

FWCC
FRIENDS
WORLD
COMMITTEE
FOR
CONSULTATION



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FWCC/EMES Annual Report 2004

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What is FWCC/EMES?

Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) was set up at the 1937 World Conference of Friends in Swarthmore, Pennsylvania. Its purpose is 'to facilitate loving understanding of diversities among Friends while we discover together, with God's help, our common spiritual ground; and to facilitate full expression of our Friends' testimonies in the world'. Representatives, appointed by the affiliated Yearly Meeting and groups, meet once every three years at Triennials in different parts of the world. They aim to provide links between Friends as they seek to perceive God's will more clearly, so that they may more effectively make their corporate witness. An Interim Committee meets annually to continue FWCC's decision-making processes and guide the work of the staff between Triennial Meetings on behalf of Friends.

The World Office in London is the centre of worldwide communications for FWCC. Its staff help organise Triennial Meetings and other gatherings and maintain contact with the work of the four Sections and the Quaker United Nations Offices. The International Membership programme links isolated Friends and worship groups around the world to the family of Friends. By means of staff travel, correspondence and publications, the office seeks to help Friends to gain a better understanding of the worldwide character of the Society of Friends and its vocation in the world.

Europe and Middle East Section

The FWCC Europe & Middle East Section (EMES) was established in 1938 and now consists of 11 Yearly Meetings, several Monthly Meetings and other smaller national groups. Events such as the Annual Meeting, the International Family Gathering, border meetings, seminars, peace and service consultations, the Quaker Youth Pilgrimage (in cooperation with the Section of the Americas), and other activities, encourage mutual respect and trust, leading towards greater involvement of Friends. A small Executive Committee, assisted by a part-time Executive Secretary, ensures communication within the Section and with other Quaker bodies and individual Friends. A team of Visiting Friends has also been appointed to travel in the ministry within the Section. Among many different interests, the Section also focuses on justice, peace and service issues.

The Europe & Middle East Young Friends (EMEYF) is well-established, cooperating within the Section but remaining fully autonomous.

Some Quaker Addresses in Europe

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From Your EMES Clerk

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 issues of importance in life, like religion, community and a sense of belonging. My parents come from a very pious, Catholic, 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 Boechout, 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 (religion-based) 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 the 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 that we were doing the right thing in the spirit of my parents. One's childhood 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 the 'older' European Quaker Meetings are children of the 1960s, and the 1960s have become a mind space too. Many of us in the '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 from 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 2004 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 the SNAP for a year or so, and report back to our FWCC Annual Gathering 2006 with a renewed vision?

The FWCC Interim Committee, a body composed of the FWCC Clerk and the Clerks of the four FWCC Sections, successfully negotiated a new constitution that will satisfy the Charity Commission for England and Wales. One of the requirements was that the Interim Committee changed its name to **FWCC Central Executive Committee**. The composition and the responsibilities of the committee remain largely the same.

New is the **FWCC International Finance Committee**, whose responsibilities include investments, the triennial budget, communications about finances with interested Friends, trends in finances globally that may effect FWCC's financial wellbeing and monitoring finances in relation to the budget and income, as well as evaluating various ways of generating revenue. As FWCC/EMES treasurer, Laurie Naumann has agreed to serve on the International Finance Committee.

Looking at the activities of the world body of Friends, I am particularly grateful for the work of the EMES Visiting Friends over the past years, as they are providing personal pastoral care and learning opportunities when invited to meetings and groups in Europe. Our Executive Secretary Bronwyn Harwood travelled to Ramallah in Palestine, concentrating much of her energy on the EMES responsibility for the Children's Play Centre in the al-Amari Camp, and to Brummana in Lebanon, as well as to Moscow MM and to Friends House Moscow Board Meetings. The Section wishes Violet Zaru, who retired recently after many years of devoted service to the Play Centre, a time of rest and peace.

Anita Wuyts

From Your EMES Executive Secretary

Visiting Friends

The new Visiting Friend programme, agreed at the Annual Meeting in 2003, really got underway in 2004. It greatly extends the capacity of EMES to respond to the requests for visits and support from smaller Yearly Meetings and groups and isolated Friends. David Blamires has been visiting Friends in Finland; Diana Lampen has been meeting with Danish Friends; Ute Caspers attended the Baltic Gathering and is establishing links with small groups in the Baltic States in particular, Tony and Moira Fitt visited Friends in the Czech Republic and have agreed to extend their links to Friends in Hungary and others in Central Europe and Elizabeth Morris joined the group during the year and visited and is in touch with Friends in Spain. Unfortunately there were difficulties in 2004 for the Friend appointed to visit Moscow in getting a visit arranged and now for personal reasons she has had to withdraw from the scheme.

Executive Secretary Travel

Space does not permit me to report on all my own travels so I will just focus on three visits. In June I made an extended visit to the Middle East which included not only visits to Friends in Ramallah and Brummana but also visits to AFSC (American Friends Service Committee) workers in Jerusalem and Amman. Whilst in Ramallah I attended the official opening of the new play centre premises in the al-Amari Camp (provided by UNWRA) and saw the progress made on the refurbishment of the old Meeting House and heard of the evolving plans for its use as an International Centre for Peace and Reconciliation. It was good to find Friends and the Friends High School in Brummana in good heart and rejoicing in re-establishing international links.

The Baltic Friends Meeting in Lithuania was the last to be organised by Hans Aaen of Denmark Yearly Meeting. After his 20 years of devotion to bringing together Friends from East and West in such gatherings it is good that the final meeting he organised should prove so significant. For the first time Friends and enquirers from Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, St. Petersburg, Poland and Belarus were all in one place together. These Friends from the Eastern Baltic countries have sustained the link established at the gathering and are planning their next meeting for April 2005.

My visit to Moscow in early November was a visit of three parts. Firstly: the Friends House Moscow Board Meeting. As Executive Secretary I am ex-officio on the Board but this was the first time I had managed to attend the Annual Board Meeting. I learnt a great deal in a few days, I am impressed by the range of work undertaken on a low budget, and by the fund-raising efforts of individual Friends in the USA and UK in particular. Secondly: Moscow Monthly Meeting. Although it was not possible for me to have a special meeting with the group I met a number of members or attenders individually and had the help of an interpreter where needed. These Friends gave me an impression of the breadth and depth of spiritual experience within the meeting and I was very

grateful to them for this time of sharing. The third part of my visit was to a gathering for enquirers held in Electrostal (50 Km outside Moscow). Friends in Russia are finding interest in Quakerism both through their own personal contacts and increasingly from contacts through the Russian Quaker website.

Other significant events in the EMES calendar are those which provide opportunities for Friends to cross borders, to worship together, to share experience and to work together. In 2004 they included the Annual Peace and Service Consultation (administered by the EMES Executive Secretary) and the various Border Meetings (which receive some financial support through the EMES John Warder Fund).

The EMES Office

Back at home in Edinburgh there have been major changes during the course of the year in the way we work. I started alone; then following the Annual Meeting was delighted to have Anna Dunford assisting me for two days per week. Her appointment as World Gathering of Young Friends administrator, starting in July brought further changes. She was able to continue both commitments part-time but in 2005 will need to commit all of her attention to the WGYF. The EMES office has been blessed with the help of a number of Young Friends and in particular Jonathan Riddell is to be thanked for his major contribution, all on a voluntary basis, in designing and maintaining the much improved EMES website. It has been fortunate that, as our family has long since 'flown the nest', Bob and I have been able to free up extra office space in the house and we count it a privilege to be hosting the World Gathering of Young Friends Office.

