



Friends World Committee
for Consultation
EUROPE & MIDDLE EAST SECTION

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FWCC/EMES Annual Report 2014

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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 at 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.

In 2012 FWCC held the 6th World Conference of Friends at Kabarak University, Nakuru, Kenya, on the theme *Being Salt and Light: Friends living the Kingdom of God in a broken world*. Almost 900 Friends attended, from some 52 countries.

The next World Plenary Meeting (formerly the Triennial/International Representatives Meeting) will be held in Pisac, near Cusco, Peru, from 19-27 January 2016. The theme is *Living the Transformation: Creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of God's children (Romans 8:19)*. See <http://www.fwccworld.org/fwccworld/> for details.

Europe & Middle East Section

The FWCC Europe & Middle East Section (EMES) was established in 1938 and now consists of 12 Yearly Meetings, a couple of 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, and other activities, encourage mutual understanding, leading towards the

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 2014

The Executive Committee met three times during 2014: 13th-16th February in Cambridge (England), 1st May in Strasbourg (France) and 18th-21st September in The Hague (Netherlands). We are grateful for the hospitality of these Meetings. We held our first Executive Committee via Skype on 11th January 2015. We look forward to meeting in Kingston-on-Thames (England) 6th-8th March 2015 and at Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre in June 2015.

FWCC EMES is a charity registered in Scotland. The members who served as Trustees of the Registered Charity for 2014 have been Rachel M Bewley-Bateman (Clerk), Neithard Petry (Treasurer), Dag Hovda Sture, Lee Taylor, Paul Sladen (EMEYF) and Leo Wieldraaijer-Vincent. Martin Touwen, as incoming Treasurer, joined us for the day on 20th September. Marisa Johnson (Executive Secretary and also a Trustee) has prepared and attended all the meetings. Julia Ryberg has attended as our Ministry and Outreach Co-ordinator. We were thankful for the contributions made by Lindsey Cook,

Sue Glover Frykman and Jeremy (Jez) Smith, who retired from the Executive at the end of 2013.

Finance: We are still working on a small budget for our core activities and are grateful for the contributions of Yearly and Monthly Meetings who make this possible. Increases in contributions and additional donations to support the work of EMES are much appreciated. Our Ministry and Outreach work continues to be funded by a grant from the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust (JRCT). During the year we have also been discussing with JRCT possibilities for future management of small grants for Quaker activities within the Europe and Middle East Section. We very much appreciate that JRCT demonstrates confidence in our work in such a practical way.

Sheila Fletcher of Enigma Business Solutions continues to act as independent examiner of our accounts. Full audited accounts for the year 2014 will be available separately for presentation by our Treasurer, Neithard Petry, at the Trustees/Executive Committee meeting in June, and to the Annual Meeting of Representatives in Woodbrooke 4th -7th June 2015. Martin Touwen's appointment as FWCC EMES Treasurer commenced on 1st January 2015, so Neithard will officially retire as our treasurer after our final audited accounts for 2014 have been presented to our Annual Meeting in June. We have very much appreciated Neithard's contribution to the work of FWCC EMES during his time as our Treasurer.

Staff: Marisa Johnson (Executive Secretary) and Julia Ryberg (Ministry and Outreach Co-ordinator) continue to work closely together. In February 2014 a new three-year contract was signed with our Ministry and Outreach Co-ordinator. Kim Bond provides part-time assistance from the FWCC World Office in London. Marisa is in regular contact with the FWCC World Office. Staff and Executive Committee members working closely together, delivered a successful Annual Meeting on the theme *Confident Quaker Voices* in Strasbourg while the Clerk was unable to travel and subsequently had necessary knee and hip surgery. We continue to meet for our monthly on-line Meeting for Worship.

We receive regular reports and monitor activities within the Section. Our Annual Meeting provided an opportunity to test a concern in relation to the on-going unrest in the Ukraine. Concern for Quaker educational establishments, Friends and activities in the Middle East amid the continuing violence, continues. Staff and trustees engage in visits to meetings, groups and individuals within the Section. Personal links have developed with Friends from other sections met at the World Conference 2012 and elsewhere.

We were very pleased that seven young people from FWCC EMES were able to participate in the Quaker Youth Pilgrimage (QYP) to Peru and Bolivia during the

summer, along with representatives from North and South America. Evaluations are taking place as well as a review of the QYP programme. We value the opportunity for young people from different cultures and theological backgrounds to meet and learn from one another, as well as gaining an increased awareness of our Quaker heritage.

We were very pleased to be able to host a meeting of FWCC Central Executive Committee (FWCC CEC) in Moyallon, Northern Ireland, in June 2014. We look forward to members of this committee joining us for our Annual Meeting to be held at Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, Birmingham, England, in June 2015, after which they will hold their own committee meeting.

The theme for our Annual Meeting 2015 is ***Pilgrims' Progress – from Kabarak to Cusco (via Busan and Birmingham!)***. Our journey continues – and we look forward to learning from and supporting one another along the way.

Rachel M Bewley-Bateman, Clerk.

Report from the Executive Secretary

2014 was another full and blessed year of service – my seventh in the role as Secretary.

After the first Executive Meeting of the year in February, Julia Ryberg and I met in Cambridge in March for an annual appraisal and to begin the work of identifying new tasks to go into the workplan for 2014-16. We travelled together with Gretchen Castle, FWCC General Secretary, to Swarthmoor Hall, where we joined other Quaker women, including the QCEA Representative and the Secretary of Netherlands Yearly Meeting, in a retreat that focused on Margaret Fell's life and ministry. The group of women that met hoped to create a network to encourage the ministry of women in today's Religious Society of Friends. The network adopted the name "Daughters of Margaret Fell" and will be aimed at those who work for Quakers in a paid capacity or have other leadership/service roles within our community. A follow-up visit to Swarthmoor Hall is being planned for 2015.

