



Friends World Committee  
for Consultation  
EUROPE & MIDDLE EAST SECTION

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## FWCC/EMES Annual Report 2011

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Note: The formal annual report and accounts, prepared in accordance with UK charity requirements, are available as a separate document on request from the EMES office.

Scottish Charity number: SC 036528

## **What is FWCC?**

The Friends World Committee for Consultation was established at the Second World Conference of Friends held at Swarthmore, Pennsylvania, in 1937. The concept of a world organisation to express the sense of world fellowship of Friends arose as an important part of the evolution of the Religious Society of Friends in the first two decades of the twentieth century. This tentative development gained impetus from the 1920 Friends World Conference in London and the Young Friends Gathering in Jordans, England, held in the same year. No other organisation exists which links together Yearly Meetings around the world. Authority within the Religious Society of Friends lies at the Yearly Meeting and Monthly Meeting/church level, leaving these groups potentially in isolation. Hence, the vision arose of an organisation to keep Friends connected and in touch with each other across the diverse spectrum of the Society.

FWCC was established to be a channel of communication among Friends, helping us to explore and nurture our identity as Quakers so that we can discover and be faithful to our true place in the world as a people of God. The current mission statement is: answering God's call to universal love. FWCC brings Friends of varying traditions and cultural experiences together in worship, communications, and consultation, to express our common heritage and our Quaker message to the world.

Representatives appointed by affiliated yearly meetings and groups gather in plenary sessions every 3-5 years. Between plenary sessions the Central Executive Committee, which is broadly representative, meets annually to continue FWCC's decision-making processes and to guide staff. The World Office in London is the centre of worldwide communications for Friends and supports the work of the Sections. It also represents Friends with outside international organisations such as the UN.

The Sixth World Conference of Friends will take place in April 2012 at Kabarak University Campus, Nakuru, Kenya. The theme of the conference will be *Being Salt and Light: Friends living the Kingdom of God in a broken 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, occasional International Family Gatherings, border meetings, seminars, peace and service consultations, the Quaker Youth Pilgrimage (in cooperation with the Section of the Americas), and other activities, encourage mutual understanding and lead towards greater involvement of Friends. Two booklets, Meeting the Spirit and Friendly Advice on Quaker Ways, have been produced and there is a newsletter, Among Friends, published three times a year. A small Executive Committee, assisted by the Executive Secretary, ensures communication within the Section and with other Quaker bodies and individual Friends. Among many other different interests, the Section also focuses on justice, peace and service issues.

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

## Some Quaker Addresses in Europe

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## **Clerk's Report on the Work of the Trustees/Executive Committee for 2011**

The Executive Committee held three meetings during the calendar year 2011: 3<sup>rd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> February in Cambridge (England), 21<sup>st</sup> April in Herzberg (Switzerland), and 22<sup>nd</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> September 2011 in Congénies (France). It is planned that the Executive Committee will meet 22<sup>nd</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> March 2012 in Cambridge (England), during the World Conference 17<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> April 2012 in Kabarak (Kenya), and 20<sup>th</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> September 2012 in Berlin (Germany).

FWCC EMES is a charity registered in Scotland. The members who served as Trustees of the Registered Charity for 2011 have been *Marit Kromberg (Clerk until 6<sup>th</sup> February)*, *Rachel M Bewley-Bateman (Clerk from 6<sup>th</sup> February)*, *Janet Cameron (Ireland YM)*, *Sue Glover Frykman (Sweden YM)*, *Neithard Petry (Treasurer)*, *Jeremy (Jez) Smith (Britain YM)*. *Marisa Johnson (Executive Secretary and also a Trustee)* has prepared and attended all the meetings. *Lindsey Cook (German YM)* serves officially from 1.1.2012. *Roisin Brennan* was appointed as Representative of EMEYF on the EMES Executive Committee to serve for a period of no more than three years. She was appointed an EMES Trustee in September 2011. *Kathrine Skarsholt (EMEYF)* will attend meetings if *Roisin* is unavailable. *Julia Ryberg* has attended as Ministry and Outreach Co-ordinator. *Kristin Skarsholt* and *Leo Vincent*, both representing EMEYF, were present at the February meeting and served on the Gathering planning committee. *Janet Cameron* completed her term of service on 31.12.2011 and we shall miss her wise contributions to our deliberations.

The Amari Play Centre, Quaker Youth Pilgrimage, Global Change and Climate matters, as well as QUNO Geneva and the Quaker Peace and Service Consultation, have also been included in our deliberations.

### **Finance**

Fully audited accounts for the year 2011 will be available separately for presentation by the Treasurer at the Trustees/Executive Committee in March and the Annual Meeting of Representatives in April. The cheerful and conscientious work of Neithard Petry, our Treasurer, is much appreciated. His recent visits to Ramallah, whilst in the area on other business, have been helpful and welcome.

**Policies and Procedures**

We are very grateful to Marit Kromberg for her time of service as Clerk of FWCC EMES, which included her work in drawing together and updating the material relating to Policies and Procedures. We plan to continue this work. I have appreciated the support and enthusiasm of members of the Executive Committee and look forward to our developing our future work together.

**Joint Gathering in Herzberg**

The Joint Gathering of FWCC EMES and EMEYF in Herzberg, Switzerland at Easter, was further enriched by the presence of members of the Central Executive Committee of FWCC. Over 100 Friends enjoyed the beautiful surroundings and the warm hospitality and thoughtfulness of Swiss Friends. The theme “*Bring and Share – A feast of Quaker fare*” provided the opening for personal testimonies from Friends from different traditions, who addressed the questions: How do we worship? Where do we draw our inspiration from? What resources help us to live faithful lives? How do we bear witness to the Truth?

**Staffing**

As the new Clerk of EMES, I have particularly appreciated the work and dedication of Marisa Johnson as Executive Secretary. The Executive Committee has encouraged Marisa in her personal concern to embark on the Equipping for Ministry Course at Woodbrooke. This may well be of benefit to us all. Julia Ryberg, our Ministry and Outreach Co-ordinator, has continued to make and develop on-line courses and links around Europe, speaking at several Yearly Meetings. She has also developed an on-line study course associated with the World Conference. Marisa and Julia support and complement each other in their work. Their reports appear separately.

**Website**

The website has expanded during the year and EMES is now also on Facebook. These provide valuable communication opportunities. Marisa welcomes information for posting online as we see networking as an important part of our work. Committee papers appear in the members sections. News of small groups and regional gatherings is appreciated. Our ecumenical connections led to Marisa addressing the Church and Peace Annual Conference 2011.

**Evangelical Friends Church International**

I was very pleased to be invited to attend a conference of the Evangelical Friends Church in Tolna, Hungary, during October. I travelled with two representatives of Ireland Yearly Meeting and we were most impressed with the warmth of the welcome and generosity of hospitality extended to us. Pastor Tony Frei met us at the airport and made sure that we saw some of the sights of Budapest as well as hosting a busy conference weekend. Tolna is a small country town of about 11,000 people situated about two hours drive from Budapest, so it was interesting to see that EU money had helped restore the town hall, square and war memorial. The Friends Church is unpretentious and practical. We joined in enthusiastic hymn-singing and heard prayers in nine languages. Ron Stansell, Clerk of Evangelical Friends Churches International (EFCI), was the visiting preacher. Tony's wife and daughter acted as interpreters. We shared meals in the garden and discovered once again that there is a language of love and friendship which is deeper than words. These Friends accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour and pray that others may also come to believe in Him. My new slim-line travel Bible was studied alongside one so well-used that the pages were held together by love and a deep faith, with particular passages carefully marked. Friends had travelled from North Western YM in the United States, as well as from Moscow, Budapest and Friends churches in the Tolna region. Croatia, Serbia, Transylvania and Romania were also represented. Many members are Roma gypsies. Tony had met Nancy Irving (FWCC Gen. Sec.) in Vienna in 2009 and he, along with daughter Betti, looks forward to attending the World Conference in Kenya.

**World Conference 2012**

We look forward in anticipation to the World Conference of Friends, which will take place at Kabarak University in Kenya from 17<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> April, 2012. Marisa and Julia are both assisting with preparations for the World Conference. Some preparatory meetings for Friends have taken place and Friends have been encouraged to reflect on the conference theme "*Being Salt and Light: Friends living the Kingdom of God in a broken world.*" There will be many opportunities and challenges as we encounter cultural and theological diversity. We are also aware that we need to be ready to engage with concerns arising out of the World Conference and its deliberations.

**Conclusion**

It is a privilege to serve as Clerk of EMES and I have welcomed the opportunity to visit Friends in Britain, France, Germany, Hungary, Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland, as well as at home in Ireland. I have in this way been able to meet Friends 'at home' as well as encounter Friends from other parts of Europe and around the world at some of these meetings.

The Clerk of EMES is ex-officio a member of the Central Executive Committee of FWCC, so this brings additional responsibilities and opportunities to see the World body in action. We are all members of the World Family of Friends and are called to care for one another and this planet on which we live.

*Rachel M Bewley-Bateman, Clerk.*

**Report from the Executive Secretary**

2011 was another busy and eventful year, and I have much to be thankful for – the loving support of colleagues and members of the Executive Committee, the interest and contributions of Representatives and the privilege to share in the work and witness of so many Friends in the Section.

Marit Kromberg came to Cambridge in February for her last meeting as Clerk of EMES. I am deeply grateful to Marit for welcoming me as the new Secretary in 2008, and providing me with a lot of guidance and practical support as I learnt about the job, and travelled to places I had never been to before. To mark the end of this warm and fruitful working relationship we both attended an inspiring course on the experience of the early Christian church at Woodbrooke.

In March I had the opportunity of some real quality time with Julia Ryberg whom I visited in Sweden. We spent time reflecting on our work, and giving each other feedback on our performances, whilst surrounded by glistening deep snow and complete silence. Later in the month I attended a meeting of the Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations (QCCIR) at Woodbrooke with our new Clerk, Rachel Bewley-Bateman, who represents Ireland Yearly Meeting on that committee. It was a welcomed chance to get to know each other better, and to build our working relationship.

The Joint Gathering with Europe and Middle East Young Friends at Herzberg over Easter was the highlight of the year for me, though a bit of a challenge to organise. The gathering was made particularly special by the presence of the Central Executive Committee of FWCC, which now meets each year in one of the Sections. This was a golden opportunity to prepare for the World Conference of Friends which will take place in Kenya in April 2012. The theme of “Bring and Share” enabled us to receive many very diverse gifts of insight and witness from Friends coming not only from different Quaker traditions, but also from many parts of the world. I am very grateful for all the help and support we received from Swiss Friends with the organisation and running of the event, in a lovely location and in wonderful spring weather.