During 2004 the size and scope of the EMES newsletter, *Among Friends*, grew. This aspect of the communications work of EMES seems important but getting the balance between time available and amount of work to be done is not easy. We plan a review, and a survey of readers' views, of *Among Friends* during 2005 to help determine future policy.

As I come to the end of my first triennium as Executive Secretary I have been reflecting on the experience, on the reasons for the existence of the European and Middle East Section of the Friends World Committee for Consultation, and on what the future might hold. Sometimes people say: EMES should do something about x or be involved in y. But what is EMES? Certainly not just the Executive Secretary, nor the Executive Committee; not even the gathered representatives at the Annual Meeting EMES is all Friends in Europe and the Middle East. I think this is important. The more Friends have a sense of these connections, the more we can be mutually supportive, the more we can learn from one another and (of particular importance to the isolated Friends, new enquirers and small groups unconnected to any Quaker structure other than FWCC/EMES) the more we can develop spiritual community which nurtures and sustains Friends wherever they live or work.

Bronwyn Harwood

Note

This Annual report has a few new entries: Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre and Quaker Voluntary Action – not programmes of EMES but Quaker organisations in Europe which usually send a representative to the Annual Meeting and Church and Peace to which EMES appointed representatives at the Annual Meeting in 2004 and which is currently the main focus for ecumenical links at Section level.

Reports from Yearly Meetings and Groups

Austria Quarterly Meeting

Our small group in Vienna carried on much as before, together with our slowly evolving round of attenders. The year rang out with the joyous visit of Hungarian Friends.

Our monthly Open House continued. Among its themes were ‘Women in Quaker History’, ‘Dialog with Muslims’, ‘Development of Religion Following the Needs of Time’, ‘Terror’, and ‘Quaker Engagement and Relief in Austria between World Wars I and II’. The Open House is also a challenge to ourselves to become better examples of what we mean to offer.

We are helping to coordinate the 100th anniversary of the Nobel Peace Prize given to Bertha von Suttner (see www.berthavonsuttner2005.info).

Friends from German Yearly Meeting gathered in Vienna in September to seek their vision of a Quaker future and to resolve a conflict around participation of the Society in other organisations active for peace. The intense three-day experience led to better understanding of how both holding on and reaching out are, together, the life of any group.

Ewald Eichler

Belgium and Luxembourg Monthly Meeting

This year for us has been marked by meetings for remembrance. Of particular concern for EMES, Alan Barber, a former clerk of our meeting, died suddenly and unexpectedly last spring. Many of you will have known Alan Barber as he was active in EMES affairs. For us he was a firm Friend. While we are rightly shocked and awed by the sheer numbers of people slaughtered across the world, death in our own immediate circles affects us intimately and brings us in clear and unavoidable confrontation with our own mortality.

Alan Barber was very much involved on the part of meeting with the Sufis in Brussels, involvement which over the last few years immunized many of us in meeting against generalizations about Islam. We learned more about the variegated reality of Islam at the very excellent Border Meeting held this year by Dutch Friends. The rich philosophical, theological, legal, mystical, and esoteric traditions of the world of Islam have much to offer our too often isolated and insulated world views.

We are pleased to report that our meeting's primary concern, the Quaker Council of European Affairs, is thriving. See www.quaker.org/qcea to find out what the Council is doing. Democracy is an empty word, readily abused by demagogues, unless we contribute to its processes. The recent development of the 'civil society' as the vehicle for effective dialogue with those who actually decide the shape of our societies gives us a way to voice our concerns. Through organizations like the Quaker Council for European Affairs, we can take advantage of the civil-society structure.

We commenced systematic consideration and discussion of the *Advices and Queries*. Doubtless other meetings accept this discipline routinely, but it had fallen into disuse among us. We find it most helpful.

Edward Haasl

Britain Yearly Meeting

It may come as a surprise to members of small yearly meetings in the European and Middle East Section of FWCC that Britain YM experiences many of their problems too. The state of the world and pressures on the lives of individuals bear down heavily on our Quaker lives. It is not easy for nominations committees to find Friends to serve our Society and do the things that we should like to engage in. The current legal requirements on people who work with children and young people, for example, are particularly stringent and have resulted in at least one summer school having to be cancelled through insufficient numbers of adult volunteers.

It may be that our current Quaker organization demands too much from our membership, both in time and in personal commitment. A committee known as RECAST is looking at ways of simplifying the ways in which our various meetings and national committees relate to each other so as to free up energies and creativity. Suggestions are also being made for the vocabulary we use about ourselves to be more in touch with current times, including more use of 'Quaker' and less of 'Friends'. Meeting for Sufferings is also grappling with another problem posed by new legal requirements: the duties of trusteeship for charitable bodies. The government is quite properly concerned about the running of institutions that have charitable status and enjoy certain privileges.

This past year saw Meeting for Sufferings decide to close the Quaker International Centre and lease Courtauld House, the building that it and FWCC World Office occupied, to a private university for 25 years. This involved long and fraught discussions, and some Friends were unhappy at both the process and the actual decision. However, QIC, though valued by many visiting Friends, had for many years not been fulfilling its aims, one of which was outreach to students and the local community. By contrast, Quaker Quest, a concentrated outreach programme organized by London Friends on a weekly basis at Friends House, is proving itself to be a vibrant, inspiring method of making Quakerism known to the general public. The idea is being taken up by Friends

in other parts of the country. Woodbrooke's 'Hearts and Minds Prepared' course is proving of much value to many meetings. We are glad that FWCC world Office is finding its new space within Friends House satisfactory.

Quakers in Britain are well served by our dedicated national staff at Friends House in London and by the many others who care for our meetings and meeting houses up and down the country. In the nature of things some meetings thrive and others struggle, while perhaps the majority maintain a noticeable Quaker presence in their area. Both individual Friends and groups with particular concerns continue to challenge and inspire us. In all of this, organizations such as Woodbrooke, Charney Manor, Glenthorne, Swarthmoor Hall, Lattendales, Claridge House, the Quaker Tapestry and the various Quaker periodicals play an important role.

David Blamires

Denmark Yearly Meeting

A highlight of the past year has been having Diana Lampen as 'Visiting Friend' among Danish Friends, arranged through EMES. We are very thankful for this opportunity to share our hopes and fears with an experienced Friend, through whom we have found that many of the answers can be found within ourselves in the Quaker group. Diana has led us through workshops with 'Experiment with Light' and this has created a deeper understanding that activities starts from within.

In January, February and March this year we have opened up for activities at our Quaker Centre every Wednesday night. Each month the first Wednesday will have an open door for visitors. The second Wednesday concentrates on a study group. The third Wednesday is dedicated to music and meditation. On the fourth Wednesday there are experiments with Quaker worship. A leaflet has been produced giving information about the activities in the Quaker Centre and a few statements about the Quakers. The leaflet has been distributed to a variety of places. Until now not many have responded and that has taught us to be patient! Diana will also share her wide experience, for instance, in areas with conflict and 'Understanding Anger and the Challenge of Transforming It'. This will be arranged together with other groups and held at a public place. Even if newcomers have been few, local Friends have turned up every Wednesday night. This has given the group new vitality and more courage to tackle our problem of belonging to an ageing group.

Hjerre Faurschou-Hviid

Finland Yearly Meeting

2004 usually saw between 2 and 6 people attending Meeting for Worship in Helsinki on Sundays and sometimes more. There are also worshipping groups meeting in Tampere and Oulu. It is our delight that there are currently some eager young people attending the meetings in Tampere. High energy comes when we all have occasion to meet together. We were grateful to have our Visiting Friend, David Blamires, join 15 of us, with other international visitors for Yearly Meeting in June.

