

Among Friends

No 123: Spring 2012

Published by the Europe and Middle East Section of Friends World Committee for Consultation
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Renewal and Transformation

Dear Friends,

Notwithstanding our testimony against Times and Seasons, I have subscribed to a daily Lenten reflection sent by email. I was reminded that the term Lent comes from an old English word meaning “spring,” the time of “lengthening of days.” *During Lent we begin to see new plant and animal life as the earth emerges from winter and moves toward another fruitful summer season. As the earth appears to awaken and bring forth new life, we can, through our observance of Lent, awaken to new spiritual awareness as well. The journey of Easter is the journey of transformation. It’s the journey of letting go, dying to the old and being born anew. It’s about surrendering and being transformed into a greater expression of joy, a greater expression of love, a greater expression of you!*

(Extract from Spiritual Preparation for the Lenten Season for Yogananda devotees by Stephen Sturgess).

When I read Etty Hillesum’s diaries and letters, and *A Life Transformed* by Patrick Woodhouse, reviewed by our Friend Jane Rose on page 8, I was profoundly moved by her steadfast faith in God and refusal to demonise even those who were inflicting the most appalling suffering on her and her fellow Jewish people.



Spring - Photo: Joe Snyder

Etty exercised compassion towards all, even Nazi guards, and naturally responded to “that of God” in everyone.

Often I hear Friends refer to “that of good”. This is not a meaning that I have ever read into “that of God”. On the contrary, I take it to mean that even when I face an individual with whom I can make no meaningful connection and in whom I can detect no redeeming feature, I have to respond to “that of God” in them, the imprint and birthright of our common humanity. In other words, my own behaviour is to be guided by that recognition, and not by their behaviour towards me. I see this phrase as a consequence of Jesus’ command to “love our enemies”, itself a restatement and extension of the instruction in Leviticus to “love your neighbour as yourself”, a form of the “Golden Rule” of compassion found in most religions. “That of God” is something precious and very fragile, wrapped up in many layers of human messiness. Like in a game of pass-the-parcel, we go on unwrapping in the hope of finding the gift. Most of the time we just find another layer of wrapping. Very occasionally, we win the prize, and are rewarded with “that of God” revealed to us in another human being – or in ourselves.

Marisa Johnson, Executive Secretary

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Quaker Concern For Animals

Quaker Concern for Animals (QCA) has been informally linked to The Religious Society of Friends in Britain, dating back to 1891, when The Friends' Anti-Vivisection Association was founded, with Joseph Storrs Fry as its first President and among its members, the Quaker Member of Parliament, Joshua Rowntree. In his 1808 Portrait of Quakerism, the Anglican Thomas Clarkson said of Friends:

"The word benevolence, when applied to the character of the Society, includes also a tender feeling towards the brute creation. It has frequently been observed by those who are acquainted with its members, that all animals belonging to them are treated with a tender consideration and not permitted to be abused..."

John Woolman wrote:

"To say that we love God and at the same time exercise cruelty toward the least creature is a contradiction in itself."

In the course of time, our association enlarged its concerns, as its new name indicated: Animal Welfare and Anti-Vivisection Society. In 1978, the group became known as Quaker Concern for Animals.

Membership of QCA has always been open to non-Friends, but our main leading is to encourage Friends to be aware of our responsibilities towards our fellow creatures, speaking up at Quaker Meetings for Worship for a more benevolent and respectful attitude towards the animal creation. We attend conferences and religious services, circulate a newsletter twice a year and lobby governments and responsible authorities on issues of concern.



Happy dog - photo: QCA



Donations are made twice-yearly to many sanctuaries and animal protection societies both here and overseas and our emphasis is on the smaller and lesser-known groups which struggle to survive.

QCA also cooperates with other religious and secular animal welfare groups and we are committed to our interfaith policy. In September, we shall again be represented at the 9th Interfaith Celebration of Animals, organised under the auspices of the World Congress of Faiths, of which one of our committee, a Unitarian minister, is secretary.