Immediately after the Joint Gathering the Central Executive Committee of FWCC met close to the border with Germany, in a lovely location overlooking the Rhine. This meeting was followed by the International Planning Committee for the World Conference. A great deal of work remains to be done, but we are hopeful that all will be ready in time for April 2012.

On my way home from Switzerland I took a detour to visit family and attended Meeting for Worship in Milan with a small group of Friends who have started to meet regularly in the city.

In May I participated in a conference at Glenthorne on the future of Experiment with Light and then represented EMES at a conference of Church and Peace, which coincided with the International Peace Convocation in Kingston, Jamaica, and produced a Message warning of the dangers of accepting a Responsibility to Protect doctrine which uses military or armed police interventions. I was asked to preach the sermon during the Sunday worship on the text from Ephesians chosen to celebrate World Peace Sunday on 22<sup>nd</sup> May – quite a daunting task, but a challenge I am glad to have had the opportunity to take on. The conference was also an opportunity to meet a few Friends from Germany, Switzerland and France, to make contact with a couple of individuals keen to find Friends in Italy and the Czech Republic, and to get to know fellow peace-workers from other churches and communities.

In June I attended the Central European Gathering in the Czech Republic, where I travelled with Lizz Roe of Woodbrooke, who provided the facilitation on the theme “Love in Action – letting our lives speak”. This was a delightful

weekend. I was particularly excited to learn about developments in Warsaw, and meet a young family and a couple of other Friends who have recently started to hold regular Meetings for Worship there.

I was able to take part in France Yearly Meeting in July, which took place in the Pyrenees, and saw good attendance and good spirits among Friends there. I was also glad to be at Britain Yearly Meeting Gathering in late July/early August, especially as there were over 60 visitors from other parts of Europe and beyond. I tried to see as many of them as possible, but this proved quite a challenge.

In September I visited our Friends in Tblisi, accompanied by Elena Belajeva as an interpreter. Elena, a Latvian Friend now living in the UK, is ethnically Russian and a Russian speaker. She had a fall and badly injured an ankle two days before we left, and this made travel very challenging. Nevertheless, we managed a good visit. Friends in Georgia face many social, political and economic challenges. They treasure visits from Friends, and love to show their country to visitors.

**The Peace and Service Consultation** took place in Kortenberg, Belgium, also in November. Twenty three representatives from several Quaker organisations and committees based or active in Europe and the Middle East took part. The theme of the weekend was *The sword comes into the world because of justice delayed and justice denied* – a quote taken from the Haggadah, the Jewish text for the Passover Seder. We considered our response to outbreaks of violence as were witnessed throughout the year, from the uprisings in North Africa and some Arab countries, to the riots in England, and the terrible atrocity in Oslo and Utøya on 22nd July 2011, when 8 people died and 10 were severely injured in Oslo by a blast that destroyed the windows of over 1000 shops, and 69 people died in Utøya, average age 19.7 years. A full report of the consultation is available on the EMES website.

Three issues of **Among Friends** were published during the year, and they complement the more frequent news coverage we can now offer through the website. I am very grateful to Alastair Reid who continues to put the journal together for me, making the task much less daunting. Our following on Facebook continues to grow.

Once again, we have been monitoring the **environmental impact** of our activities. We have collected and analysed information about all EMES (staff, Executive Committee and Ministry and Outreach) travel, and attempted to measure the carbon emissions incurred. The results are largely in line with those of the previous two years, in the number of flights and train trips undertaken, although total air-miles were down by 1/3 and carbon emissions were almost 25% below 2010 levels. This is because only one long-haul flight (to Tbilisi, Georgia) was undertaken. This accounted for 32% of flight-related emissions.

I am very fortunate in the support I receive from the Executive Committee members. Janet Cameron, of Ireland Yearly Meeting, completed her service at the end of 2011. I thank her for her prayerful service given to EMES, and unfailing helpfulness with any task that was required during our meetings and gatherings, especially the 2009 Annual Meeting in Moyallon, which she organised practically single-handed. In 2012 we shall welcome Lindsey Cook of German Yearly Meeting on the Executive Committee. Lindsey is well-known already, having served as the Section's representative on QUNO New York, and working on the report on the Amari Play Centre in 2009/10.

I am grateful for the cheerful and kind support of Kim Bond, from the World Office in London, who continues to provide me with administration and secretarial support one day a week. And I must record my deep appreciation to Sue Glover Frykman for her help in putting this report together.

Once again, I look forward to keeping in touch with the work and witness of Friends everywhere in our Section for another year, God willing.

*Marisa Johnson, Executive Secretary*

## **Ministry and Outreach Development**

The online introductory course about Quakerism, *Quakers in Europe*, continues to be the backbone of the Ministry and Outreach programme. It is a cooperative project between EMES and Woodbrooke. Its development phase began in 2007. The course has been translated into and delivered in many languages since 2008, with multiple runs in several languages with trained

facilitators. An evaluation of the project is near completion as this report is being written. The evaluation will help discern the future of the project and how it might be adjusted and complemented. The pioneer experience of *Quaker in Europe* is serving Woodbrooke as it explores how it can broaden its e-learning programme.

The new EMES *Companion* programme is the latest resource geared at equipping Friends to nurture each other and to reach out. There has been a first run to prepare a few Friends, including one of the EMEYF Elders, for service as Companions, which entails being paired up with an enquirer for a period of structured interaction and exploration of the Quaker way. At the time this report is being written, the first pair has begun their work together.

To support the *Companion* programme focus on outreach, the Ministry & Outreach programme sponsored another *Meeting for Learning* at Sweden YM's retreat centre, Svartbäcken in November. Twelve Friends from nine countries worked with the theme *Reaching out: How do we share our Quaker faith and the Quaker way?*

The Ministry & Outreach programme sponsored a Russian-speaking gathering, which was organised and held solely in Russian. Seventeen Friends from five countries gathered at Kremenchuk in the Ukraine in October. Funds from the programme also sent Friends to travel in the ministry, in pairs, to Tbilisi; and made possible EMES representation at the Evangelical Friends Churches meeting in Hungary.

In my role as Coordinator, I travelled to Ireland YM and spoke of outreach experience within Sweden YM and Europe more widely. I led a retreat for Danish Friends and organised an outreach event in a nearby village. At German YM, I delivered the Richard L. Cary lecture, with the theme *Wahrhaftig leben: Ent-täuscht und erhellt werden (Becoming authentic: Disillusionment and Enlightenment)*. It has since been translated into Finnish and Swedish. For the World Office, I am coordinating global online study circles, using the World Conference *Salt and Light* study booklet. I am organising the worship sharing groups at the Conference, along with two other Friends.

It is satisfying to serve established Meetings, with travels to Switzerland and Finland planned for 2012 (travelling with another Friend in each case), and to support the newer groups such as the one in Vilnius. It is exciting to witness stirrings of Quaker life in Italy, Malta, Poland and Portugal. It is our hope that the Ministry & Outreach programme, for which we deeply thank the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust for this second round of funding through to 2013, will continue to serve Friends in times of new life, challenge, inspiration and exploration of Quaker faith and witness.

*Julia Ryberg, Ministry and Outreach Co-ordinator*

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

The Amari Play Centre provides preschool education for 40 children from the Amari Refugee Camp.

Quakers, both local and international, have supported this project for the last thirty seven years. The Amari Play Centre continues to reflect the original project guidelines:

- It should be with children
- It should be in the educational field
- It should be in an area where a recognised need was evident
- It should be in an area where there was a local Quaker group

Today, thirty seven year after its establishment, it continues to serve the most marginalised communities of refugee boys and girls – those same ones whose great grandparents lost their homes and livelihoods over sixty years ago. Early objectives stemmed from the need to establish a child-focused, educational programme, in an area of need where a local Quaker group was present. Thanks to the support of local and international Friends, APC continues to serve the most vulnerable sector of society by providing them with a safe and healthy educational and play environment.

APC is housed in the UNRWA School for Girls in the Amari Refugee Camp where over 10,520 refugees are registered. UNRWA provides emergency food rations to 1,513 families, and 253 families receive assistance under the “Social Safety Net” programme. Half of the men in the Amari Refugee Camp are out of work. The average monthly salary is between \$320 and \$450 and is

expected to support on average a large family of ten. The cost of living in the West Bank has increased significantly, where loaf of bread now costs \$1.80 and half a gallon of milk \$3.40.

The Centre is open five days a week, from 07:30-13:00. Forty to forty five children (girls and boys) are accommodated each year, and the Centre receives more applications than it can accept due to the heavy demand from the community. One head teacher, two teacher assistants and a part-time supervisor serve the Centre.

An estimated annual budget of US\$32,000 is needed to keep the APC running.

These are the words of one of the students who attended the APC 20 years ago:

*“I attended the APC 20 years ago. I come from a family of 9 children. My parents could not afford to send us to kindergartens so the Quaker Play Centre was a wonderful opportunity. I still remember my good and fun days at the Play Centre. It opened doors for me and encouraged me to continue my school education. It made a change in my life and here I am; I am a mother of 2 children and continuing my education at the Open University. I know many families want their children to go to APC because of the good reputation it has established all through the years – it’s a place that is full of love.”*

*Muna Khleifi, Supervisor*

## **Church and Peace**

This year Marisa attended the Annual General Meeting of Church and Peace as Kees Nieuwerth had been asked to represent Church and Peace at the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation of the World Council of Churches on Just Peace in Kingston, Jamaica. This coincided with the meeting of Church and Peace in France. In fact, messages were exchanged between the meeting of C&P in St. Antoine and the meeting of the WCC in Kingston!

The International Ecumenical Peace Convocation brought together some 1000 delegates from all parts of the world and from many different Christian denominations. Amongst them a small group of delegates from the Historic Peace Churches: Mennonites, Quakers and Brethren. During the course of the meeting in Kingston this group also met several times to assess the process and discern possible joint contributions. This became a truly historic and inspiring

gathering. For the first time in history, churches declared solemnly that there is no theological (or indeed any other) justification for war. They went on to state that war as an instrument to settle conflicts should be declared illegal in international relations!

Kees has been asked to share the experiences and insights gained by facilitating three sessions on Just Peace at the Friends World Conference in Kenya in 2012. He also wrote a detailed and inspired report on the IEPC, which is available on request.

*Kees Nieuwerth, EMES Representative to Church and Peace*

### **Global Change and Climate Matters**

The Global Change Group, consisting of Friends from a number of Yearly Meetings within our Section, considered the questions raised by the FWCC World Office on the theme 'Friends and Global Change'. During the course of 2011, Kees Nieuwerth, as convenor/clerk of the group, made a compilation of all the responses, which was presented as a report to the World Office. All the responses received by the World Office will be used as contributions to prepare for the upcoming World Conference in Kenya in 2012.