I was delighted to take part in my first ever **Denmark Yearly Meeting** on 28th – 30th March 2014. Although only a dozen local Friends could take part, the Yearly Meeting had invited six Friends from abroad to support them and share in their exploration of Gifts for Transformation, facilitated by Thomas Swain of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. It was a warm and uplifting experience, and Friends displayed great generosity in facilitating participation from so many others.

I also managed a very brief visit to **Ireland Yearly Meeting** in session in Dublin on 25th April to hear the public lecture delivered with affecting sincerity by Ian Kirk-Smith, current editor of *The Friend*.

Our **Annual Meeting** in May in Strasbourg was a tremendous success (according to feedback received!), in spite of last minute's challenges, like arriving on 1st May, when no public transport, shops or restaurants are open in France! We considered what makes for a *Confident Quaker Voice*, reminding ourselves that confidence is literally rooted in faith/trust. An unscheduled concern for travel in Ukraine was brought to the Meeting by two Friends, one from Moscow Monthly Meeting, and an attender from Tallin. Some Friends witnessed for the first time the testing of a concern under Quaker discipline. All of us who were there felt the guidance of the Spirit. Generous financial support from all around the Section followed, and enabled the two Friends to travel to Kiev, Odessa and Lugansk in the early autumn, and for Alternatives to Violence work and other initiatives to be supported subsequently.

I was fortunate to take part in a number of gatherings:

Church & Peace AGM: This took place in May, in the Netherlands. It was mainly concerned with follow up to the call to Pilgrimages of Justice and Peace by the World Council of Churches General Assembly in Busan. The Administration Committee (governing body) of Church and Peace met in Birmingham in November, and I helped facilitate contact between them and local Friends to use the opportunity to raise Church and Peace's profile among Quakers in Britain.

Finland Yearly Meeting's Summer Gathering in Muhos: This was a delightful event, with the aim of deepening the spiritual life of the Meeting, rather than transact business. A variety of art-based activities were used as methods of exploration, simple meals were prepared by participants in turn, there was lots of time for worship, teaching about the roots of Quakerism in Finland, and fellowship.

Quaker Committee for Christian and Intefaith Relations of Britain Yearly Meeting: I attended a meeting of this committee in Scotland in June to present my report on Church and Peace AGM and to raise interest in the idea of Pilgrimages of Justice and Peace.

Central Executive Committee of FWCC & International Planning Committee: FWCC Central Executive Committee met at Moyallon, Co. Armagh, Northern Ireland, in late June for some very intense business sessions to fulfil its role of governing the World Office. An important outcome of the meeting was the establishment of Quaker World Day, to be celebrated on the 1st Sunday of October each year. The purpose of this is to encourage inter-action of Friends around the world, raise awareness of the work of FWCC and fundraise for the World Office and the Sections.

The CEC meeting was followed by a meeting of the International Planning Committee for what is now known as the World Plenary Meeting (formerly the Meeting of International Representatives), which will take place in Cusco, Peru, in January 2016 from 19th to 27th January, the theme “**Living the Transformation: Creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God (Romans 8:19)**”

Britain Yearly Meeting Gathering: The week-long Yearly Meeting Gathering of Britain Yearly Meeting at Bath University in early August was a very special time for me. As well as meeting lots of visitors from other Meetings, and many local Friends, contributing to events organised by Quaker World Relations Committee and FWCC World Office, my son Rob, his friend Rose and I had a special commission from the Yearly Meeting, namely, to introduce the theme “Being Quaker: Commitment and Belonging – the role of Membership”. Our triple act on Sunday morning, during the first business session, was received very kindly and was followed by a commitment by the Yearly Meeting to revisit arrangements for Membership for Friends who do not fit local geographical criteria.

The Swarthmore Lecture by Ben Pink Dandelion “Open for Transformation” was delivered in a very informal and spontaneous style, which engaged the audience very much. We are delighted that Ben will address our Annual Meeting in Woodbrooke in June 2015.

As the war on Gaza raged, there was a great deal of distress expressed during the Yearly Meeting, and a public statement on the issue was made, calling for an embargo on supplying weapons to Israel, and the recognition of the State of Palestine. There was also a great deal of interest in the possibility of Quaker work in Ukraine.

Quaker Youth Pilgrimage: I was delighted to go to Heathrow airport to meet the returning pilgrims on the evening of 22nd August. Knowing all the young people and the leaders were safely back was a joyful feeling. Read more about the Pilgrimage in the report by the Quaker Youth Pilgrimage Committee further on.

Seminar in Stavanger & Aksdal: This took place from 3rd to 5th September to celebrate 200 years of Quaker presence in Norway, and also the bicentenary of the Norwegian Constitution, which also dates to 1814, although the country did not gain independence until 1905. A number of academics, both Norwegian and from the UK presented papers on a variety of topics, from the history of religious toleration in Norway, to the history of education, correspondence between British and Norwegian Quakers, migration to the US. Each afternoon there were excursions to places of significance to local Quakers, such as graveyards and Meeting Houses. We had a particularly pleasant visit to the oldest Meeting House still in use, in a very isolated rural spot, a short way from the town of Aksdal. Meetings have been held there since 1868.