Our patrons are Nitin Mehta, of the Jain society The Young Indian Vegetarians, André Menache of Antidote-Europe, veterinarian and expert on regulatory toxicology and the Quaker poet Rosie Bailey.

QCA members have campaigned against hunting and hare coursing; we continue to oppose factory farming and the export of live animals for slaughter, the exploitation of animals in laboratory experimentation, and in captivity. We support those who adopt a plant-based diet and lobby against the destruction of animal habitats and the environment in general.

Considering that our Testimony for Peace and Non-Violence should be extended to our fellow animals too, we have developed links with the peace movement. We are affiliates of The Movement for the Abolition of War and, in company with other denominations and faiths, lay purple poppies for the animals lost in war at Remembrance Day services at cenotaphs throughout Britain.

We like to think that we have taken to heart the Quaker Advice: "Let the law of kindness know no limits. Show a loving consideration for all God's creatures."

Please visit our web site at <http://www.quaker-animals.org.uk>

Report of EFCI Conference in Hungary

Richard S. Harrison, *Ireland Yearly Meeting writes:*

Carolyn McMullen and I attended the Evangelical Friends Church International [EFCI] Conference in Hungary, 14-16 October 2011, as observers from Ireland Yearly Meeting in response to an invitation to IYM from Evangelical Friends Church International (EFCI), an umbrella body organised in five world regions, of which Europe is the most recent. They were accompanied by Rachel M. Bewley-Bateman, Clerk of FWCC EMES.

The Bolivian Friends Church is under the EFCI umbrella, of which Dr Ron Stansell, Professor of Missiology, is Secretary. He spent fourteen years in Bolivia helping to translate the Bible into Aymara. Now retired, he travels the world to remote regions harmonising the work of EFCI under the aegis of North Western YM, one of the Yearly Meetings in the United States in the Programmed Evangelical tradition. He sees his work as following Christ's command to preach the gospel to all the world.

Pastor Tony Frei left the Baptist community in which he was raised, to set up a livelier entity in Tolna, along with his parents and family. Within the past four years he met Nancy Irving, General Secretary of FWCC, and was encouraged to see himself as part of a wider Quaker community. Contact with members of North Western YM further confirmed him in his choice. He has met members of the Hungarian Friends Worship Group in Budapest.

These Hungarian Friends are clearly a native phenomenon with wide appeal, and they now have some fourteen churches and other groups amounting to some two thousand adherents. They have a wider constituency in Croatia, Serbia, Transylvania and Romania, apparently among people sharing the assumptions of Hungarian culture, but with several languages commonly used among them, and including a large number of Gypsy people who are frequently disregarded by society and live in extreme poverty. Contact with these Friends has resulted in improvement in their lives, their emergence from poverty and a will to create better conditions for themselves. This grows out of their declared faith in the



EFCI Europe Conference in Hungary. Photo by Rachel Bewley-Bateman

saving power of Jesus Christ. They are warm, passionate and highly inventive people.

We met in the Friends Church in Tolna, a neat modern meetinghouse with a large yard, kitchen and ancillary rooms. The building was constructed by the members themselves. Tolna is a small country town of about 11,000 people about two hours south east of Budapest. The conference focussed on Mission and Evangelization, attracting pastors and members from constituent Hungarian groups. Ron Stansell's keynote addresses were translated into Hungarian. There were appropriate mentions of William Penn and George Fox and vigorous sessions of heart-felt hymn singing and testimony in Hungarian. Many hymns were translations from 'Mission Praise', familiar to many Irish Friends. Prayers were in eight or more languages, including Irish.

I feel privileged to have attended and was impressed by the generosity and overwhelming hospitality of the Hungarian Friends we met and by their rich heart-felt responses and greetings. Support and links with the wider family of Friends can only be helpful to this young church. It was stimulating to be among people who have found their lives changed by Jesus Christ. The well-thumbed Bible spilling out of its binding and the radiant face of the Romany Pastor told its own story, and generosity, friendship and kindness can open many doors which the fearful would keep shut.

