yearly Meeting writes:*

*The Way of the Child* was the name of the week-end course held at Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre in March 2009. The course was intended for children and their parents, as well as for members of religious communities who are responsible for children's and youth activities. Micke and I had the opportunity of participating in the course with aid from the Catchpool Fund and we were in fact the only participants from outside Britain.

The leaders of the weekend were Wynn McGregor and Sheila Hoyer from the United States. Wynn herself is a Presbyterian Pastor and Sheila an Evangelical Quaker working with youths and children. The majority of those on the course were Liberal Quakers, a few belonging to other churches. So everyone who has been involved either by direct contact or through literature with Evangelical Friends knows that liberal and Evangelical Quakers differ over Christian terminology and language. So right away during the course introduction we were primed to be involved with open minds and without getting bogged down in linguistic expressions. *"The Way of the Child"* method has been tried out in different Christian churches – Methodists, Baptists, Episcopalian and Presbyterian churches, as well as Evangelical Friends Churches. Surely now too amongst British Liberal Quakers, as people seemed to become interested in this way of leading children into contact with God.

What is *"The way of the Child"* then really? The Way of the Child: helping children to experience God concentrates on supporting the spiritual growth of children. The programme is based on the following ideas:

- Children have an innate connection to God
- Children are naturally open to mystery
- Children have an incredible capacity to feel respect
- Children are receptive
- Children love what is real
- Children are admirably humble

According to Wynn McGregor there are two different sides to Christian upbringing, an intellectual side and a side that is developed. *"The Way of the Child"* offers the chance to experience God by meditating in the silence through different exercises. It is a time away from the hubbub and it offers the chance to try out different ways to become silent and concentrate on spiritual questions. The leader has a great bearing on how well the children's session goes. It is thus important that the leader prepares spiritually on a daily basis for the weekly silent time. Supervising children, like each adult's participation in Meeting for Worship, demands that one goes with heart and mind prepared. It is a matter of a different kind of pilgrimage or spiritual journey with children.

During the week-end we discussed a lot as adults how little Quakers speak with children, their own and those of others, about their spiritual views. In many families the Family Meeting for Worship are past history and discussing religion is shunned. Somehow we believe that the children themselves should absorb spirituality from our way of living, or from the weekly silent meetings, where they are held. One participant pointed out that if we don't offer our children other values or information about the invisible spirit floating in the air, then there are always other communities, both spiritual and secular, which have something to offer in an easily assimilable form. At certain times of life a person more actively than others a spiritual philosophy and so it would really be important than we would have then something to give. It would be important that our children at least know what we believe and why.

If anyone is interested in reading more about *"The way of the Child"* then I have literature and handbooks which describe how to go on that way; both from the point of view of the practicalities as well as far as theological content is concerned.

Information is also available on the web: <http://www.upperroom.org/companions/wayofthechild.asp>

*First printed in Finland Quaker Newsletter 4/2009*

## Diary Dates 2009/2010

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

More dates for 2009 available on the website: [www.fwccemes.org](http://www.fwccemes.org) Please send items for inclusion in the diary to Marisa Johnson at [emes@fwcc.quaker.org](mailto:emes@fwcc.quaker.org)  
6th March 2010: Ramallah Meeting House Centenary:

Information from [ficr@palnet.com](mailto:ficr@palnet.com)

### 19-21 March 2010: German Speaking Gathering in Lindenberg

Information from [k.mangels@gmx.de](mailto:k.mangels@gmx.de)

### 1-4 April 2010: EMES Annual Meeting 2010, Bonn-Venusberg

Information from [emes@fwcc.quaker.org](mailto:emes@fwcc.quaker.org)

### 8-11 April 2010: Ireland Yearly Meeting, Friends School Lisburn, Co. Antrim

Information from [office@quakers-in-ireland.ie](mailto:office@quakers-in-ireland.ie)

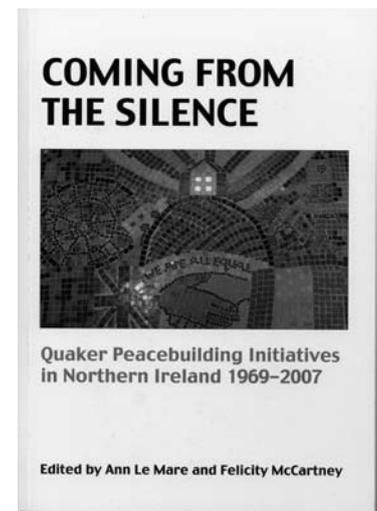
### 14 July - 13 August 2010 Quaker Youth Pilgrimage 2010

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>.

Quakers have had a long history of involvement in peace and relief work in many parts of the world. During the Troubles in Northern Ireland Quakers were involved in a series of projects. 'Coming from the Silence' describes the work of four major projects and a number of smaller initiatives taking place

between 1969 and 2007. It sets the work in a wider Quaker context and analyses it from an international development perspective. The four major projects described are: Quaker House, a conciliation project based in Belfast; the Ulster Quaker Service Committee, a family support service working initially at Maze/Long Kesh prison; the Centre for Neighbourhood Development, a Belfast based community development agency; and the Quaker Peace Education Project, a Derry based initiative working mainly with children and young people.

Quaker meetings are traditionally periods of silent worship. From this silence came a range of Quaker action in Northern Ireland. This book illustrates the rich variety of action Quakers have been involved in over the last forty years.



**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** 117: 1 February 2010**