Evangelical Friends Church International (Europe) Conference in Tolna, Hungary, in October 2014: I was very delighted to be able to take part in this conference, together with Gretchen Castle, FWCC General Secretary, and to visit the Budapest Worship Group on the way there. We enjoyed warm hospitality everywhere we went, and although the style of worship and stated beliefs may be very different between unprogrammed and Evangelical Friends, there was no doubting God's gracious presence in the warmth of the welcome, the mutual encouragement and affirmation that were exchanged.

EMES Peace & Service Consultation took place in Kortenberg, Belgium, at the end of November 2014, on the theme *Removing Enmity and Suspicion between Countries – a challenge from 1917, a concern for today*. The theme was in the context of 2014 marking 100 years since the beginning of World War I, 75 years since the invasion of Poland, and 25 years since the fall of the Berlin Wall. We were reminded that “*We are not for names, nor men, nor titles of Government, nor are we for this party nor against the other... but we are for justice and mercy and truth and peace and true freedom, that these may be exalted in our nation, and that goodness, righteousness, meekness, temperance, peace and unity with God, and with one another, that these things may abound*”. Edward Burrough, 1659.

I continue to serve on **QCEA Council**, which met in April and October 2014.

International Membership Matters.

Franco Perna and I travelled to Bologna at the beginning of November to interview four local Friends who had applied for International Membership. The worship group in Bologna has been in existence for some 20 years. During our visit we took part in a moving Meeting for Worship to remember the life of Pier Cesare Bori, the Friend who started the group in the 1990s, on the second anniversary of his death. He is much missed.

At the time of writing, an application from Poland is under consideration.

Publication of Issues of Among Friends.

Among Friends was published and distributed in the spring, summer and autumn of 2014. We continue to maintain the website www.fwccemes.org and the Facebook page, and hope that many readers will use them to keep in touch with our activities between Annual Reports!

Marisa Johnson, Executive Secretary

Ministry & Outreach Development

It is with gratitude that a report for the Ministry & Outreach programme can be written for 2014. Thanks to the generosity of the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, funding through 2016 means that the programme can continue to serve Meetings across the Section.

Planning for the Annual Gathering in Strasbourg was much of the focus for the first months of the year. Another was planning for summer and autumn travels in the ministry. Russian Friend Natasha Zhuravenkova accompanied me on visits to Friends in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. Swedish Friend Catharina Gustavsson accompanied me on a visit to the Friends in Barcelona. It was especially good that Friends from Madrid and Gran Canaria could join us then, and it was satisfying to see that the group is growing. I attended the all-Polish gathering in Warsaw and visited Friends in Budapest. Unfortunately, British Friend Cathy Butler was unable to accompany me as planned. Late in the year, happy news reached us of a new Quaker group in Iceland, resulting in plans for a visit there in early 2015.

A request from Belgium and Luxemborg YM resulted in planning for a 2015 exploration of Eldership and Oversight within the Section, including online interaction and a residential gathering. The *Quaker in Europe* online course is still alive, with preparations underway for the course to be run for the first time in Spanish, Esperanto and Polish. The Executive Secretary and I co-tutor a European Friend who is undertaking Woodbrooke's Equipping for Ministry course. I am involved in the growing international Experiment with Light group that meets via Skype monthly, with increasing interest suggesting that weekly sessions will be offered in 2015. I am serving on a sub-committee for the planning of the 2016 IRM meeting in Peru.

Julia Ryberg, Ministry and Outreach Co-ordinator

Amari Play Centre, Ramallah

The Amari Play Centre celebrated its 40th birthday in December 2014. The Centre, referred to locally as the Quaker Kindergarten, provides a healthy environment for children from 7.30 am to 2 pm 5 days a week (Sunday to Thursday).

The Amari Refugee Camp is home to 11,000 inhabitants, around 14 % of which are under the age of 14. One day I was visiting the Play Centre and met some girls running towards me from the next-door UNRWA School for Girls. It was raining and they were seeking shelter. "Hello Miss Muna" they said. I studied their faces to see whether I recognised them. They reminded me of their names and said that they had attended the Play Centre about five years ago. They wanted to shelter from the rain at the Centre because they felt at home there. We talked a little – I asked them about their studies and they talked about their happy memories of the Centre when they were five years old.

They hugged the teachers and talked to the children. It was great to see them growing up and advancing in their education. But what felt even better was that they still valued and loved the Play Centre and the teachers there. They regarded it as their first encounter with education and still had very happy memories of the experience. It felt important to have contributed to the positive changes in these children's lives and help them to look positively towards the future.

Your donations have helped the Amari Play Centre to provide preschool education for the last 40 years. Thank you! All the educational material and the three teachers' salaries are covered by donations from people who cared and still care. Not only that, milk, sandwiches and hot meals are offered whenever funds are available. Each dollar donated helps to feed a child for a day, or can provide educational tools for children to use and learn from. We look forward to your continued support!

Muna Khleifi, Supervisor

Church and Peace

In May 2014 Church and Peace held its annual meeting at Baarlo, in the Netherlands. The theme was '**Just Policing' and unarmed intervention: the churches' dialogue on responsibility to protect (R2P)**'. The question is how can people be protected from serious human rights violations and infringement of humanitarian international law? In response to the concept of responsibility to protect (R2P), the international community agreed on the three pillars of prevention, response and reconstruction and has acted on them in recent years. The responsibility to *respond* remained controversial as it also allows for military intervention. Whether the motivation for military intervention is based alone on the responsibility to protect seems questionable.

Peace Churches go further in their criticism: if we hold to our witness to nonviolence, what will then be appropriate forms of intervention? To answer this question, the proposal of "Just Policing" was developed: International police units would be deployed to protect threatened population groups and restore law, public safety and order, while other responsible bodies and institutions would investigate the causes of the conflict and negotiate resolutions.