Congo Election Monitoring

Penny Heymans of *Quaker Service Norway* writes:

Through its Change Agent Peace Programme (CAPP) in DR Congo, Burundi, Rwanda and Kenya Quaker Service Norway (QSN) has provided training courses prior to elections, election observation, and post election monitoring since 2004. The work is now done through the Quaker Peace Network (QPN) which was formed in 2004 and which consists of 40 different Quaker Peace Programmes in 13 countries in Africa. Change Agents for Peace International (CAPI), QSN's main partner in its work in the Great Lakes, is the secretariat for QPN.

In the most recent elections in The Democratic Republic of Congo (D R Congo) in November 2011 a total of 32 million people were registered to vote but only 19 million in fact did. The elections took place amidst widespread fear and confusion over a number of issues. This was the second election to be held since 2006 after the country lived under dictatorship for over 40 years. QPN working together with local organisations had drawn together over 300 local observers with eight international observers from Kenya, Burundi, Tanzania, Rwanda and Canada working on Election Day.

The elections were generally seen to be peaceful, contrary to what many had predicted that there would be an outbreak of violence. The Kivu province in Eastern Congo where most of QPN observers were concentrated remained calm throughout the voting period. The election training conducted through the CAPP programme prior to the election consisted of civic education at grass root levels targeting diverse



Jean Paul, a QPN observer votes in Uvira
Photo: Penny Heymans

groups, notably sensitizing youth and women to participate in the process, both as voters and candidates. Radio messages were used to educate and encourage people to vote, with an accent being given to peaceful elections. Peace workshops, such as Alternatives to Violence (AVP) were conducted to encourage people to use non-violent means of resolving conflicts. Such trainings were effective in changing people's perceptions and behaviour during election period so as to reduce manipulation based on bribery and ethnicity.

QPN members, clad in QPN T-shirts and caps, have testified that they were very enriched both individually and as organizations after participating in the elections. The training conducted for election observers provided the necessary skills and confidence to observe alongside other local and international observers. They became more visible and were recognized by the National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI) and other international organizations, especially in Uvira and Goma that had fewer observers from other organizations.

DR Congo still has to go through 6 more elections; Provincial elections (25 March, 2012), Elections for senate (4 July 2012), Elections for Governors and Vice-Governors (21 July 2012), Local elections (5 Feb 2013), Elections for urban advices, chiefs of Sectors and "Bourgmestres" (1 May 2013), Elections for Mayors (24 June 13). There is much to be done.



QPN Observers pose for a group photo in Kinshasa
Photo: Penny Heymans

Letter from Kate de la Mare

Kate de la Mare writes on 13th January 2012:

(Readers will remember from the previous issue of Among Friends that Kate and her husband Sébastien are travelling through India with Ekta Parishad, a movement promoting the rights of the poorest people in the country).

The Christmas period was full of rich experiences for us. We took nearly three weeks away from the school, hoping to meet tribal people in the Niamgivi Hills. We found ourselves once again staying on the edge of a big village/small town in a new concrete building which is the office-base of an NGO working for people's development (self-help groups linked to micro-finance, education/hygiene).

Providentially, on our first day in town we met a young man from a local very small village. Thomas, a keen Christian who has learned English well and who came to be our translator and guide during our stay – with the fervent request that we come and visit his village and other villages where Christians are present. The first days in this area Sébastien fell sick and our visit to the tribal people was delayed. Finally, we set off with Thomas and walked for about two hours through the jungle and up the mountain, meeting with a couple on the way, who were returning to their village after market day, and helped us find our way.

On arrival the villages were afraid that we might be connected to Vedanta, the mining corporation which is threatening their continued existence as forest-dwellers. They said we might stay one night and they would meet in the morning to discuss our request further. We were preparing a campfire for the night about 100 yards from the village, when guerrillas arrived and said we must go, that they were defending the people and the mountain from Vedanta (not helped by the fact that the NGO where we were lodging distributes Vedanta's food supplement flour in local villages).