David Blamires also joined us in November 2004 and facilitated a weekend meeting of Friends focused on knowing one another more deeply. This was a tender weekend in which we were able to spend time with each other in a much less hurried way than we normally do. We were able to get to know some of each other's 'everyday lives' as well as our feelings towards, and experiences of, Quakerism in general and our Finnish Friends' family in particular. We hope we can arrange more of this kind of gentle gathering and growing together in the future.

Over the past year we accepted 1 Young Friend into membership, and 1 resignation from membership, and 1 Friend died. Now we total 13 members and about 40 attenders. We have welcomed a number of new regular attenders and are always glad to see long term friends who can only make Meeting for Worship irregularly.

Thanks to financial support from various sources we have been able to connect with Friends beyond Finland and reach out to inquirers in Finland. For example, individuals have traveled to attend some other Yearly Meetings, the FWCC Triennial World Gathering, and the meeting on Universalism. *Advices and Queries* has been translated into Finnish and printed, and the Finnish brochure, whose title in English is 'Introduction to Friends', has been updated and reprinted. These small publications are very valuable to be able to offer to enquirers.

We continue to produce two editions per year of the newsletter, *Kveekariuutiset* (Quaker News) mainly in Finnish with some articles in English. The newsletter is sent to approximately 60 households and remains a major form of outreach. There is also a moderated e-mail discussion list called 'Kveekarit' (Finnish for 'Quakers') where active discussion of Quaker concerns occurs mainly in Finnish. There are currently 41 subscribers, not all directly associated with our meeting, and not all in Finland. Only subscribers to the list can contribute or access the archive of e-mail discussion. Our Friend, Antti Alhonsaari has also written in Finnish a long history of Friends in Finland. We are selling this for 10 euros per copy.

Anne Herbert

France Yearly Meeting

France Yearly Meeting met last August for their 80th meeting in the beautiful area of Conquerac where we shared the pleasure of meeting, talking, worshipping, singing and dancing together. The theme was 'Non-Violent Resolution of Conflicts', a theme which helped us all look deeper within and showed us ways in which we can claim responsibility for our reactions to conflict. The workshops were led by three British Friends and were well received.

This year the Peace Committee, and particularly Jean Henriette Louis from the Quaker Centre in Paris, have been actively involved in helping with the coordination of the International Decade for Peace that took place at La Villette in Paris in June. The French Quakers had a stand there and showed documents and books from different Quaker organizations. We hope that next year we will be able to create an international stand that shows the actions of Quakers in their peace work all over the world. Joy and Maarten Bronkhorst offered workshops on the theme of non-violence using clowning and voice work.

The big arms sale, Eurosatory, took place as usual and Yvonne Kressman personally protested at this event. We look forward to European participation in 2006.

Work continues at the Maison Quaker at Congenies. The house has been used for meetings, retreats and also a family camp. The house was opened for the day of the local patrimoine and received over 100 visitors.

This year a delegate was sent to the Triennial in New Zealand. The experience was deeply enriching. It helped us to become aware of how Friends all over the world are working and the importance of being part of this large family.

A young French Friend went to the Junior Yearly Meeting in Britain last spring, and European Young Friends met in Brittany this year for the Spring Gathering in a beautiful place by the sea. There are more Young Friends emerging and one of the attendees from Brittany has become actively involved in helping to organise the next Young Friends Spring Gathering, and will be participating in the World Gathering in August.

New groups are springing up with the influx of British residents moving to France and Brittany, maybe we will be able to have meetings without driving 100 Km!

Francoise Tomlin has now finished her term as clerk and we welcome Axel Jensen who was previously the Secretary for Peace. Maarten Bronkhorst will take on that role and Anton van der Wissel will be the adjoint clerk supporting Axel.

Joy Liengaard

German Yearly Meeting

There have been several famous Quaker botanists, but up until now none of them has described *Quercus Quakerus*, the Quaker Oak, introduced to us by Tony Fitt in his Cary Lecture at Yearly Meeting. For a tree to bear fruits it has to have a healthy root system, planted in well-watered and fertile soil. In examining the roots of Quakerism, and their dependence on the fact of Jesus' life, Tony shed light on questions concerning us today; such as the relationship between worship and activity, and between traditional and modern interpretations of the Bible.

193 members and attenders, and 39 'under-18s' attended Yearly Meeting, and it was enriched by the presence of 21 visitors from abroad. The number in membership actually rose (by 1) to 275. A highlight was welcoming 10 new Friends into membership. But we are still a very small group of people. It becomes increasingly difficult to find Friends with time and energy to take up office, particularly clerkship. A working group has been set up to look into ways of streamlining and centralising office work, so that clerks can spend less time gluing envelopes and more time on true clerkship. Those who attended the seminar on clerkship in May learned more about what makes a good clerk, and recommended that such seminars should be held more often.

Yearly Meeting presented so many highlights that it was often hard to choose which activity to attend. Our horizons were broadened by enthusiastic descriptions and a slide show of the Triennial and of New Zealand. Just as entertaining and inspiring were Young Friends (who were clad in bright yellow 'Inner Light' T-shirts) giving slide shows of their canoeing holidays in Germany and Belarus. Keeping a flotilla of canoes on course would seem to call for some of the same skills required for keeping Quakerism on course, and Young Friends are learning these skills. A long-term consideration of how we manage our finances, and of what our priorities should be, has also demonstrated our faith in the future of Quakerism here.

The pain caused by the long-lasting conflict about the membership of Friends' sub-committees in outside organisations is still felt. But the effort, fantasy and love applied to the work of transforming this conflict are bearing fruit, and there is confidence that we can move forward.

On what other occasions do Friends meet? Very few local meetings now have weekly Sunday worship. Some have reduced the frequency of Sunday meetings, but try to meet regularly on a weekday evening. This suits some Friends but still doesn't solve the problem of helping older, less mobile Friends to attend. Regional meetings, such as our 'Bezirksversammlungen', some of them one-day affairs, and some over a weekend, are an important focus of our activities. Themes have included 'Personal Testimonies', 'Individual Spiritual Journeys', 'Conflict Resolution', 'The Middle East', 'The Triennial', and 'Faith and Practice'; often accompanied by an exciting programme for the children, encouraging them to feel that they belong.

In addition, Friends have reported how much they have gained and been challenged at the seminars, 'Living with Illness, and Facing Dying and Death', and the Peace Committee's 'Non-Violent Ways of Approaching the Problem of Terrorism'.

International contacts are flourishing. Two young people attended the Youth Pilgrimage, and wrote enthusiastic reports. Germany and Austria have many borders, and joint meetings were held with our neighbours to the North, to the South, to the East and to the West.

There is indeed hope that *Quercus Quakerus* will not only survive but will continue to bear fruit.

Janet Kreysa

Hungary, Budapest Worship Group

Although we are still small in number, there is life and vigour in our worship group. In the course of the year three new attenders have joined us. One of them is a Young Friend, who managed to attend the Brussels Meeting of Young Friends and really felt she belonged.

Since September we have had Meetings for Learning once a month in addition to our monthly meetings for worship. We are studying the handouts for Hearts and Minds in the framework of worship-sharing.

We are hosting next year's Central European Regional Meeting in Taksony, near Budapest, on an island of the Danube on 3-5 June 2005. Our speakers will include Brian Phillips, Tony Fitt and Moira Fitt. More information is available via eastland.zsuzsa@freemail.hu. We are going to invite university students to the talks so as not to hide our treasure under a bushel. As a follow-up to the Meeting, on 6 June some 20 of the participants will be working for Habitat for Humanity in the neighbouring village of Dunavarsány.