The 10th WCC Assembly in Busan in 2013 critically analysed R2P and recommended examining its possible abuse to justify armed interventions. This is where our Peace Church contribution comes in. We can stand up for unarmed, peace-securing and peace-keeping missions, and then help to develop and participate in them. Churches can play an important role. They are already on the spot when the international community is far from thinking about prevention and protection measures.

How can we shape the theological peace church dialogue with the churches, even though our demands are not yet those of the majority? How can cooperation be organised step by step?

For this discussion the keynote speakers were Jonathan Frerichs, programme executive for peace-building & disarmament at the World Council of Churches, Geneva and Dr. James Jakob Fehr, German Mennonite Peace Committee, Bammental/Germany. We still remain in a process of discernment about our response to the cries of the endangered people.

2014 was a stern test for pacifists as the crisis in Syria and Northern Iraq unfolded. Terrorist attacks there and in many other parts of the world make it very clear that it is not only a theological debate but a question which touches all our lives. Church and Peace has continued to engage this question in its numerous forms through publications, participation in a TV show, encouragement for our peace witness and ongoing prayer for all people involved.

A first day seminar in Birmingham, UK in November on the World Council of Churches Call for a Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace was held with good participation. Together we explored what does it mean for our community, congregation, meeting when we engage in this Pilgrimage? A mediation on the term pilgrimage was helpful to remind ourselves that such a process touches on our whole existence as a person of faith and engaged member of society.

Church and Peace decided to hold its next International Conference in October 2015 in Pristina, Kosovo. It will be hosted by the congregation that has recently joined our ecumenical European network. We are happy to accept their invitation to come and learn more about this European region. The conference will be an opportunity to meet with people from Southeast Europe/West Balkans for fellowship and to share our gifts.

Davorka Lovrekovic, General Secretary

Quaker Youth Pilgrimage

The aim of a pilgrimage is to go on a journey with the intention and hope to experience a connection with God – the Source of Awe. It is a heavy task and one that forces us to experience the world and our faith from outside of our comfort zones. Seven young Friends and two leaders from our Section joined pilgrims and leaders from North and South Americas to undertake such a journey in Peru and Bolivia in the summer of 2014. Their epistle can be found at:

http://fwccamericas.org/events/14_qyp/14_Epistle.pdf. Please share it widely!

It is a relief to read in their epistle that the experience achieved its aims of journey, community and spiritual nourishment. This was despite some difficulties of cultural and theological differences which caused tender moments for those of us who carried the pilgrimage in person and at a distance. We were reminded constantly that our “Family of

Friends” was not without its conflicts and issues – like any other family but that through a loving and open approach we found unity with one another. Our young Friends have shown that it is possible to create a community that transcends cultural, language and theological differences. This is a good lesson for them to learn and a good lesson for them to teach us! I strongly advise meetings to contact local pilgrims and ask them to come and talk to the meeting about their experiences.

On a practical note: the Pilgrimage Committee dipped into its generous legacy to make this last pilgrimage a success. Meeting in Latin America is a new experience for us – it is more costly than previous years and we wanted to make sure that all young people across the Section were able to participate if they felt led to – regardless of financial costs. We were particularly happy to welcome a young Friend from Budapest Worship group on the pilgrimage.

In 2014 our committee met in Stourbridge (UK), Strasbourg (Fr) and Birmingham (UK). Our committee membership has changed and now includes Friends from the Netherlands, Germany and the UK that span age and gender differences - but we are still a small group undertaking a great task. We ask Friends interested in joining our numbers to make contact. Our meetings in 2014 were focused on the practical arrangements for the 2014 pilgrimage and our support to the Section of the Americas QYP committee as well as discernment over a future pilgrimage to Africa in 2016. After one of our number visited Kenya and intense consultation and discernment, we agreed to put the plans for an African pilgrimage on hold until we have further considered the role of the pilgrimage in our Section, the practical issues of an African pilgrimage and the wider role of QYP in FWCC.

Following the 2014 pilgrimage the committee has been busy with a period of discernment to discover how best to serve young Friends in our section in their quest to experience a journey to God whilst remaining faithful to our tradition of simplicity. We hope to present a report to the 2015 EMES Annual Meeting to outline future plans for the Quaker Youth Pilgrimage – in whatever form that may emerge before us – in the meantime we are happy to hear from you with your thoughts.

Leo Wieldraaijer-Vincent, Clerk, Quaker Youth Pilgrimage Committee

Reports from Yearly Meetings, Monthly Meetings and Groups

Belgium and Luxembourg Yearly Meeting

We held our second Yearly Meeting from 6-8 June 2014, which produced the epistle 'What does it mean to be prophets in 2014?' In March we were inspired by a Kindlers' Study day. This encouraged us to hold a series of evening meetings on deepening our spiritual practices, which were well attended.

In November we held our own study day on 'Our Quaker Community at 40: Look back in celebration, look ahead in anticipation', inspired by the visit from the Kindlers. This was a successful and moving day of listening to testimony and to each other, to learn about our Meeting's past and its possible future direction and growth. Twenty-two adults and five children attended: a significant proportion of our active membership.

We continued our regular Stepping Stones discussion meetings, held on different topics every three or four weeks after Meeting for Worship. We collated and printed a booklet called *Helpful Practices in Meeting* for free distribution (the pdf is on our website), describing different ways that Friends attend Meeting for Worship in BLYM.

Friends have begun to hold Meetings for Worship in their homes, outside Brussels, which we welcome and will nurture.

We raised money for a number of causes, the most sizeable of which was a contribution of €900 to help equip a permanent home for homeless people in Brussels.