Finally, after the intervention of one or two of the village women, it was agreed that we might stay until morning, in the village itself. We all returned



Ekta Parishad - Photo: Gerald Conyngham

together the 100 yards up the hill. Village people first and guerrillas behind. I was glad we had not simply caved in to threats of violence, yet sad to have brought this added disturbance into the villagers' life. Glad to be with them in their village, yet regretful that the presence of the guerrillas largely prevented direct communication with the people. It was a very challenging experience for Thomas (who is barely 20 years old) who was afraid for his/our lives – and a deep opportunity for all three of us to share in what it means to live from faith.

How joyful Thomas was when we returned to the plain and were warmly received into the nearest village (where about half are Christians) – beginning of an unexpected two week period of visiting, praying, worshipping and laying on of hands in a number of villages in the surrounding plains area; during which time we were based in Thomas' own small village, sleeping with him and his parents in their little two-roomed house. In the attacks on Christian villages in 2008 these people and their Christian neighbours all had their homes destroyed. In such circumstances, the Gospel challenge to live, not in the fear of man, but to openly sacrifice all to the cause of Love, came alive for me as never before.

Ways for sharing our faith: in-reach: outreach

Jane Rose writes *writes:*

I participated on a gently empowering retreat weekend in Svartbäcken (a Quaker retreat centre in Sweden) amid the November gloom. The outside natural world was trying to go into winter hibernation at the same time as we twelve Friends from different YMs around Europe were cocooned in Svartbäcken. The theme for the weekend was: Sharing our Faith.

What I personally took away from this meeting for learning, apart from the fellowship, the wonderful food, the natural space and the chance to talk with other isolated and not so isolated Friends, were particular ways (I don't want to call them techniques) of facilitating the sharing of things that deeply matter to us. These ways are not exclusive to Friends and may not have originated with Friends, but during our weekend they helped me see how it may be possible to open up and share matters of our Quaker approach to faith with others.

Many Friends are rather reticent to do this, both in the context of outreach (which is what we usually focus on when the topic of sharing our faith comes up) but also in-reach. By in-reach I mean deepening the spiritual life of our own meetings or worship groups by regular sharing of what we have found as well as what we struggle with, and above all deepening the experience (quality) of our Meetings for Worship.

I would like to share three of the ways which were used on the retreat. The first one is the familiar experience of Worship Sharing. Worship Sharing being a chance for all in a group to share something from personal



Photo: Julia Ryberg

experience in an atmosphere of trust and acceptance where each contribution is punctuated with silence and not commented on or evaluated in any way. Worship Sharing is not new for me, but I have never used it as a lead-in to Worship, which was how it was used on this retreat. This made it a significantly different experience for me as the knowledge that Meeting for Worship would immediately follow our Worship Sharing lent quite a different quality to our sharing, and in turn the worship itself seemed to be deepened and opened, perhaps because our hearts and minds had a chance to prepare together.

The second way was Holy Listening. As we prepared for Meeting for Worship with Worship Sharing we also prepared for the Holy Listening. In this case our preparation took the form of a personal hour (we could walk, sit, draw, write...) where we could focus on what we have found on our journey (what makes our hearts sing). In Holy Listening we were with one other person, and each of us had 15 minutes for sharing and 15 minutes for listening. This gave freedom both to the speaker and the listener, as the listener was there to listen and 'be with', not to interject or respond verbally and the speaker could speak in total confidence that he or she was truly being listened to.