The report of our Global Change Group (available on request) makes interesting reading. Quite a few of the contributions made by Friends in the course of this consultation process are about our allegiance to 'false gods', rather than building and living the Kingdom of God in this broken world. A clear call is made for Friends to return to a prophetic vision, counter-veiling the powers of the world. Friends feel that our corporate response (and our response as individuals) falls well short of the transformative response that these interconnected crises requires of us. We are still not really geared up to being an activist community with a powerful sense that the world needs to be turned upside down and that it is our spiritual conviction that much of our task lies there. And, in particular, we have not really settled as a community to recognise that the whole system works in opposition to our testimonies and to true Life ... so although we record Minutes that point in this direction, we have failed to become a community dedicated to a quite different vision ... of peace, simplicity, truth and equality, too much charity and too little justice, too much helping the system's losers rather than changing the system itself, helping the poor rather than abolishing poverty.

So, Friends, can we decide at our World Conference to faithfully and patiently embark upon a campaign to banish poverty and war this century? Would not that be answering the call to build the Kingdom of God here and now? The report reminds us that it is high time we Friends discern, through a worldwide consultation process, what vital role the Religious Society of Friends can play in this respect; a role that in the words of our Friend Kenneth Boulding, the critical economist, is “...*small perhaps in quantity, but of enormous importance in quality, and that to refuse to take on this role or to run away from the burden which it may imply would be a betrayal of trust and a tragedy not only for the Society of Friends but for mankind as a whole.*”

*Kees Nieuwerth, Clerk/convenor EMES Global Change Group*

### **Quaker Youth Pilgrimage**

This year the QYP committee's attention has been focused on the practical organisation of QYP 2012 as well as the long term future of the Quaker Youth Pilgrimage. We have also enjoyed spending some time getting to know each other and sharing at a deep level, to build up the trust and understanding which will be required as the QYP draws closer and our work becomes more pressured.

Sadly, Liz Eddington had to leave as work pressures left her no time for QYP work. However, we are delighted to welcome Martin Touwen (Netherlands YM) and Kerstin Mangels (German YM) who will be co-ordinating the continental European part of the pilgrimage and Madeleine Prager (Britain YM - co-opted for this pilgrimage).

Three of our committee attended the EMES gathering at Herzberg. This was worthwhile as we shared our experiences of the QYP, talked to Friends from across Europe who were interested and could spread the word, and discussed with Friends where they see QYP developing in the future.

### QYP 2012

The pilgrimage group will gather in Birmingham, and then stay with host families followed by three days at Woodbrooke. They next visit Quaker sites in 1652 country, followed by travel to Brussels for a weekend visit to QCEA, and on to the Netherlands which includes retreat time to explore their Quaker faith together. They return by ferry to England for work projects at Barmoor before their closing retreat in Birmingham. The accommodation is already booked and

we are finalising travel arrangements. We have appointed one leader and are in the process of appointing a second. We are delighted to hear there will be more pilgrims from the pastoral tradition in America this time.

An exciting new development is that we are looking forward to receiving applications from two students from Ramallah Friends School in the Pilgrimage group, which will ensure Middle East participation in the pilgrimage again. We are very grateful for Elizabeth Rossinger's legacy which will allow us to help with this participation. We are getting advice from the organisers of the week-long Northern Young Friends Summer Shindig which has already welcomed four Ramallah students.

#### QYP 2014 and Beyond

The Section of the Americas committee has been visioning the future of QYP in their section. They propose to hold pilgrimages in Latin America for 18 year olds and over, in Spanish. As a result we have been visioning the future of QYP in EMES. We believe that the 16-18 year old age group is an important group to work with, as these young people are on the brink of big changes in their lives, and their spirituality is open to new inspiration.

At Herzberg we proposed that we start exploring the possibility of holding QYP in Kenya, as a joint venture between EMES and the African Section. This would fulfil the QYP aims of meeting Friends from the wider world and from different Quaker traditions very well. We made contact with African Friends at Herzberg and the three of us who are going to the World Conference in Kenya next April will investigate further. We move forward with joy, gratitude and faith.

*The QYP Committee*

### **Reports from Yearly Meetings, Monthly Meetings and Groups**

#### **Belgium and Luxembourg Monthly Meeting**

Belgium and Luxembourg Monthly Meeting continues to thrive. Meeting for Worship is held in Brussels every Sunday and Wednesday, in Luxembourg approximately every month and in Flanders occasionally. Every first Sunday, Children's Meetings are held and there is a 'bring-and-share' lunch which is always a time for lively discussion.

Sadly, our Friend Patricia (P.A.M.) van der Esch-Mitchell, who had served the Meeting in many ways since joining us in the 1980s, died on 8 April 2011. A Testimony to the grace of God in her life was prepared, and a Meeting for Worship in her memory was held at Quaker House, Brussels on Sunday 27 November 2011.

Our Friend Joslin Towler passed away in the UK after a long illness on 6 September 2011. Belgium and Luxembourg Friends were present at her funeral in Hereford and at Almeley Quaker Meeting.

The annual Weekend Residential Meeting was held at the Maison de Notre Dame du Chant d'Oiseau in Brussels from 7 to 9 October 2011 and was attended by around 30 people. The theme was "A community growing together in the Spirit", and the event was centred around reflections and discussions led by members of the 'Woodbrooke on the Road' team. The feedback from participants was very positive. Several new initiatives have arisen from the reflections at the gathering.

One home study group meets monthly in the home of members of the community and a new study group, using the "Becoming Friends" materials, started in December 2011. Regular meetings for Enquirers and Attenders are organised. A Quaker Bookstall is available on most Sundays.

A childminding/babysitting service is now provided at Quaker House, Brussels every Sunday during the hours of Meeting for Worship, to encourage parents of young children to come to Meeting.

The Meeting has revised the remits of its groups, and the job descriptions of its officers; it has made appointments to its groups and offices for the triennium 2012–2014. From January 2012, the "Life of the Meeting" Committee is replaced by a Ministry and Oversight Group which will "focus on developing the meeting's spiritual life and pastoral care; it will work as a core group that will facilitate the involvement of each of us, according to our abilities and to the spiritual and pastoral needs of the community."

*Paul Holdsworth, Clerk*

## Britain Yearly Meeting

A high spot in 2011 was Yearly Meeting Gathering, held 30 July - 6 August at the University of Kent in Canterbury, where 1500 Friends from around Britain met in unusually hot, dry weather to reflect on "*Growing in the Spirit: changing the way we live to sustain the world we live in*". The event combined Yearly Meeting business sessions with a less formal range of activities for all ages. We were blessed with the presence of a large number of children and young people and with visitors from other Yearly Meetings.

Pam Lunn, well-known to many as a Woodbrooke tutor, gave the annual Swarthmore Lecture, "*Costing not less than everything: sustainability and spirituality in challenging times*". Many of us had high expectations. We were not disappointed. Subsequent business sessions addressed the need to take action in response to climate change and peak oil. We split up into groups of 100 or so Friends to grapple with various questions. Reports from the groups then informed a plenary meeting for worship for business. Eventually we were led to agree a minute committing ourselves, Quakers in BYM, to becoming a sustainable low-carbon community. More detail including the text of Minute 36, how to get a copy of the lecture and how we can respond to it can be found at [www.quaker.org.uk/creating-just-and-sustainable-world](http://www.quaker.org.uk/creating-just-and-sustainable-world). Those of us who were there sensed that we were moved by the Spirit to come to this decision, just as we were moved two years ago in York to declare our intention to work towards equality for same-sex couples and opposite-sex couples in the celebration of marriage.

That decision bore fruit much more quickly than anyone envisaged. Together with the Unitarians and liberal Jews we lobbied the government for a change in the law to allow the celebration of same-sex civil partnerships in places of worship. Whilst the law does not recognise same sex marriage, regulations under the Equality Act were published in December 2011 that enable same sex couples marrying under Quaker auspices in England and Wales to have a civil partnership ceremony directly associated with the Meeting for Worship. This goes some way towards equal marriage envisaged at York in 2009. We currently await clarification of the Quaker processes to be put in place with regard to civil partnership ceremonies in our Meeting Houses.

These decisions have not been easy for all our members, and nor was the one taken by Meeting for Sufferings (our representative body which meets between Yearly Meetings), when we considered the call from Palestinian Christians for boycott, divestment and sanctions in relation to goods produced in the illegal Israeli settlements. We were deeply exercised as we struggled to reach clearness and following deep discernment were able to recommend to Friends the boycott of Israeli settlement goods. Since then area meetings have worked on the issue of boycott, most supporting it, some asking for more powerful action and a few reluctant and leaving the matter to individual conscience.

National Quaker Week, now in its fourth year, once again involved Friends throughout the Yearly Meeting in a variety of outreach events. Peace was chosen as this year's theme to mark the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the declaration made by early Friends to King Charles II. This anniversary was also marked by a reaffirmation of our peace testimony during Yearly Meeting Gathering, drawing on feedback from workshops held by local and area meetings and other Quaker gatherings during the preceding months.

*Britain Yearly Meeting's Representatives*

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

I was asked if I could write the annual summary of the Czech Quaker Group. My contribution will be personal, as this is essentially about my introduction to Quakers, my integration and my understanding about what Quakerism is. Over the year I discovered more and more. I first went to Prague meeting in 2010, for a few Sunday meetings only, but due to my previous experiences and traumas I was not able to become really part of any group or believe that a group of good people would accept me among themselves (I have experienced many instances of being excluded, being set apart due to my "being different" and being very rarely accepted in my life). This is why I stopped attending meeting for a longer period and returned only in 2011 as I had been pondering the entire time: "Should I go or not?" "Do I have the courage or not?"

When I returned I was welcomed again very warmly and friendly. Maybe that is why I stopped being afraid and understood that the other name for Quakers, the "Society of Friends" is not just an empty term. Everyone treated me really like a friend! And during that past year some friendships deepened such that they continue also outside Sunday meetings.

The Czech Quakers are something of a musical group; most people play either an instrument, compose music and are capable of talking about music and music-making for quite some time. I am no musician, even though I love music and am an avid music listener. I have to admit that it is a very pleasant experience to sing together; the best time we had before Christmas when we sang Czech carols under Prague's Charles Bridge followed by the gathering at Arne's home. I have not experienced the spirit of Christmas so strongly in maybe 10 years. I don't make music but consider myself a writer. So towards the end of the year these two things came together when Pavel wrote some music/melodies to two of my poems. I am looking forward to singing them together with the others (we have not had a chance yet).