We are keeping in touch with our twin group in Wem. E-mail makes it so much easier to bridge the distance and prayer knows no distances.

At the invitation of Friends in Vienna we had a lovely Quaker Christmas together on 19 December sharing worship and lunch and exchanging small gifts.

We are getting closer to one another and building new bridges through visiting Friends.

Zsuzsa Eastland

Ireland Yearly Meeting

This year, Quakers have marked 350 years since the first Meetings for Worship were held in Ireland. We launched our celebrations at a special residential Yearly Meeting in April. The Quaker Youth Theatre performed a play in a local theatre about the arrival of Friends in Ireland, and our Public Lecturer, Martin Lynn, challenged us to reclaim for ourselves the spiritual fervour of early Friends.

Yearly Meeting marked the beginning of local activities across the country: meetings organised outreach activities, Open Days, plays, talks and tree-planting. We estimate that more than 2,000 people attended the events overall and there was also coverage of Quakers in the Irish media. The Irish government issued a stamp to commemorate the anniversary and our Historical Committee was hosted at the official residence of the Irish President to present her a copy of a book published in 2004, *Quaker Meetings Houses of Ireland*.

We found that our efforts during the year strengthened and refreshed us as a community, as well as raising awareness of Friends among the wider population. It is too soon to tell what the long term harvest from seeds grown this year will be, but we are delighted to welcome some new attenders at some of our meetings, and a new regular Meeting for Worship, held in County Tipperary. More information on the anniversary year is available from the Yearly Meeting.

Irish Friends are also preparing to move their headquarters early in 2005. We will be leaving our premises near Dublin city centre and moving to the outskirts, along with the Quaker-run Bloomfield Hospital where the elderly are cared for. The new 'Quaker House' will be substantially larger than our current headquarters, and it challenges us to consider how we make best use of the new space. Building work is also due to commence in 2005 on a new residential centre at Moyallon in Northern Ireland. Support from Friends in Ireland and beyond means that we will be able to offer a neutral venue for community groups, church and youth organisations as well as all kinds of Quaker groups.

Ireland Yearly Meeting continues to consider the drafting of a new book of Christian experience. The emphasis in 2004 has been on sharing our views between different meetings, so that we gain a richer understanding of the range of views in our Yearly Meeting. A second draft will be discussed at Yearly Meeting in 2005.

As the year closes, we give thanks for the special activities in 2004 and just as important, the ongoing efforts of Friends in organising gatherings, activities for young people and the business of caring for our meetings and our communities.

Christine McCartney

Middle East Yearly Meeting, Brummana Monthly Meeting

The meeting continues its witness through its weekly Meeting for Worship, utilising the reception room in the administrative block at Brummana High School. The school and the meeting remain inextricably linked, both spiritually and physically. The school uses the large meeting house for its assemblies and gatherings, primarily for the Upper School, but it is also used for other myriad events relevant to the well being of the school; a usage that reflects the fact that Quaker meeting houses are for general usage and not just confined to worship. At the same time members of the meeting remain closely involved both in the management of the school, and in their concern for its general well-being and its continued success and its contribution to the life of the surrounding villages, Lebanon and neighbouring countries. The Monthly Meeting is very much aware of its own history and of the service and responsibilities which emanate from this and to which it seeks to remain true.

Weekly worship with its small group of faithful members is strengthened by the continual international presence in the country. At this time there are three Friends from Britain working at the school, whilst Australia, the United States and Germany are regularly represented at worship, not to mention the irregular appearance of Friends from other parts of the world. This infusion is important to the meeting, as it ensures that its own worship is enriched and contact is maintained with the world family of Friends. A welcome cup of coffee or tea at the home of Renee Baz, the oldest member of the meeting, always follows Sunday meeting and allows not only for relaxed discussion but helps build friendships and the exchange of general news and views.

Since September the Friends working at the school have organised a weekly short Meeting of Worship for the staff, and this innovation allows the school to recognise links to its parentage. Brummana Friends have gladly supported this venture, recognising that this is also a small piece of outreach, which has always proved difficult in a country where almost everything is defined by religious affiliation and where much activity and status is based on adherence to the various faith communities. It is for this reason that the Monthly Meeting can use the school to maintain its presence and authority and ensure that Quakers touch upon the life of the country.

During the last three months the meeting has been able to arrange for the first time for some time, two Meetings for Learning. The first looked at issues of diversity of belief amongst Friends and the second was on our understanding of the nature and centrality of silence in worship; two valuable gatherings serving to remind members of the Monthly Meeting that such assemblies are important if the spiritual life of the meeting is to be sustained. The intention is that these will continue.

The Monthly Meeting is also aware that it needs to look closely at its own state of health as a worshipping community, and the old question, 'How doth truth prosper amongst you?' remains a challenge and a reminder that the Quaker world has to be alive to the changing environment around it. Here in the Middle East, Brummana Monthly Meet-

ing is very saddened by the human sufferings brought about by conflicts and wars, old and new, but in this they find a greater need to maintain their witness.

Sabah Baz

Middle East Yearly Meeting, Ramallah Monthly Meeting

The old Meeting House in the centre of Ramallah was re-opened for worship in November 2004 and plans are underway for its use as the International Friends Centre in Ramallah. A vision statement has been drawn up:

Our Centre exists to unite in one place:

- a space for sacred worship after the manner of Friends to which all are welcome
- a safe environment in which residents of Ramallah can come together to work towards a better future in an atmosphere of faith and hope
- a vehicle through which Friends and other people of goodwill from outside Ramallah can connect with, and provide support to, those in the region who are striving to build a future of peace and justice

To these ends, the International Friends Centre in Ramallah will seek to offer a ministry of hospitality; to create [an] atmosphere of care and respect in which positive, civic and civil discourse can be pursued; and to be a symbol of hope and reconciliation in a region where despair and violence have too often reigned. In all this we seek to express the deepest values and highest aspirations of the Quaker faith.

The year has seen two major events in the life of the Friends Play Centre in the al-Amari Camp. In June after a difficult time in temporary accommodation, the bright new premises attached to the new buildings of the UNWRA Girls School were opened. In September Violet Zaru, who has given faithful service over many years, retired and handed over the role of Director to Muna Khleifi. 43 children registered at the beginning of the year. Three, who have been recognized as having particular musical abilities, have transferred to the Edward Said Musical Kindergarten. Weekly music classes are being provided for all the children at the Play Centre through the Barenboim-Said foundation.

Jean Zaru

Netherlands Yearly Meeting

At our Yearly Meeting in the 'Woodbrookers House' at Barchem we were happy to have Friends representing Britain Yearly Meeting, German Yearly Meeting, Belgium and Luxemburg Monthly Meeting and the Mennonite Peace Group in the Netherlands in our midst. We explored the theme 'And If We Let Our Light Shine...' in a number of

different ways. To illustrate this theme the parable of the talents from Matthew 25:14-30 was read in Afrikaans, a language that has common roots with the present day Dutch language. Then we were all invited to note our own talents on a bright yellow piece of paper in the shape of a sun with eight beams of light. And we were asked to share these talents with one another in small groups. And what a lot of different talents there proved to be found amongst us all! It was an enriching experience.

In the Meeting for Business the FWCC Triennial in New Zealand was reported on. Friends were reminded of the enriching diversity in our world family of Friends. What struck us is the fact that today there are more Friends in the southern hemisphere than there are in the northern and that the Africa Section counts more members than the Section of the Americas. As agreed at Auckland, Friends were urgently asked to increase our Yearly Meeting's contribution to FWCC. This was accepted.