Four Friends took part in a Quaker Witness against the sale and production of weapons at the Eurosatory Arms Fair in Paris, and have built closer contact with French Friends taking a faithful stand in this Action towards Peace. BLYL also built links with a Belgian peace organisation, Vredesactie, through a donation, adding strength to a bigger, more conspicuous organisation working towards peace.

Kate Macdonald, Clerk

Britain Yearly Meeting

Quakers in Britain in 2014 have been attempting to live out our faith in the world and also to work on strengthening our sense of who we are as Quakers: what does this mean for us individually and as a faith community?

The centenary of World War 1 is being hugely marked in Britain. To balance the great emphasis on military suffering and heroism, Quakers have focused on hard choices, on

conscientious objection and the conviction exemplified by those refusing violence. They have raised awareness of alternatives, telling inspiring stories of peace and reconciliation. The materials thus gathered have deepened our commitment to being a peace church. Coincidentally we see a new tide of militarisation in Britain; criticism of the armed forces is stifled, and Armistice Day centres on today's soldiers, rather than the horror of earlier wars. Public statements issued by Quaker Peace and Social Witness have analysed this and protested against state money being used to promote militarism in British classrooms. We have called for an international treaty to ban nuclear weapons.

Inequality is another focus. Moves towards greater economic equality are being reversed, with Britain becoming one of the most unequal societies in the developed world. Meeting for Sufferings has spoken out strongly and Friends are acting locally (with all faith organisations) to offer help and relief. Quaker calls for a new Slavery Bill are part of this concern. We welcome proposed government legislation to prevent slavery within company supply chains, but aim to strengthen the bill's provisions further during 2015.

Work on **climate change** issues continues. Alongside other faith groups we engaged with the UN Climate Summit and People's Climate March. Britain Yearly Meeting has withdrawn all investment in fossil fuel.

We rejoice that in 2014 our work on **equal marriage** saw the first legally-recognised same-sex marriages in the UK. Since then, Quaker dialogue has helped the progress of legislation allowing couples in civil partnerships to convert these into marriages.

In **Christian and Interfaith** work we are seeking to strengthen dialogue with our Muslim and Jewish friends and are also responding to the WCC's 'Towards a Common Vision'. A powerful paper from our Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations' sets out a Quaker vision of 'A Spirit-Led Church'. Within our own community, we are thinking about three aspects of our faith. Yearly Meeting Gathering held in Bath last August considered **what it means to be a Quaker today**, looking at membership and commitment. We have begun two pieces of work for the future. Meetings are currently considering our proposed **Long Term Framework**. We have created a preparation group to think about **a new edition of Quaker Faith & Practice**. This once in a generation project takes years to mature. The resulting book of discipline may look superficially rather different from the present one and may have different versions (a Young Persons' QFP?).

For Quaker World Relations Committee /representatives to FWCC this is a very exciting time. Our committee has been reconstituted with clearer definition of roles, fewer members, greater co-ordination and stronger encouragement to action. We are relishing this development and look forward to sharing thoughts with you at our EMES meeting.

Our major refurbishment of the Large Meeting House at Friends House, London is nearing completion. The dramatic change from sombre dark surroundings to light, space and uplift, feels deeply appropriate. Worshipping and working there now, we feel physically closer, no longer separated into floor and gallery. Our eyes are drawn up towards the light, strengthening our sense of the light within.

We rejoice at welcoming EMES Friends into this transformed space at Yearly Meeting in May.

Barbara Windle, on behalf of Britain Yearly Meeting's Representatives

Czech Republic, Prague Meeting

At our last meeting for worship in December there were 9 adults and although we have 20 members on our address list, 9 is a record since I started attending in spring 2014. We are a mix of Friends and attenders, Czechs and foreigners, Christian, Buddhist, undecided. We are mainly from Prague, although Pavel travels 3 hours from České Budějovice to attend, sometimes with his family. Children, who have their own activities, often outnumber adults at the Meeting. We sometimes share worship with Friends from Plzeň who run their own regular meetings and who join us in other activities such as carol singing. A Quaker meeting is also held from time to time in Kurim.

As well as providing spiritual support, our Meeting serves as a place in which to develop friendships and offer practical help e.g. if someone is ill. Each Meeting is followed by a shared potluck lunch and, if numbers and time allow, a discussion based on *Engaging with the Quaker Testimonies* and more recently *Becoming Friends*. These sessions can help to clarify or change thinking on social and ethical issues, although in such a small group of like minded people I think there is inevitably a lack of diversity of thought.

In 2014 Pavel went to Woodbrooke returning with ideas and literature and Arne and Roman spent 2 weeks picking olives in Ramallah, a thought-provoking experience. Four from the meeting attended the Central European Gathering in Vienna, and learned about the work of the Quaker Council for European Affairs in Brussels, as well as walking the Vienna Peace Trail. The Monday evening simple suppers and short meeting every fortnight hosted by Ella and Kristyna were held during the first half of the year, but attracted very few people. Roman continues to host the weekly Experiment with Light attended by some of us and also by visitors passing through.

What else can we hope for in this beautiful and challenging country at a difficult time everywhere for people of all faiths and none? As Arne said, 'There are lots of Quakers in Prague, they just don't know it yet.' One of our goals should definitely be to find at least some of them.

Denmark Yearly Meeting

Our Yearly Meeting took place in March, where our American Friend Thomas Swain supported us together with five guests from abroad. In the concluding session we talked about the difficulties a small group experiences when trying to live up to its own expectations and those of others about a proper Quaker Meeting.