The third way was a different kind of listening; this time taking place in a group of 3. The total experience lasted 60 minutes which was divided into three parts. Each person in the group was required to be a time-keeper for 20 minutes, thus maintaining the supportive framework. The first person had 6 minutes to share an issue on which they needed clarity (the time-keeper indicated when 5 minutes were used and there was still 1 minute left to run). After the 6 minutes there were 4 minutes for all 3 to reflect in silence on what had been shared. Then followed a second 6 minute period (again with a 5 minute reminder) where the two listeners could speak from the silence sharing their own reflections on the issue that had been shared. Finally,



Retreat weekend in Svartbäcken

Photo: Bronwen Haire

the last 4 minutes were for holding what had been shared in the light. The same 20-minute format was repeated twice more, enabling everyone in the group to have a time for personal sharing and two times to be in the role of listener. This was a powerful listening experience for all in my group and there was a strong feeling that we were indeed held in the light and the issues brought up had been clarified at depth.

A few weeks after the retreat my own small worship group met: what follows is a reflection on our Meeting for Worship.

Reflection on Meeting for Worship in Northern Finland

Northern Friends met for worship in December: we started experimentally with worship sharing which we felt deepened our worship as well as giving holy listening space for ministry. We were 9 Friends altogether this time which is a lot for us. On the way to Meeting (a 4 hour journey) I wrote something which I feel has its source in the retreat I attended at Svartbäcken in November on *Sharing our faith: in-reach and outreach*.

Going to Meeting in the context of northern Finland takes time to meet with our faith group. It takes a whole day. I can afford that in money every 6-8 weeks. If my faith group was nearer, could I afford a day once a week?

What is it that we gather for? Are we a group of friends who enjoy the silence together? Are we more than this?

Are we less than this? What is it that draws 6 people to travel from north and south to meet for an hour in silence? What is that silence? Do we bring it with us? Do we find it when we get there? And what is the quality we hope for from that silence? At its best and deepest the silence can be living water- it can be the gateway to the highest and lightest place imaginable. But not always. On what does it depend? Sharing our faith is one answer. What you give will also be given unto you.. We come together to share our faith: in words, in silence. To strengthen us in our lives as we live them right now. In the challenges, in the jigsaw of the everyday rush, bustle and doing. We need the well of silence, the well of living water to support us in our everyday living and doing and being- especially in the being which can often be forgotten among the doing.

Etty Hillesum, A Life Transformed

Etty Hillesum, A Life Transformed

By Patrick Woodhouse

Continuum International Publishing Group 2009

Jane Rose writes:

In October last year I made a new friend. She came to me through a book I was given. Her name is Etty Hillesum and she died in 1943 aged 29. Etty was a Dutch Jewish student living in Nazi-occupied Amsterdam, and in March 1941 she made her first entry in a diary that was to become one of the most remarkable documents to emerge from the Nazi holocaust. In the diary Etty graphically writes about everything, from her feelings and thoughts about the intimacy of prayer and the importance of the inner life to reflections on food and friendships and observations about what was happening to the Jewish community in Amsterdam and later in the Westerbork transit camp. As I write, the words of a popular song of the moment are running through my head: 'We found love in a hopeless place.' I also have a picture in my mind of the summer violets which I found one day in November still blooming through the snow in our garden. Both these images are in some way illustrative of the love, the inner vitality and the courage of Etty Hillesum whose life experiences and more importantly her reflections and spiritual growth are documented so vividly through her diary and letters. Her voice speaks to us across the years with total immediacy and relevance: 'there must be someone to live through it all and bear witness to the fact that God lived, even in these times and why should I not be that witness?'

The diary, together with the letters Etty wrote from the Westerbork transit camp are the source and subject of Patrick Woodhouse's moving reflection on the relevance and meaning of Etty's life for us today. He traces her life's journey with its beginning in a talented but dysfunctional family, through her student life in Amsterdam to her days in the Westerbork transit

camp, first as a member of the Jewish Council and then as an inmate, before leaving for Auschwitz where she died. Etty's diary is the backbone of Woodhouse's book and through his writing, so intertwined with Etty's own words, we meet her as a living, loving and immediate person. Woodhouse gently and sensitively helps us to