The main event of the year 2011 was the organisation and happening of the Central European Gathering of Friends in Litomyšl, Czech Republic. I went to this gathering in a pretty bad state of mind; I had stopped drinking just a few weeks before. Daily drinking had for years been my false companion to make up for my suffering, hurt and failures. The pressure and tightness I felt in my life and which had been aggravated and reinforced by alcohol, broke forth and came to the surface during those days. Meanwhile the gathering just took its course and in the end I went home after these days in the exactly opposite state of mind: full of happiness and willingness to live on. I was very inspired to hear what some Quakers are doing in terms of humanitarian activities, I felt so comfortable among all participants, in short I felt more and more at home in this international group by every passing day. Certainly the beautiful renaissance town of Litomyšl also contributed to this. This was a real breakthrough experience for me that reinforced my will to live differently, and had the Light take root in me. It also made me want to contribute to others. All of this fell into exactly the moment in time when I needed to experience it. I felt real acceptance, full integration based on equality, which as I understand now is not just a hollow phrase for Quakers.

Now I feel I am a Quaker, I feel I am part of this society and I think I understand what this means. The year 2011 was a real breakthrough year for me, I managed to overcome my mid-life crisis which Jung called the "small death", and I succeeded to turn again towards life, but in a different way, in a changed way. This process is not over but continues to unfold for me. And I have to thank not only Czech Quakers. How they treated and accepted me has impacted my life and still does so quite fundamentally.

*Petr Štěpánek*

## **Denmark Yearly Meeting**

The first English Quaker to visit Denmark was twenty-year-old John Hall who in 1657 met King Frederik III but was later put in prison. In 1875 a group of 6 Danes applied for membership of the Society of Friends and the first Danish Yearly Meeting was held in 1879. However, historically the total number of adult members has never exceeded 60-70 persons.

The present number of registered Danish Quakers is only 30. Almost half of those are above 70 years of age and not more than half of the listed members are actively participating in our activities. 40-50 friends of Friends are regularly being informed of our activities through a newsletter. In Copenhagen a meeting for worship is held every Sunday.

In 2011 two retreats were arranged in various parts of the country to allow isolated Friends to meet with the larger group of Friends living in the Copenhagen area. We always send representatives to Norway and Sweden Yearly Meetings and receive visits from them.

This year we decided to hold our own Yearly Meeting and concentrate on the growth of Quakerism in Denmark. We had some problems in the past year and saw a need to find our own feet as a Quaker group. The Yearly Meeting was held without representatives from other countries; something we have never experienced before. We felt we had a need to understand what leads to spiritual fellowship and we therefore shared personal experiences in a Quaker perspective.

We have found that the Quaker way of resolving conflicts has been of help to us. Our aim is to focus more on the spiritual life, which gives us new hope for the future.

*Mogens Clausen, Clerk*

## **Estonia: Tallinn Worship Group**

Our small group continues, sure and strong. We have switched to holding Meetings for Worship on the last Sunday of every month, and this seems to work well. We used to have ad hoc Meetings, and still do when there are

visitors in town who wish to meet with us. This year we've had visitors from the U.K. and Germany. On average our monthly Meetings for Worship attract about 4 or 5 people, with others coming from Tartu and Sillamäe when possible. This summer, we lost one of our stalwart members, Anna-Leena, when she moved back to Finland. At about the same time, we got a new member, Bob, here for the next couple of years attached to the U.S. Embassy.

The Meeting continues to have a connection with the Children's Centre in Sillamäe, and to support the Lighthouse street-kids drop-in centre here in Tallinn. As usual, individual members are involved in their own projects: Mik teaches computer skills to disabled adults; Bob judges a new award for Estonian-American Innovation; Roland has his own NGO called Diverse Faiths Alliance where he facilitates communication among the different faith groups here; Roland, Steve and Myra work on raising awareness about issues concerning Palestine/Israel - leafleting, writing letters, signing petitions and are currently meeting with groups in Tallinn, including members of the Estonian Council of Churches, in an effort to support a Churches for Middle East Peace initiative to show the documentary BUDRUS (about successful, non-violent peace actions by Palestinians, Israelis and internationals working together to change the course of the 'separation' wall from going through the village of Budrus, bisecting the village cemetery, and cutting off the villagers from their olive groves). So far, we have had one such showing in Helsinki hosted by Helsinki Friends, where even the Palestinian Ambassador to Finland attended.

Our plans for 2012 are to carry on as we have been doing.

*Myra and Steve Ford*

### **Finland Yearly Meeting**

For Finnish Friends, 2011 was a year of growing and recovering from earlier losses. That is perhaps the reason why we could not even manage to hold a proper Yearly Meeting with invited foreign Friends and an Epistle. Several dear and, for our community, important Friends have left us to go back to their own countries, while some are studying abroad. Perhaps we have relied too much on them and it takes time to gather new energies. But there are many signs of growing in the Spirit throughout the country.

Besides the four active and steady worship groups there is a new worship group in Pori on the west coast. In Helsinki there is a Meeting for Worship

every Sunday, which is well supported by both Friends and attenders. It is the biggest group in Finland. Friends from other countries visiting Helsinki have also come and enriched the meeting. Two meetings for worship for children were held too, with a shorter silence, storytelling and questions, discussions and drawing.

The Turku group has a Meeting for Worship every second Sunday in a private home. In Tampere there was an article about the worship group in the Church Organ. After that many new attenders came several times. Meetings for Worship are held here twice a month on a Saturday afternoon. The Northern group held smaller Meetings for Worship every Sunday in Kokkola and bigger ones every sixth week either in Oulu or Muhos. We hope they will soon be able to find a good steady meeting place, rather than having to meet in private homes.

Our newsletter was published twice in 2011 by a new editor. Many Friends have been voluntarily active in the translation work and contributions to it.

Our own premises are still rented out and there will soon be a need to decide what is reasonable for the community to have and hold. The library is housed as a separate collection in the library of an ideological neighbour organisation. There are also smaller collections of newer Quaker literature in Kokkola and Turku. A list of the books will be available on the new websites so that people can borrow them.

The long dreamed of and planned for new website will hopefully be ready by the end of 2011. The autumn meeting for business made the decision to give the task of designing the website to a student, with oversight from the executive committee. All the worship groups have contributed with ideas, opinions and wishes for the work.

In November we had a visit from Myra and Steve Ford, Friends who are resident in Tallinn. They told us about the situation in Palestine after Meeting for Worship. There were also outsiders who came to hear their interesting report. Two young Finnish Friends have been to Young Quaker gatherings abroad: Samuli Huusko went to Switzerland and Terho Huusko went to Great Britain. Maija Mäkelä represented Finland Yearly Meeting at the EMES/EMEYF Joint Gathering in Switzerland at Easter.

Jaana Erkkilä is participating in the Equipping for Ministry course at Woodbrooke. Jane Rose and Jaana Erkkilä went to Svartbäcken (Sweden) for a ‘Meeting for Learning’ weekend. Maija Mäkelä was also there for a weekend on Quaker Belief and Practice. Heather Lundberg Fowler represented Finland Yearly Meeting at Britain Yearly Meeting and Thomas Lindblom at Sweden Yearly Meeting.

In October a very old Helsinki Friend, Alli Järvinen, died. As she had been a Quaker for some fifty years she wanted to a Quaker Funeral; a wish that her relatives gladly fulfilled with the help of Helsinki Friends. Some weeks later there was also a memorial for her during the Meeting for Worship.

*Maija Mäkelä, YM Clerk*

### **France Yearly Meeting**

The Epistle from France Yearly Meeting, held at St Giron, Arriège from July 14<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> 2011, describes the ‘sense and state of the meeting’ and is here published in full as the YM’s report.

To Friends everywhere,

*May we not let pass un-noticed our joyful moments of inspiration. Joy will not wait.*

We are almost fifty, of nine different nationalities, gathered at St. Giron in the Midi-Pyrenees, (South-west). The mountain trails and the forests which surround us have inspired us concerning our theme “Dreaming together”; a theme that the regional groups and individuals had been exploring during the previous months. The pilgrims on the road to St Jacques of Compostelle are examples of fidelity for us on our own travels along the Quaker way.

Our meetings, this year, have been held in serenity, and in a spirit of listening, caring and mutual affection, thanks also to the effective work of the Preparation committee, throughout the year.

To learn to know one another better, coming, as we do, from all the corners of France, we have dedicated several sessions to sharing in small groups, our reflections on the present state of our French Yearly Meeting, the challenges it

needs overcome and the quality of our personal commitment to our Quaker life. These subjects had been previously examined in the regions, thus assuring maximum participation.

During our meeting, nourishment for the heart and mind were complemented in a welcome way by short physical exercise breaks and breathing exercises, to ensure that we did not neglect our bodies. Furthermore, the sacred dances and the quality of the singing during our festive evening lifted us to peaks of joy and shared emotion.

One of the summits of the French Quaker year has been the International Commemoration of the presence of William Penn at the Protestant Academy of Saumur in 1662 to 1664. The report and recollection of the ceremony of naming a square 'La Place William Penn' by the town of Saumur, was for us all a cause for rejoicing.

### **A message from our young people**

We are four young people at this assembly, from four and a half to nineteen years of age. Despite this heterogeneity, we have got on marvellously together, looking after Mira like a little sister.

Among the young people of our ages many are searching for values that they could find among Quakers. But how can we establish contact? Perhaps we need to imagine more activities that could inform them of our existence?

*Signed by Sylvette Thompson, Clerk*

### **Georgia Worship Group**

2011 was hard for many countries worldwide. The economic crisis affected the US, as well as Europe, Russia and other countries. But the year was also interesting and informative for Georgian Friends. Two Georgian Friends attended a very interesting and informative course at Woodbrooke in April. They also had a very good meeting with Friends in Cambridge and Bristol. The Executive Secretary of EMES, together with a travelling companion, visited Friends in Tbilisi during the summer. Their visit was very informative and helpful. Georgian Friends very much appreciated their coming. Later in the year two Friends from New York visited Georgia, held AVP training sessions in Tbilisi and worshipped together with local Friends. Their visit to Georgia

was very helpful and productive and we hope that they will come again in 2012.

In autumn 2011, during his stay in the UK, a Friend from Georgia visited the Friends Meeting in Beccles. It was a wonderful meeting that strengthened the already existing bonds with Friends there. Two Georgian Friends (ethnic Russians living in Georgia) attended the Russian Speaking Gathering in Ukraine. They enjoyed the gathering every much and would like to express gratitude to EMES and JRCT for organising it and making it possible.

Georgian Friends Worship Group would like to express a deep gratitude to the Radley Trust for the support they have provided and to all the Friends worldwide who pray and think about them. Thank you very much.

*Georgian Friends Worship Group*

### **German Yearly Meeting**

In October 2011, at our “Quäkerhaus” in Bad Pyrmont, the main theme of the 81st Annual German Yearly Meeting was “Becoming Authentic: Disillusionment and Enlightenment”. The author of the Annual Richard Cary Lecture was Julia Ryberg (Sweden YM). Julia gave us both an entertaining but also very personal account of her spiritual journey. By opening her heart, she reminded us that we are called to follow Jesus no matter whom we perceive him to be. By sharing her fair-trade chocolate and bananas, she reminded us Friends that we could also celebrate holy communion.