We are grateful to FWCC EMES for its economic support to enable two supporting Nordic Friends to visit us regularly. In 2015 we shall arrange a small internal early meeting with only those two Friends participating from abroad.

This year, as we have done before, we arranged a spring gathering in Jutland, and in August several members took part in the celebration of a member's 100th birthday on the small island where she lives. On Copenhagen Cultural Night we were visited by about 30 people eager to learn more about Quakers.

Jens Steensberg

Estonia: Tallinn Worship Group

In 2014 the Tallinn Meeting Group met monthly in Tallinn, holding a total of 15 Meetings for Worship. Currently, three people from Tallinn, one from Tartu and one from Narva attend regularly. We seek and welcome visitors and generally meet on the first Sunday of each month at different locations.

The year's largest project was "A peace dialogue in Eastern Europe" carried out from September 12-17 in Ukraine. The peace project had its origins at the EMES Annual Meeting in Strasbourg and, together with an EMES support group, the first monitoring phase was completed successfully.

Two youth events were held in Tallinn on UN Day and Merle Veessalu-Rand's new book, *Kingitused* (Gifts) was presented. Roland attended German Yearly Meeting. His attendance was cut short due to a flight problem, but it was beneficial – especially meeting Jalka from Vienna. At the meeting, Roland led a discussion group on the Ukraine peace project, "A peace dialogue in Eastern Europe".

At the invitation of Robert Gilchrist and Julia Ryberg, Mik Seljamaa and Roland visited Friends in Sweden. We visited the Peace Museum in Uppsala and in Stockholm we were pleased to visit the Quaker Centre. Roland spoke about the peace project in Ukraine and showed photos. The visit gave us new energy to continue with our activities.

Alla Soroka, an AVP activist in Odessa, and Roland have been working on plans for the joint family camp this summer in Ukraine, which include practical activities and discussions about cultural differences. The aim is for a better understanding of the region that would bring about permanent peace there.

A key focus of our group has been to seek ways to keep such a small meeting as ours sustainable over the long term, particularly as expatriate members frequently rotate out of Estonia. We welcome links with other meetings and would greatly appreciate insight on best practices for bringing in new members or attendees.

Our small group welcomes all visitors to Tallinn.

Roland Rand, Clerk

Finland Yearly Meeting_

In 2014 we began to reflect on our roots in Finland Yearly Meeting. We had a summer gathering in June in Muhos in Northern Finland and spent a wonderful weekend building our community by cooking, sharing our spiritual journeys and doing creative activities like singing and painting together. Pirkko Lehto, who was involved with Friends in Finland before our Yearly Meeting was established, shared her story about the beginnings of Finland Yearly Meeting and what it has meant for her to be part of the worldwide family of Friends. We were thankful for sharing the weekend with Friends from overseas as well.

Leena Lampela, a Friend from Tampere worship group has started to interview our elderly Friends and to collect our history in recorded form. We have become aware how valuable it is to collect stories from Friends and attenders who have been involved in Quaker activities in Finland since World War II. Some of them are still with us, although two long term F/friends left us very recently.

Rurik Rancken died in Tammisaari in January 2015. He was a member of Sweden Yearly Meeting, but lived in Southern Finland. He and his late wife Birgitta Rancken lived an inspiring life that meant a lot for many Friends and attenders in Finland and Sweden. They built the first, and so far the only Quaker Meeting House in Tammisaari. Their home was a place for many of us to gather and work for the organisation Emmaus, which has sent aid to developing countries since the 1980s. Johanna Saesvuolavaara lived a long life and died in December 2014. She participated in the first Quaker work camps in Lapland from 1945-47 and served as the editor of the Quaker newsletter in Finland. She was active in the international work camp movement and lived a simple life in service for others.

We are a small Yearly Meeting and our members are scattered throughout the country, but there is a sincere will to keep our faith community going and we are trying to discern

how to best nurture our community and spiritual life in spite of the geographical distances. Helsinki Meeting holds Meeting for Worship every Sunday and Tampere Worship Group every second Saturday. The Helsinki group organises Light meditations (Experiment with Light) and also a study circle. In Northern Finland we gather in Kokkola, Oulu, Muhos and Rovaniemi. Here in the north we hold Meetings for Worship in our homes as regularly as we can and feel thankful for our small community.

Jaana Erkkilä, Clerk

France Yearly Meeting

During the past months, following our last Yearly Meeting, our French group of Friends has seen some big changes.

First of all it was decided in November 2013 that it was not going to be possible to hold a Yearly Meeting in 2014. Far from causing a slowdown in our business, this decision encouraged the preparation group to use the extra time to launch a comprehensive survey of all Friends of France in order to note their opinion on the format of our Annual Meeting, their preferences for the date, time and place. In conclusion, it is clear from this survey that Friends come mostly to seek conviviality, sharing, spirituality and a sense of belonging to the Quaker movement in France.

A group of Friends has also created a “Communications Group”. In January 2014 a number of Friends met in Paris for a fruitful weekend. They started 14 projects, began to define the roles and tasks to be filled and invited people to participate. Change can only take place with the voluntary participation of Friends. We are thankful to have a new treasurer, Sylviane Mercier, and a new editor, Eric Callcut, who is now responsible for the Friends Newsletter.

As a result of the work of the Communications Group we now have an attractive website which has brought requests for information from the public, also a pamphlet “La Voie Quaker” “The Quaker Way” our own “Advices and Queries” and a large banner “Quakers in France”. The latter was used for the first time on the occasion of the demonstration in Paris against Eurosatory, the international armaments trade fair.

Of course we cannot talk about communication without recognising the benefit of the Internet, of which we are making good use. Thanks to this technology we can all, on request and free of charge, receive the “Lettre des Amis” newsletter online.