access Etty's journal and letters bringing her right into our lives, showing us that we too can go deeper, whatever our life situation. Etty refused to hate and recognized that fear is the root of hate- she encourages us by her example to see that letting go of both is possible. In the final chapter Woodhouse focuses on four ways in which he sees Etty as a woman of our time: firstly, she interrupts our skepticism about faith so we can believe again; secondly, she invites us to pray 'My life has become an uninterrupted dialogue with You, oh God, one great dialogue. Sometimes when I stand in some corner of the camp, my feet planted on Your earth, my eyes raised towards Your heaven, tears sometimes run down my face, tears of deep emotion and gratitude'; thirdly she interrupts our easy hatred of the enemy and helps us to see: 'I try to look things straight in the face, even the worst crimes and discover the small naked human being amid the monstrous wreckage caused by man's senseless deeds.'; and fourthly she interrupts our despair about the future and invites us to be courageous. A letter written from Westerbork in 1942 which tells many details about the life of the camp begins with the words: 'With the courage of despair.' The courage is reflected in Etty's warmth and compassion and love, above all, her love.

News from Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre

The *Quaker in Europe* project is due to receive recommendations from an on-going review in the coming weeks. The report will give Woodbrooke and EMES indications of how *Quaker in Europe* might be adapted and complemented. The project continues its life in various parts of Europe.

Woodbrooke's Moodle site went global at the beginning of 2012 as it stepped in at the last minute to host the Salt and Light online study groups when technical difficulties arose with the FWCC World Office Moodle. The sessions, focusing on the World Conference study booklet, suddenly gave Woodbrooke's Moodle over 100 new users from all over the Quaker world, and the number is growing. Participants in India, Australia, USA, Cuba, Ghana, Russia, Latvia, England and many other countries represent various Quaker traditions. So far, twelve groups of about 10 Friends are working together for 7 weeks in English, Spanish, Russian and French. Facilitators for each group have been drawn in part from the group of Quaker in Europe facilitators, and some Woodbrooke staff are involved as facilitators and participants. Julia Ryberg, European Project Co-ordinator, said: "It has been an exciting and intensive period. This unexpected experience will feed in to the work that is being done to develop Woodbrooke's e-learning programme."

Woodbrooke on-the-road delivered its largest ever event in January, with almost 160 staff from the Quaker Schools in York taking part. The off-site co-ordinator, Lizz Roe, who recently gave her 60th on-the-road session, said: "It was a lively and busy day and provided an opportunity for staff within the schools to learn more about Quakers, and to meet people outside their own departments. We came away with a sense of a job well done."

Last year, Woodbrooke ran a number of events around Europe and this year is the same. Stuart Masters will be going to the Central European Gathering in May in Poland to run sessions on 'Celebrating the Quaker



Photo provided by Woodbrooke

Way', Mike Eccles will be working with Ireland Yearly Meeting on training for Clerks trainers, and we have a couple of other events planned for later in the year.

If you would like Woodbrooke to come on-the-road to deliver a session at your meeting in 2013, please contact Lizz Roe as soon as possible by emailing lizz.roe@woodbrooke.org.uk or calling +44 (0)121 415 6787.

A number of Woodbrooke staff will be travelling to Kenya in April to participate in the FWCC World Conference. We expect all sorts of things will arise from that – watch this space...

News from Birmingham: Building work on the new garden lounge extension began at the beginning of January and is due to be completed in May. A video showing the progress of the building work as it happens is available to view on the Woodbrooke YouTube channel or via the Woodbrooke website (www.woodbrooke.org.uk). We are still fundraising for the remaining costs of the project and as of the end of February, we had less than £60,000 left to raise of our £140,000 target.

Thinking of attending a course? Catchpool Fund bursaries are readily available if financial help is needed. Contact Julia Ryberg, European Project Co-ordinator, for information on the Catchpool Fund at julia.ryberg@woodbrooke.org.uk or

+46 (0) 175-715 30. See www.woodbrooke.org.uk for general information and to request a course brochure.

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Encouraging Community: Invitation to the EMEYF Spring Gathering 2012!