We were challenged both by Julia and elsewhere during the YM on the following:

- Are we seeing the truth about our lives and ourselves?
- Are we speaking the truth about our lives?
- Are we living the truth - letting our lives speak?
- Are we making space for the spirit to gather us in love and guide us (Gospel Order)?
- To remember we are not called to be perfect.

A total of 183 attended our Yearly Meeting. We also were visited and thanked by a representative of the Town Mayor.

We rejoice in our growing number of active young friends. Some of our worship groups continue to grow both in number and spiritually, whilst other

continue to struggle with the declining numbers of active members and attenders. Our Yearly Meeting, our regional meetings, local meetings and interest groups have concerned themselves with such themes as:

- ◆ Our response to the Kairos Palestine Document
- ◆ Our response to the increasing access of Army recruiting officers in schools after compulsory military service ended in Germany
- ◆ Experimenting with new and old ways to regenerate the spiritual life of meetings
- ◆ Membership
- ◆ An active weekend of being “Rooted in Christianity; open to new light”
- ◆ The traditional week long family gathering in Hirschluch, south of Berlin
- ◆ Our now finished handbook to help integrate children, young friends, and adults into the spiritual life of the Yearly Meeting
- ◆ Equality, dignity and respectfulness of each others’ identity
- ◆ Continuing to work on our own Quaker Faith and Practice based on Friends experiences from Germany and Austria.

We have continued to support where possible the idea of our Young Friends travelling in tandem with older Friends as co-representatives of GYM to other Yearly Meetings.

*Christopher Hatton, Björn Rohde-Liebenau and Lutz Caspers,  
Representatives*

### **Hungary, Budapest Worship Group**

In the past year the Budapest meeting has done less community activity and more relationship building. Hard times take specific individual forms and provide an opportunity to offer loving kindness to one another.

In June, Brian Philips came to Budapest to give a talk on the Quaker Peace Testimony. It’s always a treat to have visitors and since our regular meeting is just once a month we also try to gather whenever there are visitors. In the past year we have had visitors from the UK and the US, including Bryan Hopkins and Helen Clay, and Major Thomson, who has been a regular November sojourner, whose visits have included interviews with Hungarians for an oral history project for the University of California at Berkeley.

We have missed our American Friends, Michael Simmons and Linda Carranza, who have gone back to the US – temporarily we hope. Judit Borzsák has also been gone for most of the year – and we expect she'll be back before too long.

Cathy Butler took part in a Meeting for Learning event on our behalf in Svartbäcken, Sweden on Quaker forms. And Zsuzsa Eastland was in Sweden in November for a course on Reaching Out.

Berne Weiss has had an Eva Koch scholarship for 2011, for a project on *Imagining the World without War*. She spent the summer at Woodbrooke, and is still trying to adjust to the real world.

Our annual border meeting was in Vienna this year. The Central European gathering was in the Czech Republic.

*Berne Weiss, Representative*

### **Ireland Yearly Meeting**

In 2011 we met for our Yearly Meeting in Dublin and were glad to welcome Friends from other Quaker groups, churches and faith groups. It was a Yearly Meeting of great enrichment. The second query for Ministry & Oversight was read to us “Do you use the spiritual gifts entrusted to you faithfully and to the honour of God?” We have seen that we all have different gifts and are called to minister in diverse ways. Some are strong in vocal ministry, while others use their gifts to follow particular testimonies, or to serve their meeting every week. We were inspired by the accounts of work in difficult situations in Palestine/Israel, Hlekweni in Zimbabwe and in the international Quaker organisations working on our behalf. In the public lecture “Called to be Friends”, Ross Chapman challenged us to “unite with the Christ within others” and reflected that “How we deal with enemies is a defining feature of Friends.”

The recent appointment of Carolyn McMullan as Youth Co-ordinator has helped to bring Young Friends together and they were very much in evidence at Yearly Meeting. Other highlights of the year included the participation of the Yearly Meeting Clerk in the Inauguration of the new President of Ireland in November, where she read a prayer for civic leaders, following a long tradition of the involvement of Friends in public events. Each year Quaker representatives also take part in a ‘Famine Commemoration’ which acknowledges the suffering of the 1845-6 Famine in Ireland and focuses attention on current famine and need throughout the world.

In October three of our members joined Evangelical Friends International as observers at their gathering in Hungary and we were glad of the contact with this group. We look forward to sending a strong team to the World Gathering in Kenya and to hearing news from around the world

*Felicity McCartney, Clerk*

### **Italy: Bologna Worship Group**

The group continues to meet regularly, although only one International Member remains, Pier Cesare Bori, who suffered poor health during 2011. Attender Fabian Di Lang continued with the regular meetings in prison. The group has a Facebook page which is regularly updated. It is called “Societa’ degli Amici di Bologna”, and often features a “Meditation on the Presence” by Pier Cesare, which has good following and was featured on national radio.

*Pier Cesare Bori*

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

The situation with Quakers in Latvia shows that we are all individual International Members of the Religious Society of Friends. As Liepaja is the only place in Latvia where there is more than one Quaker, we decided that it was time to change the name from Latvia Recognised Meeting to Liepaja Worship Group. We asked the FWCC International Membership Applications Committee about this. After consultation with the International Membership Secretary, Harry Albright, our status was changed.

2011 was the second year in which we in Liepaja came together once a month for worship and sharing together with local spiritual seekers in a gathering that we call a Meeting for Insights. This form of meeting has been very good and on each occasion we have been 2 Quakers and at least 8 seekers. In this group we have had many talks about the Quaker way and our experience. We also introduce attenders to silent worship at the beginning of our meetings. After this silent hour the sharing is different and deeper, and people feel it. We can say that Quakerism in Liepaja started in a natural way and at the right time. Now we continue this work.

It is very important to have this kind of group of similar thinking people in the place where we live. Some time ago we decided to consider our tango practices as part of our spiritual ministry and we continue it on a regular basis too. We

also see that a half of the people in this worship and sharing group dance the tango.

At the FWCC EMES Annual Gathering in Switzerland in April 2011 I met a Friend from our neighbouring country of Lithuania. In June 2011 we went to Vilnius to meet with Friends from the Vilnius Worship Group. We are looking forward to continuing this friendship.

*Inese Ansule, Clerk*

## **Lithuania**

Two International Members and a small number of attenders hold a regular Meeting for Worship in Vilnius.

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

In the midst of the Arab uprising and the change that is sweeping the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, Lebanon remains relatively safe and free of major events, having been the first to go through so many changes and provide a model of democracy and free speech to many Arab countries. In this atmosphere of uncertainty all around, our meeting continues to provide the backbone of Quaker presence in Lebanon through the Quaker School, Brummana High School (BHS).

This year the number of students at the school is slightly below 1,000, with about 25% coming from neighbouring countries to seek liberal education and exposure to the more acceptable methods of teaching and preparation for colleges/universities in Lebanon and the West. To many, BHS ([www.bhs.edu.lb](http://www.bhs.edu.lb)) provides the first exposure to Western standards and values. This Quaker school works hard to build good and productive youth emphasising elements of honesty, integrity, stewardship, peace-building, cultural bridging and accepting that of God in every one. We teach such notions as globalisation and internationalism and encourage creative and critical thinking. We have a trilingual approach to education using the Arabic, English and French languages. These attributes make this school one of very few minarets of education in the area. The meeting provides 3 to 4 very active members for the board of the school as well as some pastoral care.

Being a small meeting to work as a group, our members are active in their communities introducing Quaker values in their social/community services and charitable organisations. We are happy to receive travelling Friends that come to the area and a few post grad and scholarship students from abroad. We look towards more interchange and exchange between the wider Friends community as well as seek Friends willing to do resident service in Lebanon and at the school. We continue to work on collecting Quaker manuscripts/old pictures/documents and literature related to the Middle East area to build a Quaker Archive Centre at the school.

From these troubled lands, we send a message of Peace, Love and Hope.

*Tony Manasseh, Clerk*

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

Ramallah Friends Meeting is over a hundred years old. It is a small Meeting. It has been influenced by wars and long years of military occupation and immigration. Yet it had and still has a very effective ministry for peace and justice. Unprogrammed Meeting for Worship takes place at 10:30 am every Sunday in the meeting house, with fellowship afterwards. During the week, its premises and grounds are used by FICR for its ministry and programme. Do come and see us, and thank you for your support.

*Jean Zaru, Clerk*

### **Netherlands Yearly Meeting**

The theme of this year's annual meeting corresponded with that of the coming World Conference, "Being Salt and Light". We explored possible ways of banishing poverty, protecting the environment and achieving a just global government. To achieve these goals many technological, economic and political measures are needed. Four Friends highlighted different angles of this major challenge and possible personal responses.

Our discussion of the Palestinian Kairos document gave us the opportunity to put the theme of "Light" and "Salt" into practice. After much struggle and thanks to inspiring ministry in the Meeting for Worship we were able to formulate a response to the document. We expressed our worries about the many illegal Israeli settlements in the Palestinian territories. We will inform the Palestinian authors that we have heard their cry of distress and that we disapprove of the occupation and oppression. Apart from our continuous financial support of the (Quaker) peace and reconciliation work in the area,

personal support has been given by two Friends by providing training in Ramallah Peace Centre on NLP and non-violent communication. Two other Friends have worked in Palestine as members of the Christian Peacemaker Team. The Yearly Meeting supports these initiatives wholeheartedly.

This year, it was our turn to host the north-western Border Meeting. The topic of the meeting was “Is everything divine? Spinoza and the Quakers” and the guest speaker was Herman de Dijn, Emeritus Professor of Philosophy at the University of Leuven in Belgium. We learned that Spinoza could well have had contact with those English Friends who visited Amsterdam to spread the Quaker message in the 1650s. We were told that the Jew who translated Margaret Fell’s letter to the Dutch Jews into Hebrew was likely to have been the youthful Spinoza. For more see the report in Among Friends, autumn 2011.

Our active work within the Council of Churches goes on. This acquired a particular international angle because our clerk, Kees Nieuwerth, having been delegated by Church and Peace, was also asked to lead the Dutch delegation to the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation of the World Council of Churches in Kingston, Jamaica. The key theme of the meeting was ‘Just Peace’ (as opposed to the former concept of a so-called ‘just war’). For more information see <http://www.overcomingviolence.org/>. This will also be the theme of our annual meeting in 2012. Moreover, Kees has been invited by FWCC to facilitate three sessions on Just Peace at our World Conference in Kenya in 2012.

Finally, the introduction of Elders within our meetings (we don’t have this function) has been considered as a result of an earlier annual EMES meeting. One monthly meeting is prepared to experiment with (certain aspects of) ‘Eldership’. The follow-up at Yearly Meeting level is a possible extension of the function of the doorkeeper to upholding the proper spirit in the meeting.