This tool has also facilitated the use of a guided meditation, the “Experiment with Light” during which participants from across France have the opportunity for deep spiritual sharing.

Please note that we now have a map of Friends in France to help those whose role it is

keep in touch with isolated Friends. Since late 2013 a version of “Practice and Usage” has been adopted and circulated with an invitation to Friends to send their comments for a future revision.

To continue to maintain our relationships with European Friends we were able to send representatives to Belgium and Luxembourg Yearly Meeting and to Britain and Switzerland Yearly Meetings.

It is a great joy for us to witness the growth and life of local groups such as the ones in Normandy, Congénies and those of the Pyrenees. Our numbers are growing thanks to Friends from Britain who come to live in France and transfer their membership and to the French sympathisers who discover us.

Sylvette Thompson, Clerk

Georgia Worship Group

The year 2014 was a peaceful one for Georgia. We sent a representative to the Peace and Service Consultation in Kortenberg. It was a very interesting and informative event, which enabled him to learn more about Friends’ international service and peace work. On his return this knowledge was spread to other friends in Georgia. We express our gratitude EMES for making our presence possible.

AT the EMEYF gathering In Macedonia it was decided that the 2015 EMEYF Spring gathering would take place in Ureki, Georgia. Any interested young Friends from 18 to 35 can apply to take part in that event here: <http://emeyf.org/spring-gathering-2015>.

Georgian Friends Worship Group

German Yearly Meeting

German Quakers experience religious community primarily at the level of the *Bezirk*, or region. Like a Quarterly Meeting, the regions gather 3-4 times per year to worship and carry out business brought forward by the local Meetings for Worship.

For several years, the East and Northwest regions have been meeting jointly each May. This year – which marked the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall – the two groups gathered in Wernigerode under the heading, “Borders and what they mean for us.” Together, Friends from “East” and “West” hiked the “Brocken” mountain to the former border between East and West Germany.

Within the Region East, the Berlin Meeting continues to thrive, offering a well visited First-day worship as well as activities such as discussion groups and lectures. Most other Eastern Friends live isolated from one another and have few opportunities for group worship. However, a worship circle in Dresden has been growing and is seen as a “hopeful sprout.”

In January, the Northwest region met in Hamburg to discuss Friends' attitudes toward ecumenical work. The meeting took place at the "Forum Hafencity," itself an ecumenical project of 17 churches, including Lutherans, Mennonites, Orthodox and others (but not Quakers). Friends already cooperate actively in many ecumenical projects, and there is a clear wish to do more. At the same time, Friends recognise real obstacles, especially regarding communication with some who do not view Quakers as Christian. Indeed, many Friends do not identify as Christians and they are concerned that we communicate honestly with other faith groups, rather than glossing over differences. "Ecumenism" thus became a recurring theme that local meetings engaged with over the year.

Friends in Bavaria and Austria struggle because of the great distances between them, but enjoy their common gatherings all the more. In September the Munich worship circle decided to reconstitute as a formal meeting for worship, and in November the Munich Meeting hosted a regional meeting where Jalka led Friends in an "Experiment with Light" à la Rex Ambler.

A number of beloved Friends in the Rhein-Ruhr region passed away in 2014, leading to intensive work with the theme, "Being born – living – dying." In meetings and in writings in our journal, the "Quäker," Friends shared their struggles to accept that death, like being born, is part of our reality and a part of the divine within us.

Friends in the Southwest region have been trying to learn more about certain Quaker traditions that are little practised in Germany, especially the Meeting for Clearness. These Friends noted that we have no initiation ceremony for young people (such as confirmation). This is part of a larger discussion about membership and the integration of young people into our Yearly Meeting.

In 2014, Friends in the Hesse region ended a cycle of discussions about Quaker testimonies and turned their attention to the activities that Friends take up to express testimonies, such as work in the Quäker-Hilfe, but also including the organisation of a Yearly Meeting. In 2015, Hesse Friends aim to discuss "What can we say?" A famous George Fox quote also served as the motto for this year's German Yearly Meeting held in October in Bonn: "You will say, 'Christ saith this, and the apostles say this;' but what canst thou say?" 2014 also saw the anniversary of the beginnings of two world wars, and in the Yearly Meeting's annual Cary Lecture, Neithard Petry encouraged Friends to find joy and hope, even in dark times, and summed up his understanding of Quakerism in his description of himself as a "religious-philosophical Do-it-Yourselfer".

Lucinda Martin, Representative

Hungary, Budapest Worship Group

Continuing in the spirit of the last few years, our meeting seems to become more of a community. We are still few in number, but have several new regular attenders. The son of one of our regular attenders, Szilvia Nagy's son Gergo, went on the Quaker youth Pilgrimage to Bolivia and Peru in the summer of 2014.

Some significant events during the year included the Central European Gathering in Vienna, which included walking the Peace Trail, with Jalka as our guide.

We invited the rabbi from the Sim Shalom Synagogue to a meeting in early spring and learned something about the life of the Jewish community and the practice of the faith in her congregation.

Berne and Roman, from the Quaker meeting in Prague, took the 'Imagining the World Without War' workshop on the road to the Common Ground on the Hill Festival in Westminster, Maryland, in the US, with support from the festival, EMES and the Joseph Rowntree Trust. They are hoping to be invited again for the 2015 Festival.