We also discussed the need and possibilities for outreach. One modern means of doing this is to start a Quaker website, which could make us more accessible to (young) enquirers. We do already have such a website, containing a digitalized version of our monthly newsletter, some other publications and general information on Friends in the Netherlands (www.vriendenkring.info).

On Sunday after our Meeting for Worship the children and young people showed us the talents they had been practising during the Yearly Meeting: joyful dances, acrobatic exercises and singing.

Another important occasion this year has been the hosting of this year's continental part of the Quaker Youth Pilgrimage. We enjoyed this very much and learned quite a lot ourselves about seventeenth century Friends in the northern parts of the Netherlands and Germany in the process.

Kees Nieuwerth

Norway Yearly Meeting

The three Monthly Meetings and two active worship groups have had a similar level of activity this year as last. Membership, considering both new members and attrition, is at 146 members, including 24 children. Meeting for Worship has varied between once a month to every Sunday in the various groups, where the Oslo Monthly Meeting has been the most active with 91 members and an average attendance at Sunday Meeting for Worship of 9 persons, and 6 persons at evening worship the first Thursday of most months. The Yearly Meeting was well attended by 83 persons and centered around the theme 'Peace Be with Us – Let the Spirit lead'. Active participation of all ages continues to be a priority during the Yearly Meeting.

The gathering for all ages from October 15-17 with 35 participants was again a success this year. Other activities for families, youths and children have taken on a new form

that is no longer centered around Sunday worship, but rather separate weekend gatherings, often just for families with children, or for youths.

A significant project in 2004 has been a seminar on Universalism to explore Quaker diversity among Nordic Friends. 35 participants gathered for 3 days to discuss the topic. In addition to a special edition of the magazine *Kvekeren* that was devoted to the topic, a publication including the presentations from the seminar and other contributions was produced a few months after the event.

Other Quaker publications in 2004 have included, in addition to the 4 annual journal publications of *Kvekeren*, the book by Pieter Balling, *Lyset på lysestaken* (from *Het Licht op den Kandelaar*, Amsterdam 1662) in Norwegian translation with commentary text from Jon Wetlesen and Inez Boon, and a revised edition of *Advices and Queries* in Norwegian under the title *Råd og Spørsmål*. Further, the clerk for the Yearly Meeting, Hans Eirik Aarek, wrote an article on Quakers from Tromsø (in Northern Norway) which is included in the book *Migrasjon som kultur* (Migration as Culture), as well as contributions to the *Norwegian Biographical Encyclopedia* on Quakers Sigrid Helliesen Lund and Didrik H. Lund.

The working group for the Peace Tax Fund, allowing for economic military objection, gathered enough signatures to obtain a hearing at the local level. The suggestion to present the issue before the Parliament was voted down by the Tønsberg City Council by only one vote. A similar approach is also being attempted in Oslo. The strategy is to increase public support for the issue in order to take the proposal a second time to the Parliament, where the suggestion has already been presented and voted down one time before.

The small family that has been in church sanctuary under the care of the Oslo Monthly Meeting, for almost 3 years, was finally granted legal residency in Norway towards the end of 2004. External contacts have continued as earlier, taking various forms and in cooperation with various Christian and ecumenical groups. Also, visits to our internet pages have increased by 14% in 2004 compared to 2003. School students remain a significant user group of the internet pages.

Quaker Service Norway is devolving two of its long time projects and working to secure functional transitions. The Uganda Change Agent Training project is no longer eligible for state support from Norway, while The Palestinian Early Childhood Education Programme has been granted a final year of support due to the severity of the situation in the region. A new project in the Middle East for children and youths, which will involve partners in both Israel and Palestine, is being researched this year. QSN continues peace-building work in Central Africa and has also strengthened its administration in 2004 with additional accounting assistance in Africa.

In 2004 Norway Yearly Meeting was represented at the Easter meeting of EMES by

Lilian Aarek and Judy Rangnes, who also attended the FWCC Triennial in New Zealand along with Hans Eirik Aarek.

Judy Rangnes and Lilian Aarek

Russia, Moscow Monthly Meeting

In 2004 the Moscow Monthly Meeting was beginning to be more stable. We still have around the same number of members and attenders as before (around 20 people), but people who usually go to our silent prayer by Sundays are more committed to Moscow Meeting. I think that over the last year we have been quite successful in trying to build a warm spiritual community. Some members and attenders from our meeting took part in an outreach retreat in Electrostal, a small town not far from Moscow. This gave us an opportunity to meet Friends from different countries, but also from other regions of Russia. Some of them are looking now to apply for membership of our meeting. Some Moscow Friends worked together on a special publishing project for Chechen children. The idea of this project is to give to Chechen children an opportunity to know about Quaker experience of tolerance, peace and reconciliation. I am very glad to say that this book *Power of Goodness* is now in print. It is to be published in three languages: English, Chechen and Russian.

Mikhail Roshchin

Spain, Barcelona Monthly Meeting

We are in a time of transition; Nancy and Gerard Negelspach, who have sustained the Barcelona Meeting for almost forty years, were obliged to move out of the home in which they had held meeting for so long. At the moment we are meeting once a month in private homes, and finding our way forward.

In November Barcelona Monthly Meeting held a retreat to which Friends from across Spain were invited. We held this weekend in a beautiful modernist retreat house in the countryside north of Barcelona and very much enjoyed this chance to be together, to welcome visitors and inquirers and friends. Elizabeth Morris came to be with us on the instigation of Bronwyn Harwood; she contributed in many ways and we hope to continue our relationship with her. In total there were thirteen of us. Over the weekend we held several Meetings for Worship, discussed what it means to be a Quaker, historically and now, spent a lovely and moving afternoon with Rosa as explained above, sang in Spanish, English and Catalan, and ended with a discussion of plans for the future. Several of the people who came had never been to a Quaker Meeting; others are seeking to further their knowledge of the Quakers, and said that they would be joining us in the future. Several people wished they had been able to make it; overall it was a rich time for us and we hope to repeat it next year, this time with the group of Friends in Madrid.

We plan to have a study weekend in Malaga at the beginning of the year, and to work on the website that has been started to give information about Quakerism in Spanish. At the same time we thought of creating a kind of inquirer's pack in Spanish. If anyone is in Spain or thinking of visiting, please do get in touch via wilson@esade.edu.

Caroline Wilson

Spain, Madrid Worship Group

We have Meeting for Worship, regularly, three times a month (1st, 3rd and 4th Sunday) and a Bible study once a month. We have also recently introduced another Study of the book of *Christian Faith and Practice* of Britain Yearly Meeting, for half an hour before each Meeting for Worship. We have discovered it is a wonderful preparation for worship, and a way to nurture our spirit.

This year our meeting has been blessed with the presence of different Friends that visited us from Germany, USA and Britain. It is several years since we stopped sending our small newsletter *Whispers*, but now we want to rescue the idea of *Whispers* and to share with you our news again.

We want to thank all Friends who wrote to us such moving letters at the time of the bombs in Madrid on March 11, and we pray that 2005 brings the peace that humankind needs so much.

Carmen Alcalde and Josefina Fernandez

Sweden Yearly Meeting

For a couple of years Sweden Yearly Meeting has been focusing on such things as YM structure, church government, and identity. The theme at the YM sessions held in May 2004 was 'Christ and the Quakers'. Six Friends gave talks about their relationship to Christ and then we continued the sharing in smaller groups. The sense of goodwill and listening nurtured our meeting. We are growing not only in spirit but also in numbers: the year 2004 we gained five new members.

Sweden YM had the pleasure of hosting the EMES annual meeting. It was a joyful event which strengthened the bonds between Swedish Friends and other EMES Friends.