*Martin Touwen, Representative*

### **Norway Yearly Meeting**

2011 has been a year of practical tasks for NYM. We are still working to consolidate the economy and secure the framework around our localities in central Oslo. We have also tried to update our system of committees to the contemporary challenges. Being a small YM of approximately 140 members in total, we need to manage our resources wisely to ensure continuity.

This year we gathered (approximately 60 of us) in Søgne, on the south coast, and our emphasis was on the Quaker testimonies, especially the peace testimony. We decided to strengthen our efforts in this field of work, and we are at present exploring our potential for this, as an organisation. A preparatory seminar will be held in Oslo in March 2012 to follow up this concern.

Quakers were not directly affected by the tragic events of July 22<sup>nd</sup>, when an extreme right-wing activist launched a one-man war attack against the Norwegian Government and Labour Party, killing more than 80, most of them young people gathered at the party's annual youth camp. But many of us were friends or acquaintances of the victims. Norway YM has expressed its condolences to the Prime Minister of Norway.

If anything, the events of last summer have strengthened our determination to work with our peace testimony. Norway's famous response with tons of roses show us both the potential for peace thinking, and the need for a more lasting approach than a spontaneous wave of sympathy and compassion.

Oslo MM is still the largest and most active, with different local actions in cooperation with other organisations, and also study activities. They hold their meetings in Norway YM's central localities in Oslo.

These quarters also house Quaker Service Norway, which continues to engage deeply in help projects in Palestine and Africa, funded mostly by Norwegian governmental organisations, but also partly by donations from members. This year, "Kvekerhjelp" has reorganised into an independent body with a separate annual meeting and membership.

We are happy to report that the worship group in Bergen has grown and become more active lately. A new worship group on a small island to the north-west of Norway has also been active during the last year. Both these groups belong to Oslo MM. A worship group in Telemark has also been active during the year.

Kristiansand MM continues to worship twice monthly, and keeps its study group on religious topics going. There is also an active worship group in the small neighbouring town of Mandal, which has organised retreat weekends for members and others.

Norway YM's eldest group, Stavanger MM, still keeps up the tradition of weekly meetings. Like in most groups, numbers vary due to visits by attenders and others. This meeting also takes care of an old 19<sup>th</sup> century meeting house, which is still in occasional use.

One of our challenges is the combination of low numbers and large distances. Despite this, we have been able to do some preparatory work for young members, as an alternative to the Lutheran or humanist confirmation, which in Norway normally takes place at the age of 14-15. Both the annual gathering in June and the family gathering in a mountain lodge in the autumn have made sure that we take extra care of our children and younger members. We hope this will allow us to grow in the future.

Norwegian prisoners of war brought back Quakerism after the Napoleonic wars. We hope to be able to celebrate the upcoming bicentennial as a growing and vital Society of Friends. We also look forward to the World Conference in Kenya, and will hold the great gathering in the Light with glad expectations of an inspiring outcome.

*Dag H. Sture, Representative*

### **Poland, Warsaw Friends Meeting**

2011 was the second year of Warsaw Friends Meeting activity. We meet regularly in The Reformed Congregation in Warsaw. Our meetings take place in Congregation House on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Saturdays at 2 pm (1<sup>st</sup> half of the year) and then on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesdays at 5 pm. The number of people attending the meeting has risen to eight. At the meetings we have hosted representatives from other meetings, inter alia, Prague Meeting, Seattle Meeting and were also visited by representatives of other protestant churches interested in our activity, for instance the Polish Reformed Church and the Unitarian Church in Poland.

Warsaw Friends Meeting manages a nationwide Quaker discussion group <http://groups.google.com/group/kwakrzy> (23 members) and co-manages an open forum about Quakerism <http://www.kwakrzy.fora.pl/> (29 members). The Warsaw group administrates the website [www.kwakrzy.pl](http://www.kwakrzy.pl) / [www.rtp.pl](http://www.rtp.pl) which is the official site of Warsaw Friends Meeting, but is also open for other

Quaker initiatives in Poland. In 2011 the Quaker library was launched with appreciable help from the Friends from Seattle.

We organise lectures and discussions about important social issues. In 2011 a meeting dedicated to ecumenism took place (May 2011) and another meeting about the situation of prisoners in Poland and methods for helping them (September 2011). Furthermore, a presentation and discussion about the Polish Quaker movement after II World War was submitted (November 2011). Friends from our group were invited to debate homosexuality in a meeting organised by Polish Reformed Church and actively took part in it.

In cooperation with the association “Przebudzeni” (The Awaken) the Warsaw group supports prisoners by correspondence and also by donations of books, audio cassettes, food, medicines etc. One of our wards left jail in December 2011 after a long sentence and we are trying to help him to start a new life outside the prison.

Friends from our group were engaged in many projects, e.g. donating blood, various activities for the environment, a protest against the production and use of cluster bombs by Poland and participation in the March of Equality.

Members of Warsaw Friends Meeting are involved in translating the “Quakers in Europe” online Woodbrooke course. In 2011 some of us took part in the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of the Czech version of “QinE” and some are going to participate in the next edition.

Two representatives of the Warsaw group were in Litomyśl, where the XIV Central European Friends Gathering (CEFG) was organised. Warsaw Friends Meeting has started preparations for the organisation of the XV CEFG in 2012 in Poland, which will be held in Niwki, Opole voivodship, from 24-27 May.

*Michał Kotakowski-Mickiewicz*

### **Russia, Moscow Monthly Meeting**

Several members of Moscow Friends Meeting helped to plan and administer a successful Gathering of Russian-Speaking Friends at Kremenchuk, Ukraine, this past October, with the invaluable sponsorship of FWCC European and Middle East Section. Seventeen Friends from five countries considered the

theme “The Gathered Meeting”, enjoyed spiritual exercises based on a new translation of Britain Yearly Meeting's Quaker Faith and Practice, heard reports from our members who attended Britain Yearly Meeting and the recent Evangelical Friends gathering in Tolna, Hungary, and approved a message of love to all the peoples of the former Soviet Union.

On June 5<sup>th</sup>, the Quaker wedding of Kostia and Jeanne Kuzmin took place in Moscow Meeting. Kostia and Jeanne are now living in Novgorod.

During the year, we continued to work on a careful process of self-examination based on a questionnaire and discussion series entitled “Raising the Effectiveness of the Meeting”. Many Friends provided written answers to a variety of questions relating to the quality of our welcome to newcomers, our spiritual depth and disciplines, and ways in which we might strengthen our knowledge of Friends and the bonds of love among us. The compiled document will spark important discussions among us for some months to come.

We watched and prayed as Libya fell victim to new waves of violence and minuted our concern over external intervention. We rejoiced and mourned with our own members’ celebrations and losses during the year, and struggled with the right approach to membership applications from Friends living at a distance. The Bible is often heard in our meetings, and we spent several weeks studying Friends approaches to Scripture, using a sermon by Russian Orthodox Metropolitan Anthony Bloom as a very fruitful starting point. At the end of 2011, we began an urgent search for a new meeting place.

“No more but our love,”

*Johan Maurer, Clerk*

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

Friends House Moscow strives to encourage and support NGO efforts in Russia and other former republics of the USSR. Supported largely by donations by Quakers throughout the world, FHM has given support to the following projects in 2011:

- Education leading to jobs and college for young adults raised in orphanages.
- Innovative programme of support for foster care parents in the newly emerging foster care system in Russia.
- *Alternativshchik*, a newsletter for young men and their families with information on their rights in obtaining alternative service for mandatory army service.
- Alternatives to Violence project workshops in schools, community centres, an army base, orphanages and other places in Ukraine, S. Ossetia, and Russia, including in Dagestan, involved in a low-level guerrilla war.
- Presentations at conferences for juvenile justice professionals encouraging the use of mediation and reconciliation with young offenders.
- Translations of books and pamphlets on Quaker worship, faith and practice, etc. These are available by mail or by download on Quakers.ru, a forum in Russian on Quakerism which FHM maintains.

We are very grateful to the Molly Brown Trust for funding for AVP in Ukraine, to the Radley Trust for their generosity behind the foster care project, and to the BEARR Trust for funding work with young offenders. We also deeply appreciate the funds provided by monthly and yearly meetings in Britain, the U.S., Holland, Germany and others. Individual Friends throughout the world also gave generously.

FHM is also grateful to EMES for helping to sponsor a gathering of Russian speaking Quakers of the former Soviet Union. Seventeen participants from five countries met in Ukraine, coming together in a spirit of peace and friendship to share and to learn from each other's experiences.

To keep in touch with the work of FHM throughout the year, you may go to [www.friendshousemoscow.org](http://www.friendshousemoscow.org), or log into <http://groupspaces.com/fofhm/>.

That last also contains a forum called “Russia Watch” with articles on the news and events in Russia.

Behind all of FHM’s work is the drive to help further the development of civil society within the former Soviet Union, including grass-roots collaboration and non-violent communication. Please join our work!

*FHM Staff*

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

This has been quite a quiet year for Barcelona, especially with some illness and several members leaving to live in various other parts of the globe. Nevertheless, Meeting has continued to be held twice a month, save in the summer months.

There have been some highlights: Gerard Negelspach, who with Nancy Negelspach came to live in Barcelona in the nineteen sixties in order to help found Barcelona Meeting, was given a monograph exhibition of his lifetime work as artist and sculptor by the small medieval town of Montblanc, in which they now reside. This involved months of preparation and many visits from lifelong Friends and friends in order to attend the opening and presentation by the town hall.

We were contacted out of the blue by the Spanish Ministry for Culture of the Archive Section, who was interested in preserving the historical memory of the work of Quakers in the Spanish Civil War period. This led to a meeting with Rosa Serra, who had herself published her PhD on the subject in book form (in Catalan), and the project to now translate and publish it in Castilian Spanish. We were very excited by this and continue to think about ways of perhaps translating the work into English, especially since not losing this historical memory and others similar seem to be something of a theme at the moment.

We wish everyone a good 2012.

*Caroline Wilson*

### **Sweden Yearly Meeting**

A highlight of the year was Sweden Yearly Meeting, held in early June 2011 at the Quaker Retreat Centre at Svartbäcken. The theme of the Yearly Meeting was ‘Spiritual Gifts’. Drawing inspiration from the EMES Annual Meeting in

Bonn in 2010, the YM Elders set the scene and atmosphere with a reflective introduction. During the weekend Thomas Swain from Philadelphia YM led us through a process in which we found the courage and joy to see our own and each others' spiritual gifts. In his gentle way, Thomas reminded us that we are called to grow in fullness and be the people we are intended to be. As the Religious Society of Friends needs everyone's gifts, we should not hide our Light under a bushel. We read texts and did exercises that inspired and helped us to step out of our deep-seated comfort zones and dare to love in a new and fresh interpretation of its power. By affirming and naming our gifts we became more aware of our own identities. Some of the exercises we did were challenging. Others were playful – one being to summarise what we had learned and discovered by writing new words to old songs. That was great fun! Being aware that we have an increasing number of attenders, as well as new members, we have begun to offer weekend-long "Meetings for Learning" as a way of informing about our Quaker ways and methods. These appear to be very much appreciated, which gives us confidence to continue this work.