European and Middle Eastern Young Friends (EMEYF) invite young Friends in the region aged 18-35 (and those who are interested in Quakerism) to Wehlen near Dresden in Germany for our Spring Gathering 2012. It will be from 6th to 13th of April 2012.

EMEYF builds closer links, encouraging exchange on spiritual matters and international friendship between Quakers aged 18-35 living in Europe and the Middle East. EMEYF crosses geographical boundaries, discovering both unity and diversity in our Quaker community.

In 2012, the theme of our gathering will be **Encouraging Community**.

We will address questions like:

What do we have to take responsibility for?

What do we want to take responsibility for?

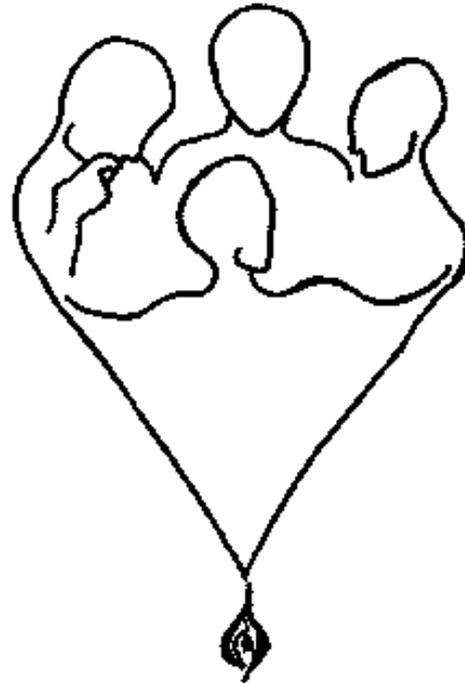
What resources help us to live brave lives?

In workshops, talks by invited speakers, worship sharing and by living together as a community we will ask how to combine faith and practice in our lives, individual as well as collective. We hope that we will strengthen our community and feel encouraged by it.

Accommodation: We will stay altogether in an old rectory. If possible, please bring a sleeping bag. Bedding can be provided for an additional cost. We will be cooking our own food.

Transport: To travel to Wehlen, it is possible to take train to "Dresden Main Station" or plane to "Dresden international airport". Please consider travelling in an environmentally friendly way by train! From Dresden, you take a regional train (you can buy the ticket at the station or airport) to "Stadt Wehlen", where you will cross the river by ferry - we will give detailed information to all registered participants.

Cost: 160 euro, which covers food and accommodation. Additionally, we ask for a donation to "Trees for Africa" to compensate the ecological cost of travelling (2 Euros for those travelling by train, 10 Euros for those flying). Please don't let financial issues prevent you from coming, you can ask your local meeting for support, if they can't help you, it is also possible to apply for



bursary from EMEYF (forms are available at www.emeyf.quaker.eu.org). Please consider donating some Euros to our bursary fund for those having higher travel costs/coming from smaller meetings - maybe your local meeting wants to support a young friend from Europe/Middle East?

Please transfer your registration fee to *Wanda Dahme (Spring Gathering Treasurer)*, account number 1014333270, bank code 12030000 (*Deutsche Kreditbank*). For international transfers, please use *IBAN DE45120300001014333270 and BIC BYLADEM1001*.

Registration: A registration form will be available on www.emeyf.quaker.eu.org soon. Please register before March 15.

If you have any questions, please send an email to springgathering2012@gmail.com. We are glad to provide you support!

Spread the word. Bring your friends. Hope to see you in Germany!

In friendship

EMEYF spring gathering planning-committee.

QCEA reflects on linking advocacy work in Brussels with Friends and Meetings across Europe

QCEA Council met in Brussels over the weekend 21 to 23 October 2011. On the agenda – for the first time in a long while – was a reflection on how the work done in Brussels is linked effectively with Friends and Meetings across the Section.

The Council is composed of Representatives from 9 Yearly Meetings, Belgium and Luxembourg Monthly Meeting, the Dutch and British Support Groups, Europe and Middle East Young Friends and EMES. Most of the Representatives also have Alternates who stand in for them when necessary and who provide a further link with QCEA. These Friends, appointed by the bodies they represent, are one of the key elements in this link.