Economical matters have been a major issue at the business meetings. For technical reasons we have not been able to balance our books. It is an indication of the good humour which exists in the YM that Swedish Friends have shown great patience with the clerking group bearing the responsibility. The most important thing however, is the growing awareness that the financial state of the YM is untenable in the long run. We are spending much more money than we can afford. We have decided that the growth of the YM has the highest priority when we cut down expenses, but what that means in practice we have yet to find out.

There is a debate going on in Sweden about same-sex marriages and legislation. As it was, in 1999 when Sweden YM revised its church government chapter about marriage, it decided to treat couples equally and use the same terminology, regardless of sex. The clerks issued a note about this, which was published in the biggest Swedish newspaper, *Dagens Nyheter*.

On the Swedish Quakers' website there is a list of Swedish Quaker publications: www.kvakare.se/bokforteckning.shtml

Vilhelm Dahllöf

Switzerland Yearly Meeting

Swiss Friends have had an up-and-down year: several energetic new projects came to life, but we were accompanied by what seemed like an unusual number of losses. Our Friends Madeleine Jequier, Bob Leach, Antoinette Schmitt, Amélie Strub and Michael Royston were all people whose passing will be felt well beyond the borders of Switzerland Yearly Meeting. However, a new generation of younger Friends seems ready to carry us forward; indeed, we hope to send at least one representative to the World Gathering of Young Friends in 2005.

Age or relocation has meant that this year, several Friends have had to lay down tasks they have been performing for many years. The absence of replacements led to some concern about continuing the work of the Yearly Meeting in the future. In the spring we held a retreat dedicated to the theme of our understanding of the Yearly Meeting and our responsibility as members. The retreat involved a continuous 24-hour period of silence, which those who took part found to be a profound and creative experience. Concretely, the retreat led to the setting up of a group looking at the identity (or is it identities?) of SYM and its members. That group continues its work this year.

Over the past couple of years, another group has assembled a history of Swiss Friends, from the beginnings of SYM to the present day. This collective memory now exists as a book that will of course be continually updated.

A highlight of the year was definitely the FWCC Triennial, held in Auckland, New Zealand. Our FWCC representative Jackie Leach Scully, and Edward and Bridget Dommen who were there as interpreters, were able to tell Friends from other places about the experiences of Swiss Quakers, and then to bring a sense of the global nature of Quakerdom back home.

The theme of our Annual Gathering, held as usual over the Pentecost/Whitsun weekend, was the question: 'How do we live out our Quaker beliefs and Quaker traditions today?' Like many other mainland European meetings, Swiss Friends are struggling with the challenges of remaining faithful to our traditional insights while adapting them to a changing world and, very often, our dwindling numbers. We were very fortunate to

have Bronwyn Harwood, FWCC/EMES Executive Secretary, to lead us in an evening's reflection based on her experience of the diversity of European and world Quakerdom. This provided a good basis for our own work over the weekend.

Switzerland Yearly Meeting is very happy to be hosting the FWCC/EMES Annual Meeting in 2005. We will be assembling at Bienenberg, a retreat centre between Basel and Zurich. We hope to see as many representatives from European Yearly Meetings as can be accommodated there! And if you can't visit Switzerland physically, we now have a website, available on www.swiss-quakers.ch. Please come and see us!

Jackie Leach Scully and Fritz Renken

Europe and Middle East Young Friends

This year Young Friends from EMEYF have met on three different occasions; the Spring Gathering, a meeting in Taizé and the Annual Meeting.

The Spring Gathering of 2004 was held in Pornichet in Brittany, France. The theme was 'Peeling an Onion to Build a Community'. Twenty-two people from different countries attended. Different speakers talked about conflict resolution, working in women's prisons and the FWCC Triennial gathering. Activities included (in no particular order) swimming in the sea, long walks on the beach, worship, music, dance and acrobatics. During the Spring Gathering attention was paid also to the World Gathering of Young Friends, which will take place in Lancaster in August 2005. In Pornichet Young Friends watched the WGYF-DVD *Can We All Be Friends?*, which is about the diversity within Quakerism. Participants of the Spring Gathering talked about the difficulties which can arise when meeting Friends with very different beliefs and values from your own and how to deal with this.

In August a group of eight Friends met up in Taizé, an international and ecumenical community in France where during the summer there are about 4,000 young people at a time. The community is led by over a hundred brothers, Catholics or from various Protestant backgrounds, from more than twenty-five nations. People from EMEYF had never met each other here before to be part of the larger Taizé community and for most of us it was our first experience of Taizé. I think many of us were surprised because some of the brothers were so 'Quakerly'. One of the brothers who spoke every morning gave us a real insight into the creation story in Genesis and his explanation made it possible for us to really get something out of that story while being true to our own beliefs. We kept saying to each other 'Brother John is a Quaker; he just doesn't know it yet!' We were also very moved by the worship service in Taizé. These services are very simple, there's a lot of singing, a short scripture reading (both in various languages) and about 10 minutes of silence. To worship in silence with some 4,000 other young people was like one of the best Quaker Meetings which I have ever been too. Albeit short, this

part of the service was deep and meaningful, and it was exciting to see that it was appreciated by such a diverse group of people, who all came from different backgrounds and had different beliefs. Although meeting up in Taizé with other Friends is not an official EMEYF activity, it is hoped that it will be repeated in the future, because all of us there thought it was a wonderful and joyful spiritual experience.

In October we held our Annual Meeting for Business in Quaker House in Brussels. We were delighted not only to have European Friends attending, but also Friends from Australia, America and the Republic of Congo. It was interesting for us to hear about Quaker practice in Congo and to learn about the difficulties which Congolese Friends experience. Because not all Friends attending spoke English we had to translate English into French and vice versa. At our EMEYF Annual Meetings during the past few years we had no longer been used to the need for translation at all times, and although this meant that business was done somewhat slower, we were actually happy about this, because we feel it's very important that Friends feel welcome also if they do not speak English. On Sunday there was a workshop led by two local Friends about their inter-faith experiences. A couple of whom one was a Muslim and one a Jew and both of them attenders from the Quaker Meeting answered our questions about their experience of combining different religions. In the world that we live in these days this was a particularly interesting workshop and we hope that the respect and understanding that this couple had for each other will be as an example in the life of many.

Apart from the gatherings where we meet face to face we keep in touch via e-mail. Especially with Friends who are prevented from being with us physically, e-mail is our main way of communication. We hope that EMEYF is and will continue to be a support for young Friends in isolated places where there are few other Friends.

Anneke Spreij

Quaker Youth Pilgrimage

The Pilgrimage took place July 16-August 13, beginning with homestays with local Friends in Birmingham. A new venue was Woodbrooke, where the group was able to take advantage of the Woodbrooke resources as they got to know each other and made a firm foundation for the continued Pilgrimage. Traditional visits in 1652 Country and a retreat at Barmoor ended the time in England. The Pilgrimage continued to the Netherlands and Germany, visiting Friends there and following in the footsteps of George Fox's journey. We find that the support of other Friends en route, complementing the efforts of the leader team, is essential for the smooth running of the Pilgrimage. Local Friends and QYP committee members at each venue are to be thanked for their efforts.

There were 28 pilgrims from North America and Europe, with participants from Britain, Ireland, Germany, Norway, Russia and Sweden. The American leaders were

Quaker pastors Ken and Pat Thames, and the European leaders were Jane Nicholls and Caroline Evens.