Change is inevitable – people move house, have increasing workloads, start families, grow old, die and so on – and this is also reflected in the lives of our Meetings. In 2011 one worship group has diminished radically in number as a result of removals from the area, another has been laid down and a new one has sprung to life across county borders. In Sweden many Friends live miles away from a regular Meeting for Worship, but it is heartening to see that people are prepared to travel long distances to attend meeting and enjoy being together in things eternal – and social.

During the year study groups have been held on a variety of Quaker subjects, retreats have taken place in a number of locations, the Experiment with Light group has continued to meet on a regular basis, and the Thursday evening 'worship sharing' sessions prior to Meeting for Worship in Stockholm have continued to attract considerable interest.

Quaker Service Sweden is an important part of our Yearly Meeting and in the autumn of 2011 succeeded in securing Swedish Government aid funds for work with the extreme poor (especially women, children and the disabled) in north-east Bangladesh. With the aid of YM funds, QSS has been able to continue to support Friends' work in Gaza and Ramallah.

We also agreed to a new publishing venture – the production of a year-book instead of a quarterly journal, as a long-lasting and important outreach tool. A new chapter for our Quaker Faith and Practice, this time relating to Nominations Committee work, was also approved.

*Sue Glover Frykman and Lars Longueville, Representatives*

### **Switzerland Yearly Meeting**

Switzerland Yearly Meeting (SYM) held a retreat from January 14<sup>th</sup>–16<sup>th</sup> 2011 at Montmirail on the theme “Global change”.

A delegation from SYM participated in the German-language Border Meeting at Lindenberg, near St. Peter in the Black Forest, Germany, from April 1<sup>st</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> 2011 on the theme “The Light from the Sermon on the Mount”.

From April 21<sup>st</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> 2011 FWCC-EMES met in Switzerland, near Aarau, at Herzberg, in a joint gathering with EMEYF, the young Quakers from all over Europe and the Middle East. In addition, the gathering included the members of the FWCC Central Executive Committee, who were due to meet later the same week in Rüdlingen, as well as members of the International Planning Committee for the 2012 World Conference to be held in Kenya from April 17<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> at Karabak University in Nakuru. More than 100 Friends from 26 countries met at this gathering, with the overall theme “Bring and share, a feast of Quaker fare”, which gave the opportunity for many personal exchanges. Members of Switzerland Yearly Meeting helped with the logistics of the entertainment and the excursions.

SYM held its annual gathering as usual over the Whitsun weekend, from May 10<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup>, at the same location as 2010, the Centre Réformé in the village of Charmey in the French-speaking part of Switzerland, with approx. 60 participants. The theme “*What Can We as (Swiss) Quakers Say on Global Change?*” was in response to our contemporary world and the extreme, rapid, and widespread changes to our environment, climate, economy, and society which affect us all. A lecture presented the work of QUNO in Geneva: What does QUNO do and how does it relate to SYM and the whole Quaker movement?

In 2011, the exhibition on Pierre Ceresole (founder of the International Civil Service and a Swiss Quaker) was launched and is displayed in turns in various towns in Switzerland. It is available in German and in French. If Friends in

Germany, Austria, France or Belgium are interested, they can contact SYM and we will forward their request.

The annual gathering of German-speaking Swiss Friends took place on November 13<sup>th</sup> 2011 in Bern, on the subject: “What does positive psychology has to say to us Quakers”, along the lines of its founder, Martin Seligman, from the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, and Barbara Fredrickson’s book “Positivity”.

*Frank van Pems, Representative*

### **Europe and Middle East Young Friends**

Whilst EMEYF does not have a formal relationship with FWCC, Yearly Meetings, or FWCC-EMES, it does not exist within a vacuum. Just as the young person growing up must go and explore the world for themselves and define their own relationships with others, so EMEYF works to define its informal relationships with other Quaker bodies – learning and gathering inspiration as well as offering our own voice into the World Family of Friends. For EMEYF it is important that we see ourselves in terms of a wider family; we encompass such a wide region of the world and within that a wide experience of faith and spirituality. Further we encompass a world that is much more than our spiritual meetings; we are active citizens in the world trying to forge our own roles and pursue our own actions to make the world a place where we want to be involved.

Our Spring Gathering was held as a joint gathering with EMES and was an opportunity to meet Friends from around the world and share spiritual stories and experiences; strengthening our understanding of what it is to be a Quaker and part of the Quaker family. Not all of the people present shared the same spiritual understandings and theologies, but throughout our moving week we discovered a unity through our diversity and the Gathering was a nourishing experience for all those who attended.

The different needs and expectations of EMEYF and FWCC-EMES at the Gathering caused tenderness for those who were key to organising the event and reminded us of the importance in our community of holding each other in the light and accompanying each other in fellowship. The Joint Gathering reminded us of the need for EMEYF to exist and allow a space for Young Adult Friends to be together; connected in faith, to build and strengthen our

community as well as the equal importance for EMEYF to look outwards and define its relationships with the wider Quaker family by being able to speak of what it is about EMEYF that makes it such a special experience for us all. It is only through being able to discuss these things in an open and equal way that we will be able to see any differences of experience as a strength that can unite us rather than divide us.

Our Annual Meeting held in November 2011 was as much a spiritual event as a business event and gave us opportunity to reconnect and learn more of each other and our lives. We focused our discernment on: how we wanted EMEYF to be, how we wanted to experience faith, outreach and fellowship.

Building on the EMEYF experience this year we hope that EMEYF will continue to shape itself and define its place in the world family of Friends in a way that allows it to be inreaching and outreaching and addressing some of the other tasks in the world which may benefit our discernment and action.

The increasing number of new people getting involved is heartening to all and further demonstrates the need for EMEYF to continue to exist. With each new person it is like a piece of the jigsaw being added; each bringing their own uniqueness to our community. We hope to continue to grow in the years to come; adapting and interacting with the changes around us and that are required of us in order for EMEYF to service Young Adult Friends across the section for another 30 years.

*Leo Vincent, Marielke Nieuwerth-van den Akker (outgoing), Esther Köhring (incoming), EMEYF Elders*

### **Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA) – the Quaker Voice in Europe**

2011 has been a truly challenging year for the European Union. The financial crisis and the way this is impacting on the Euro have been in the news almost all the time. This has possibly not yet had much of an impact on our work but the signs of tension within the European Union are everywhere. Sometimes it seems that when we listen to the news and hear of more gloom from the rating agencies that there are some people out there who want to ensure that the European Union (or at least the Euro) will fail.

The constant undertone of UK euro-scepticism seems to support that trend or tendency and any talk of Treaty changes – very much in the news at the end of the year – have us concerned about the future of the European project.

The European Union (along with the Council of Europe) was begun as a peace project. It all started just in the aftermath of the Second World War when six countries from both sides of the recent wars came together to set up a structure that would prevent future wars between them. Some sixty years later and with 27 countries in the European Union, they have achieved at least that. We would have to say that is a success and one that is certainly worth keeping. Whilst all these big issues are going on around us,

- We have continued to focus on the energy security agenda of the EU (advocating binding energy efficiency targets as a key contribution to meeting the CO<sub>2</sub> emission reduction).
- We have worked hard throughout the year to try to influence the EU in its stance vis-à-vis Israel and Palestine.
- We have continued our efforts (as part of the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office – a platform of now 30 NGOs which was co-founded by QCEA over 10 years ago) to ensure conflict prevention and peacebuilding have a high profile in the EU's foreign policy.
- We have extended our criminal justice focus to include the growing role the European Union is playing in this field and helped in the process to bring together a new group of NGOs working on this.
- We have engaged in the now increasingly heated discussions about the next European Union budgetary framework for the next 7 years: trying to ensure that climate action, energy efficiency, research for the common good (rather than just for profit), and peacebuilding and conflict prevention have a significant place.

We haven't neglected the Council of Europe, although our focus there has been less active because structural and financial challenges have meant that policy process take longer. A Founder Member of QCEA (though now unrelated to QCEA), Martyn Bond has published a book about the Council of Europe which will be reviewed in *Around Europe* in February.

2011 also saw a new look website, blog, tweeting and the Action Alert programme. For more information on all these see: [www.qcea.org](http://www.qcea.org)

*Liz Scurfield and Martina Weitsch*

### **Quaker United Nations Office and Committee (Geneva)**

This was a year of transitions in staffing and achievements in programme work for QUNO Geneva. David Atwood retired as Director and Disarmament and Peace Representative and Jonathan Woolley started as Director in June. The ongoing work on peace and disarmament was supported by Paulin Regnard as Programme Officer during 2011 in order to ensure fulfilment of existing commitments (particularly in relation to the regional seminars and Ministerial Conference on Armed Violence and Development) and maintenance of contacts while enabling time for reflection and discernment of the work for its next phase.

A major development was the judgment of the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights that conscientious objection to military service is protected under the European Human Rights Convention's right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. QUNO had contributed to this as lead drafter of an amicus brief ('third party intervention') which provided the Court with information about the UN recognition of conscientious objection and other relevant facts. This amicus brief was cited by the Court and the judgment followed the same approach as the UN Human Rights Committee's in recognising the right of conscientious objection.

QUNO was a major player in the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child's Day of General Discussion on 'children of incarcerated parents'. Oliver Robertson co-chaired the NGO Working Group on Children of Incarcerated Parents, and facilitated one of the official working groups for the Day. QUNO also organised an exhibition – "Collateral Convicts", now available for use by others – showing the child's view of having a parent arrested and imprisoned. Over 200 people attended the Day, mostly professionals and practitioners, and

engaged in real discussion of the issues. Both the Committee and QUNO will be producing publications.

QUNO's work on food and sustainability promotes informed and balanced consideration of the issues around intellectual property and seeds, including through its publication, [Food, Biological Diversity and Intellectual Property: The Role of the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants \(UPOV\)](#). QUNO has also commissioned a publication to serve as a policy guide to developing countries clarifying flexibilities needed in the application of intellectual property laws to plants.

The work on human impacts of climate change continues. QUNO was invited to the "Nansen Conference on Climate Change and Displacement in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" (in Oslo) and which adopted a set of Principles. QUNO's specific contribution was the inclusion of the impact on receiving communities and those who stay behind, in addition to the need to address the situation of those who move.