We heard from Representatives from France and Britain YMs and from the British Support Group (QCEA British Committee) and considered the different challenges they face. QCEA can only function effectively with the support from Friends in Europe. That support requires engagement with the work that is done because your team in Brussels (and the Council who guide the work programme) need to know what your priorities and concerns are.

The QCEA work programme is structured around the broad areas of peace, human rights, economic justice, sustainable energy security and democratic accountability. Within these broad areas, choices have to be made about specific focus areas and these choices have to be informed by input from Friends via Council. This is a difficult but also a rewarding process.

We talked about reporting processes within the Yearly Meetings; engagement with Friends at Yearly Meeting (through special interest groups and through presentations to the YM as a whole), mailings to Meetings, articles in regular Quaker publications, participation in QCEA Study Tours and more. Some

Yearly Meetings make it a regular feature to invite QCEA staff members to their Yearly Meetings (or to other more regionally focused meetings) so that as many Friends as possible can meet members of the team as people rather than just as authors of much written work.

Council concluded this item with the following (part) minute:

‘After these presentations, Council considered several issues which meetings wishing to support QCEA are facing. Having a support group seems to be a useful device. Also, there should be a good cooperation between the representative and the alternate representative of a body represented on the Council. Council members were reminded that as representatives, they are appointed by Quaker procedure and not by majority vote; they do not function as mandated delegates of the body they represent. However, they do bear the responsibility of transmitting the corporate discernment, led by the Spirit, of the Yearly Meeting or other body they represent, and to which they should report back. Council members might do well to consult within their constituencies between the meetings over which an issue develops. Once Council has resolved it, all should stand in unity with the decision.’

Diary Dates 2012

More dates for 2012 and beyond are available on the website: www.fwccemes.org. Please send items for inclusion in the diary to Marisa Johnson at emes@fwccemes.org.

23-25 March: Grenztreffen CH-D-F in Lindenberg, Black Forest. Information from Brigitte Seger [seger.brigitte@sunrise.ch](mailto:brigitte@sunrise.ch)

12-15 April: Ireland Yearly Meeting. More information from office@quakers-in-ireland.ie

14-21 April: QCEA Study Tour. More information from <http://www.qcea.org/home/events/study-tours/>

17-25 April: World Conference of Friends, Kabarak University, Kenya: www.saltandlight2012.org

17-20 May: Netherlands Yearly Meeting. Information from secretariaat@dequakers.nl

17-20 May: Sweden Yearly Meeting. Information from kvakargarden@kvakare.se

24-27 May: Central European Gathering in Niwki near Opole, Poland. Information from michal.kolakowski-mickiewicz@wp.eu

25-26 May: Belgium & Luxembourg Monthly Meeting Residential Weekend. Information from quakerclerk@gmail.com

25-28 May: Britain Yearly Meeting, Friends House, London: karlg@quaker.org.uk

25-28 May: Switzerland Yearly Meeting. Information from rorie_nazareth@bluewin.ch

26-28 May: Norway Yearly Meeting. More information from kveker@kveker.org

11-15 June: Vigil outside Eurosatory Arms Fair, Paris. See <http://www.fwccemes.org/calendar/join-us-in-paris-at-the-international-arms-trade-exhibition>

Border Meeting

This year's Quaker Border Meeting in the Benelux/France/Germany area will take place in Strasbourg. We invite you to join us.

7-9 September 2012

"No to violence in daily life!"

Speaker: Ullrich Hahn, president of the German branch of the International Fellowship for Reconciliation.

More information will follow soon.

In Friendship / Amicalement / Mit
Freundesgrüssen / Met Vriendengroet,

Strasbourg Quakers / le groupe quaker de
Strasbourg / die Straßburger Andachtsgruppe /
Straatsburggroep

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Deadline for Among Friends 124: 1 July 2012