While the Pilgrimage was certainly a success, we wish there had been more Young Friends from the programmed tradition. Each Pilgrimage is a unique event, but the committee strives continually to learn from each Pilgrimage in order to improve on future ones. The work of the committee itself is challenging and increasingly time-consuming, and we are investigating ways to ease the burden on committee members and to meet the new tasks that the Pilgrimage presents, such as improved insurance and safety measures. Current challenges include finding new committee members to replace those who have stepped down and acknowledging that Pilgrimages are increasingly expensive, especially when continental venues are included (an important component, however, of every second Pilgrimage arranged by EMES).

We continue to affirm the value of the Quaker Youth Pilgrimage for the individual soul journeys of the participants and for the equipping of Young Friends for future leadership and ministry within the Religious Society of Friends.

Julia Ryberg, Clerk

Quaker Council for European Affairs

2004 has been a very full year for us, and has allowed us to move from a major focus of managing the organisation to a better balance with project work and we move into 2005 on what feels like a more solid footing.

We were able, during the year, to attend 7 Yearly Meetings and the Meeting of Baltic Friends and have found at all of these a warm welcome and open ears for what we had to report of our work. We hope that the profile of QCEA has now been raised to a point where most Friends in Europe are familiar with QCEA and we are planning to build on this foundation to continue to strengthen our links with Friends throughout Europe, to ensure that our work is fully integrated into the web of Quaker work done by many Friends throughout Europe and beyond.

Programme Development and Work – Highlights in 2004

More detail on the work programme and QCEA events is available on our website: www.quaker.org/qcea

Peace

Our Response to the Militarization of the EU: QCEA took on this issue as follow-up action to our work on the Convention on the Future of Europe. We focussed on lobbying on the issue of Article 40 of the Constitutional Treaty and proposed the setting up of a European Peace Building Agency. We have produced a set of briefing papers. This is now a major focus of our peace work and will continue for the foreseeable future.

Israel/Palestine: QPSW are managing an ecumenical accompaniers' programme for the CTBI (Churches Together in Britain and Ireland). QCEA hosted a series of meetings with key decision makers in Brussels for the accompaniers to address. This took place in January 2004. Subsequently, we have continued a low level of activity on Middle East issues including attendance of relevant conferences, sending lobbying letters at several points to EU decision-makers and making the Middle East one focus for our Study Tour.

Peace Tax: QCEA has incorporated into its work programme, plans to raise the issue of the Peace Tax as a human rights issue with the Council of Europe. We have drafted a resolution to take to the Council of Europe; we presented this at a workshop at the Conscience and Peace Tax International Conference in July 2004 in Brussels; we have amended this resolution in light of comments made there, and we are now preparing to submit this resolution in January 2005.

Terrorism – a Non-Violent Response: The major project we had been planning on this issue has been modified significantly. We are now working on a much smaller scale and are preparing a set of briefing papers on the response of the EU and its Member States to the perceived threat of terrorism. This phase of the project is being done with the assistance of a student intern on short term placement. A second phase of this project will then bring together recent Quaker thinking/writing on this subject and formulate a response to the actions being taken by the EU in the context of a non-violent, pacifist stance.

Human Rights

Asylum and Migration: We have produced a publication setting out both the history of human rights issues in the EU and the current issues facing the EU and its members. We are now working on a set of briefing papers on the current issues on asylum and migration and cooperating with a group of other Christian NGOs.

Criminal Justice: QCEA has worked extensively on issues of criminal justice in the past. The project to examine the conditions of women in prison, the issues this raises for their children, the types of offences women are imprisoned for, the causes of recent sharp rises in numbers of women in prison, and the alternatives being developed in some European countries, has started and we have made progress in the initial research and in drafting and issuing questionnaires to find out more from sources in Governments, among those working in prisons, and NGOs working with prisoners and ex-prisoners.

This work arose at a time when FWCC and QUNO-Geneva had made representations on this issue to the UNHCR and where a UN Committee has commissioned preliminary research into the issues. We are collaborating with QUNO-Geneva on this matter to ensure that the work we both do is coordinated, has maximum impact both at EU level and at UN level, and that it feeds into the current processes at the UN.

Conscientious Objection: We have been able to take forward the work on updating the current state of affairs regarding CO in the Member States of the Council of Europe. The research to update the European section of the WRI publication *Refusing to Bear Arms* is now nearly complete and will be published by QCEA before the end of the year. We expect to launch the report in January at the Council of Europe and subsequently in Brussels. We will undertake relevant lobbying work on the basis of the findings.

Economic Justice

Corporate Social Responsibility: The European Commission started a Multi-Stakeholder Forum on this subject in 2003 and QCEA participated in this as a representative of the NGO sector. This work was completed during 2004 with mixed results from the NGO point of view. We will continue to follow the ongoing debate about this issue and engage with it as appropriate.

Migrants Remittances: This is a currently very topical issue and QCEA is undertaking research on the EU angle of this issue in order to develop a lobbying approach.

Martina Weitsch

Quaker Office United Nations, Geneva, (QUNO)

A Year of Change

Change at the Geneva Office

Possibly the biggest change in 2004 was the retirement of Brewster Grace, with David Attwood taking over the role as director, and Martin Watson joining as the new staff person for economic justice concerns. Naturally these changes had their impact on the work of the committee. Not so much re the staffing issue (although the committee had been consulted on this, too), but in the concurrent shift of programme work. The emphasis on work relating to TRIPS (Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights) has shifted from the issue of access to medicines and the right to propagate seeds, to the rights of indigenous people (e.g. on 'patenting' medicinal properties). A new concern is one for the rights of economic migrants under negotiations relating to international trade in services; legal or illegal, right or wrong; people who choose or are forced to live and work in another country should have a basic set of rights guaranteed for their protection. The committee helped in sharpening the focus of this new area of work.

Rachel Brett continues work on child soldiers, conscientious objection and other well known areas of work, with an added emphasis on the fate of women in prison. David Atwood's primary concern, on top of his role as director, is the work relating to small arms, as well as the 'bigger' issues of nuclear disarmament and biological warfare.

Change in the Legal Structure

Britain Yearly Meeting and FWCC started to share responsibility for the QUNO-Geneva work some five years ago. One effect of this sharing, which is now making its mark felt, was the need for a new legal arrangement, in effect a Non Governmental Organization status for QUNO-Geneva under Swiss Law. As usual, organizations need office bearers, and for practical (because, of the FWCC delegates, I live closest) and other reasons I ended up being treasurer of the new body, which is called the 'Quaker United Nations Association' (Geneva). One role of the Executive Committee (which includes the treasurer) will be to relieve the wider QUNO committee of tedious legal and financial matters. It is our hope that more Yearly Meetings (and/or service bodies) within the section will find a way to contribute financially to the work of the Geneva office, giving practical expression to the non-material support which keeps our representatives at QUNO going on behalf of Friends worldwide.

Change ahead!

The year ended on a very high note, and not only from the perspective of the committee: by the time this report reaches you, there should be a fully integrated website for both QUNO offices in place (www.quno.org). The committee had, from the start, tried to encourage the concept of 'one QUNO – two offices'. Initial steps, in which the committee was instrumental, were joint introductory flyers, and a joint internet-portal, which then led to two separate sites, and which will soon be history. And just in time, too: the arrangement, by which Quaker Hilfe eV (QH) had funded and maintained the QUNO-Geneva site for the last couple of years, came to an end in December 2004. The new joint site will be hosted on the AFSC server.

Lastly I would like to thank the section for its trust and renewal of my mandate.