In addition to the change of Directors, during the year QUNO said farewell to Aoife Reaper-Reynolds and Carolan Goggin on completion of their Programme Assistant terms and welcomed three new ones, Helen Kearney, Lynn Finnegan and Steven Heywood. Other staff: Representatives Caroline Dommen and Rachel Brett; Oliver Robertson (Programme Officer), Sylviane Trousseau (Office Manager), Rene Lejeune (Finance Office). Neithard Petry continues as the FWCC EMES member on the Committee for QUNO Geneva.

*Rachel Brett, Human Rights & Refugees Representative*

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

This is my last year as the FWCC-EMES Representative to the Quaker United Nations Office in New York. It has been a privilege to support our Quaker work at the United Nations, and as a former United Nations official, I am convinced that Quakers offer a special gift to the UN community. We are not just another international non-governmental organisation. We are a religious body which upholds the United Nations mission to bring peace to the world. Our presence brings a spiritual message and a foundation that draws us beyond purely political advocacy work. Whether in New York or in Geneva, the QUNO offices speak truth to the powerful, give voice to the disempowered, and use our quiet diplomacy in the belief that conflicting groups can find

resolution in a safe, secure and confidential place. Over the many decades, we have gained trust and respect from the international community for our work.

The QUNO New York office is fully staffed with its director Andrew Tomlinson, Representatives Sarah Clark and Camilla Campisi, and new programme assistants Samia Abbas and Kristin Mandela. QUNO NY focuses on Peacebuilding, Prevention (of conflict), Liaison and Outreach. In its Peacebuilding Programme, QUNO has supported the work of the UN Peace Building Commission and Peacebuilding Support Office to strengthen peace efforts in post-conflict countries. In particular, QUNO emphasises the crucial role of civil society in securing lasting peace and reconciliation in a post-conflict regions. This has been a poignant message, as the UN mechanisms are too often disconnected from the grassroots communities, whose support is often the backbone of a lasting peace. QUNO has been particularly involved the prevention of election violence (Democratic Republic of Congo), restorative justice (Burundi), and peacebuilding capacity (Liberia), often in conjunction with fellow Quakers from these regions. QUNO's Peacebuilding and Prevention work is often interwoven; the Prevention programme works to connect the UN, diplomatic and NGO communities with efforts to promote political dialogue and peace in conflict-sensitive regions. QUNO staff are active on challenges facing countries such as Somalia and Myanmar, and in supporting the upcoming election process in Kenya. The Peacebuilding and Prevention programmes are also engaged in efforts to encourage emerging centres of power, such as China, in order to take on a peaceful and responsible role in the international community.

The QUNO Liaison and Outreach work is structured to be flexible, allowing QUNO to respond quickly to crises or sudden Quaker concerns. In the last year, for example, QUNO was able to spend considerable time on the issues of Palestine and Israel, to support QUNO Geneva's work on disarmament, violent arms and development, as well as spending time with Quaker and ecumenical gatherings.

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

*Lindsey Fielder Cook, Bonn*

## **Quaker Voluntary Action**

Our Working Retreat programme again enabled Friends and others to join together for a blend of spiritual reflection and practical work. We ran eight Retreats in 2011, lasting between five and ten days.

We visited Palestine twice, working in collaboration with the Friends International Centre in Ramallah. In addition to a modest amount of practical work, our Retreats contained a substantial learning element for participants. Trips and talks were arranged to give several perspectives on issues to do with the Israeli / Palestinian situation, and the work of local peacemakers was seen at first hand.

Participants on our Ramallah Retreats returned inspired and enthused by the work of those they met there. Several have this taken forward back home through publicity and awareness raising and one participant was inspired enough to become a Trustee of QVA.

QVA has begun work on a joint fundraising Appeal with FICR which will be launched in February 2012. We are keen to support FICR's vital work, and have agreed to administrate fundraising efforts in the UK. We hope also that those in other parts of Europe will feel led to help publicise and contribute to the Appeal.

Away from Ramallah, our overarching theme for the year's Retreats was Sustainability. We visited Holland and Sweden, and were particularly glad to have Dutch participants present. We also held four Retreats in the UK.

At our Bamford (UK) Retreat we combined discussion and reflection with practical work to make the buildings more eco-friendly. Young and old, with different skills and abilities, came together. As one participant describes:

“We worshipped together and reflected on themes at the crossroads between the sustainability of our world and the spiritual life and were given new insight. We prepared meals and ate together, had a lot of fun and became a community.”

Thank you for all your support in 2011. We hope to welcome as many Friends as possible from across Europe & the Middle East to our Working Retreats in 2012. Why not join us?

*Conor Jerram, Clerk*

### **Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre**

Woodbrooke has continued to develop its programme of education throughout the year. Under the careful leadership of Julia Ryberg, the *Quaker in Europe* online project continues its life among Friends in different parts of Europe. The fifth run in French had participants from France, Belgium, Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of Congo. A fourth run in Czech begins in January 2012 and translations into Esperanto are completed. Woodbrooke and FWCC-EMES have been evaluating this jointly sponsored project, and we hope to have this completed in early 2012. The findings of the evaluation will help us determine what changes may need to be made in the course content and format. It will also help Woodbrooke in its explorations of how e-learning can be developed and more widely used in its course offerings, in order to broaden the access to our educational programme.

The online version of the English-language Becoming Friends course, whilst initially designed for Britain Yearly Meeting, has also attracted a number of participants from other countries, among them Belgium, Finland, France, Ireland, Netherlands, Portugal and Spain.

Woodbrooke went “on-the-road in Europe” during 2011. Lizz Roe ran an event at the Central European Gathering in the Czech Republic with *Let Your Life Speak* and Tim Peat Ashworth and Alex Wildwood travelled to Germany with *Rooted in Christianity, Open to New Light*. In October, Zelig Gross and Michael Booth spent a weekend with Belgium and Luxembourg MM at their annual residential weekend exploring the theme *Growing as a Community Grounded in the Spirit*. In November, Harvey Gilman led a day with French Quakers (and friends) at the Quaker Centre in Paris, focusing on *Deepening the Spiritual Life of the Meeting*. We will be looking forward to further “on-the-road in Europe” events in 2012.

In May, the Postgraduate Quaker Studies tutor, Betty Hagglund, was one of the guest speakers at a “special event in Saumur”, in France, to mark the naming of a square after the Quaker, William Penn. Around 130 people from seven

different yearly meetings from across Europe and North America travelled to the town. Betty gave a talk about the daily life of the students at the Protestant Academy in Saumur during the seventeenth century, at the time when Penn was there. Woodbrooke's Centre for Postgraduate Quaker Studies (CPQS) was also invited to judge the essay competition which came before the event.

The Catchpool Fund continues to help us support the European Projects work as well as providing individual bursaries. Woodbrooke is committed to meeting the learning needs of Friends in Europe as best it can, through courses and conferences that create learning communities. Sometimes those communities exist for only a few days, and sometimes they create connections that last a lifetime.

*Sandra Berry, Director*

### Yearly Meetings in 2012

Yearly Meeting	When	Contact
Denmark	24-25 March	<a href="mailto:post@kvaekerne.dk">post@kvaekerne.dk</a>
Ireland	12-15 April	<a href="mailto:office@quakers-in-ireland.ie">office@quakers-in-ireland.ie</a>
Netherlands	17-20 May	<a href="mailto:secretariaat@dequakers.nl">secretariaat@dequakers.nl</a>
Sweden	17-20 May	<a href="mailto:kvakargarden@kvakare.se">kvakargarden@kvakare.se</a>
Britain	25-28 May	Paul Parker, Clerk, Friends House, 173 Euston Road London NW1 2AX <a href="mailto:karlg@quaker.org.uk">karlg@quaker.org.uk</a>
Switzerland	25-28 May	<a href="mailto:rorie_nazareth@bluewin.ch">rorie_nazareth@bluewin.ch</a>
Norway	26-28 May	<a href="mailto:kveker@kveker.org">kveker@kveker.org</a>
France	26-29 July	<a href="mailto:assembleedefrance@gmail.com">assembleedefrance@gmail.com</a>
Finland	12-14 October	<a href="mailto:majjamakela4@gmail.com">majjamakela4@gmail.com</a>
German	18-21 October	<a href="mailto:clerks@quaeker.org">clerks@quaeker.org</a>

**Other events in 2012**

Grenztreffen Switzerland/Germany/France	23-25 March	Brigitte Seger
EMEYF Spring Gathering	6-13 April	Hannah Slater
QCEA Study Tour	14-21 April	Cat Hellewell
Sixth World Conference of Friends, Kenya	17-25 April	Marleen Schepers
Central European Gathering	24-27 May	Michal Kolakowski-Mickiewicz
Quaker Youth Pilgrimage, Europe	15 July-15 Aug	Rachel Miller
Border Meeting for Friends from Europe, in Strasbourg	7-9 Sept	Mike Zipser
Peace and Service Consultation in Kortenberg, Belgium	2-4 November	<a href="mailto:emes@fwccemes.org">emes@fwccemes.org</a>

**CONTRIBUTING TO FWCC EMES**

The work of FWCC EMES depends on contributions from the Yearly Meetings in the Section and from individual donations. Contributions for the general work can be made using the bank details below.

**In Sterling: By international transfer to:**

Unity Trust Bank plc, Nine Brindleyplace, Birmingham, B1 2HB, UK  
 IBAN: GB11 CPBK 0800 5150 0732 10  
 BIC: CPBKGB22

It is also **essential** that you quote the following details

Account Name: FWCC-EMES

Account Number: 20180696

Sort Code: 08-60-01

**Holders of UK bank accounts** can also send cheques or CAF vouchers in pounds sterling made out to 'FWCC-EMES'.

**In Euros: Sozialbank Account**

IBAN: DE35 3702 0500 0001 0795 00 in Germany just 1079500)

BIC: BFSWDE33XXX (in Germany just 370 205 00)

Name: Sozialbank

Location: Cologne (Köln), Wörthstr. 15-17, 50668 Köln

In the name of: Friends World Committee for Consultation Europe & Middle East

**CONTRIBUTING TO THE AMARI CAMP PLAY CENTRE, RAMALLAH**

There is a separate, FWCC-EMES Amari Play Centre account. Contributions for the play centre should be made as follows:

**By international transfer to:**

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

IBAN: GB48 MIDL 4005 3072 1385 49

BIC: MIDLGB2141W

It is also **essential** that you quote the following details

Account Name: FWCC-EMES Amari Play Centre

Account Number: 00091841

Sort Code: 40-52-40

**Holders of UK bank accounts** can also send cheques or CAF vouchers in pounds sterling for the 'FWCC-EMES Amari Play Centre' to the EMES office.

**Please note that EMES does not hold accounts for other Quaker work in the Section**

Please contact the FWCC EMES Office or the Treasurer, Neithard Petry, for further information or to inform us of bank transfers you are making.