*Martin Kunz (German Yearly Meeting /London),
FWCC/EMES Representative on the QUNO-Geneva Committee*

Quaker Voluntary Action

Year of Change

QVA experienced Committee changes in 2004 when Martin Smith took over the clerkship from Bronwyn Harwood. Martin, who has been involved from the start overseeing its growth and development, lives in Yorkshire, UK. New members to the committee include Peter Jarman of York, UK, who some people will know through his connections with Friends House Moscow; and Birgit Voellm, who is originally from Germany, but now lives within a mile of QVA's office. In a coincidental act of symmetry, committee member Julian Hodgkin, moved to Bonn, in the summer and is our new newsletter editor.

Project Work – Long Term

Agents for Change Programme

The new scheme aims to help Friends put our testimonies into practice through developing volunteering projects that respond to locally identified needs. Agents will be able to help with anything from project planning to fund-raising, recruiting volunteers and linking Friends together with people who have developed similar projects. Woodbrooke College in Birmingham, UK, hosted the four days of training in October and November. We were delighted to have a France Yearly Meeting Friend and a German Friend, in the group of Agents and hope that there will be more opportunities for Friends from across the Europe and Middle East Section, to work alongside one another in volunteering projects..

New Barracks Play Volunteer Project and Dreamscheme

This year we recruited two volunteers to live and work together, with the children on a housing estate in the UK. The two projects work alongside each other so a teacher from Ukraine and a student from USA developed a combined role providing the children with volunteering on the estate (work such as gardening, litter collection and can recycling), sports, art and crafts and excursions. It was a fascinating East-meets-West-meets-Salford project and everyone learned much from the experience.

Community Volunteer House

This project is a Quaker contribution to the development of inter-racial harmony and tolerance. The development of this project has been patchy this year due to illness within the steering group, the resignation of one of its members and lack of funding. However, progress has been made in writing policy documents, identifying potential partners and searching for a suitable property. The project will provide four volunteers who will begin living in the community house in 2006 and staying for up to a year, or possibly even longer.

Project Work – Short Term

Kinder House Project

Eight volunteers took part in the second Kinder House project in July, in collaboration with Ulster Quaker Service Committee, at the residential centre near Downpatrick, an hour from Belfast. The work to improve the gardens and play areas was carried out by volunteers from all over Europe, improving facilities for the families and groups of young people who use the centre.

Palestine

The Tent of Nations project near Bethlehem provides support, work and activities for young people. This includes planting fields of olives, figs and almond trees on land that

has been destroyed by the army. QVA ran a scheme for Friends to buy a tree, with a certificate, to give as an alternative Christmas gift. We were able to provide 300 trees.

Swarthmoor Hall, 1652 Country, UK

This is a new style of QVA project and was developed in 2004 to offer volunteers a combination of both manual and spiritual work. Friends will be able to spend time in retreat and working in the gardens of Swarthmoor Hall in Cumbria, UK. The project will run twice in 2005 – the first time for individual Friends and the second for a group who have booked all of the 10 places.

Sue Dixon

Church and Peace

The Church and Peace Annual General Meeting 2004 took place 14-16 May at the Schänzli Mennonite Congregation in Muttentz/BL, Switzerland. There were 52 participants from nine countries: the Netherlands, Belgium, United Kingdom, France, Germany, Switzerland, Hungary, Croatia and the Czech Republic. The facilities were those of a well-equipped conference centre, including simultaneous translation covering the three languages used interchangeably: French, English and German. Housing was provided by the members of the congregation in their homes, everything being efficiently organized, with our hosts appearing at the end of each day to whisk us away.

We were made most welcome from the very start, meeting one another, sharing opening prayer and song, and the evening meal, before the opening business session. Routine matters were dealt with first, including approval of the Minutes of last year's AGM in Osijek. Smooth organization turned out to be the hallmark of the rest of business which took most of Saturday. The C&P Administration Committee Annual Report 2003 mentioned a paper entitled *What is a Peace Church?* as a guide to enrich discussion on C&P vision and aims, one concern in connection with this being, the need 'to get to know each other better as members of the committee in order to benefit from each person's gifts during this time of service for the network'.

This is a concept very dear to Church and Peace as networking is seen in terms of needed dialogue particularly among the churches. For example, the C&P International Office Annual Report 2003 deplors the lack of change within the churches in the wake of the widespread movements against the war in Iraq. In this context, C&P's place and role are seen in constant need of sharpening. To this end, conferences, communication, visitations and dialogue with the churches are indispensable tools. Regional activities include field work and local meetings: reports along these lines were received from Hungary, France, Britain, and Ireland. It is dedicated C&P members who cultivate contacts with church communities, NGOs, government officials, and relevant organizations such as foundations.

Saturday night brought fellowship with the Schänzli Congregation; voluntary working groups were offered, with themes such as Militarization of the European Union, Integrity of Creation and Peace through Justice.

All too quickly, Sunday dawned, and with it, a farewell to our gracious hosts. We joined the congregation of several hundred in worship, with singing, an inspiring sermon by Marie-Noelle von der Recke – General Secretary of Church and Peace – and prayers by some of us in our respective languages. It might be added that there were three Quakers, besides the ones who represented the two Yearly Meetings, who are corporate members of Church and Peace; this reporter is applying for individual membership.

Fritz Renken

Diary 2005

| Yearly Meeting | When | Contact |
|----------------|---------------------|--|
| Britain | 30 July - 6 August | Elsa Dicks, Friends House, Euston Road, London, NW1 2BJ, UK. rco@quaker.org.uk |
| Denmark | 29 - 30 October | Kvækerne, Drejervej 17-4, DK-2400 København NV, Denmark. m.clausen@post.tele.dk |
| Finland | August | Jane Rose, Karhuntie 130, SF-91500 Muhos, Finland. jhsptrose@mail.suomi.net |
| France | 24 - 28 August | Axel Jenson, Poutet d'en Bas, 09350 Castex, France. axena.jenson@wanadoo.fr |
| German | 3 - 6 November | Quäkerbüro, Planckstraße 20, D-10117 Berlin, Germany. buero@quaker.org |
| Ireland | 31 March - 3 April | C Rosemary H Castangner, Quaker House Dublin, Stocking Lane, Rathfarnham, Dublin 16, Ireland. quakers@gofree.indigo.ie |
| Middle East | No sessions planned | Sabah Baz, PO Box 4, Brummana, Lebanon. baz@inco.com.lb |
| Netherlands | 6 - 8 May | Hadewijch Touwen, Quakersecretariaat, Postbus 989, NL-4600 AZ Bergen op Zoom, The Netherlands. secretariat@quaker.dds.nl |
| Norway | 23 - 26 June | Marit Kromberg, Vennenes Saamfunn Kvekerne, Skovveien 20, 0257 Oslo, Norway. kveker@kveker.org |
| Sweden | 5 - 8 May | Sweden YM, Kväkargården, Box 9166, S-102 72 Stockholm, Sweden. info@kvakare.org |
| Switzerland | 13 - 16 May | Derek Brett, Maison Quaker, 13 Ave du Mervelet, CH-1209 Genève, Switzerland. dubrett@talk21.com |

Some other Meetings in 2005

20 - 26 March, **EMEYF Spring Gathering**, the Netherlands. Contact emeyf@qcea.org

24 - 27 March, **EMES Annual Meeting**, Bienenberg, near Liestal, Basel, Switzerland. Contact Bronwyn Harwood via emes@fwcc.quaker.org

29 April - 2 May, **Eastern Baltic Friends Border Meeting**, Jurmala, Latvia. Contact Ivars Abelis via Ivars43@yahoo.com

3 - 5 June, **Central Europe Regional Meeting**, Hungary. Contact Zsuzsa Eastland, 1112 Budapest, Törösvár utca 20, Hungary. zeast@axelero.hu

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

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