Visitors are always welcome and usually occasion a Meeting for Worship. In 2014 we were visited by Johan Maurer, Irina Sadikova and Sasha Gorbenko from Moscow, Jasmine Piercy and Mary Waldmeyer from Britain and Julia Ryberg from Sweden, all of whom helped to feed our spirits. A Friend from Lewes Meeting spent several months in Budapest, attended our Meeting and brought wonderful English Christmas crackers to our December Meeting. Gretchen Castle, Marisa Johnson and Jalka passed through Budapest on their way to the EFCI Conference and Tony Frei came to take them to Tolna.

We are now looking forward to the 2015 Central European Gathering, which we will host in Novi Sad, Serbia.

Berne Weiss

Hungary, Evangelical Friends Church in Tolna

We bought a charity building for our foundation at the beginning of 2014 which we named Friends' House. Youth were sleeping there throughout the Children and Youth Conference in summer.

We had a baptism meeting in May. Six young teenagers, who grew up in our church, were baptised on this day. They were born during our mission. We started the EFC mission 17 years ago.

Meanwhile, we renewed our church house: we had the sewerage system laid on, rendering, painting inside and outside etc.

We had the EFCI Europe Children and Youth Conference in August, about 50 children and 30 youth took part in it.

We had the EFCI Europe Conference in October together with our Quaker Friends. There were brothers and sisters there from eight countries.

We had several pastor conferences and meetings last year. Women's Conferences were held. Quakers visited us from various parts. Serbian, Croatian, Romanian missions and charity work were undertaken. Christmas Charity work was done.

Our plans, aims:

1. Personal evangelisation, reach out to new people for Christ and the church.
2. To strengthen brothers and sisters and to expand services. Evangelisation meetings are planned.
3. The sale of the camp of our Foundation is in progress. We would like to purchase the neighbouring building of the house of the Foundation.
4. We would like to expand make an office, a guest house, a youth house and a garage in the centre of the Foundation (Friends' House).
5. We are planning a children and youth camp in the summer.
6. We would like to form a youth music group and choir in the church in Tolna.
7. We would like to buy a new minibus, because our church minibus (22 years old) has broken down.

Please pray for:

the strengthening of the EFC Hungary, new people to receive Jesus, new co-workers, the Bible lessons at public schools, financial resources.

Frei Antal

Ireland Yearly Meeting

Ireland Yearly Meeting was held in Dublin from 24 to 27 April 2014 when our theme "Faith in Action – Living our Lives According to Our Spiritual Experience" permeated

throughout our meetings and we were conscious of God's presence in our midst. Three Friends spoke at the Ministry and Oversight session and were inspirational in telling how their faith has enabled them to embrace peace in their everyday lives. An emotionally inspiring Public Lecture given by Ian G Kirk-Smith, Editor of *The Friend*, told how he became a Quaker “on principle not consequence” and how he valued being able to see that of Christ within persons he met.

We have seen how our actions locally have strengthened the resolve and given faith to others, not only in Ireland but around the world, to support our fellow men and women in need not only with love and compassion but also with practical help.

In May we were invited to take part in the annual commemoration of the Great Irish Famine which was attended by other churches and Government representatives including the Taoiseach, Enda Kenny. Along with other church representatives Rosemary Sinton offered a prayer in memory of those who lost their lives through starvation. During the year the Irish Government placed an article on the Famine Commemoration website detailing some of the relief work carried out by Irish Friends during the famine.

Daniel H Sinton, Clerk

Italy: Bologna Worship Group

We meet regularly twice a month (2nd and 4th Sundays) at via Lombardia, 36, Bologna [in the public peace library in Quartiere Savena] from 11:00 a.m.

The concern we share – albeit with different roles and involvement – is the work in Dozza prison (Bologna) started by Pier Cesare Bori (more than 15 years ago) with the inmates (initially from the Middle East) and now carried on by Fabian Lang, once a week, with the collaboration of some students from the university (see: www.unavia.it). The meeting usually begins with 10 minutes of silence, then a reading from a text (many of which have been selected by Pier Cesare Bori and are from different spiritual traditions) and a round of talks. Some of us are waiting for permission from the prison authorities to gain access to the prison. When this has been granted we will be able to plan other initiatives, such as teaching Italian to foreign inmates or accompanying inmates during their short (a few hours) permitted periods outside the prison.

We are still actively supporting the realisation of a Medical Charity Centre in Weh, in North-West Cameroon, which is Fabian Lang's birthplace, and are constantly in contact with the locals (associations and community leaders responsible for the project) so that the project reflects people's needs. Plans are afoot to raise money for the roof of the Centre and to involve people in achieving the goals of the project. The Centre will be run

entirely by locals, with our support (in terms of economic help, collaboration in the construction planning, volunteers). For more information please see www.wehcenter.org and on Facebook, Ambulatorio Medico per WEH.

Lucia Biondelli

Italy: Milan Worship Group

The Milan group of Friends of Friends continues to seek the way forward. It struggles with size and logistic challenges, but despite this continues to search for and in the Light.

Joyce Steijn

Latvia: Liepaja Worship Group

Liepaja worship group consists of people with different religious backgrounds and some professional psychologists who get together once a month for Quaker silent worship. We are equal and can share our understandings and experiences. We were very glad to meet Visiting Friends from Sweden and Russia here last summer and hope to strengthen our contacts with the Quaker world family.

Inese Ansule

Lithuania

Vilnius Quaker Group continues to gather, with certain gaps, at least once a month. Last October Friends from Britain Yearly Meeting visited us – the Pennock family, who not only worshipped with us but also guided us through an Experiment with Light self-exploration session. This actually augmented and strengthened a similar introductory experience our group had with Julia Ryberg from Sweden and Friends from Liepaja (Latvia) and Moscow (Russia).

Despite the personal drawbacks or obstacles experienced by some of our group members, we hold on to Silent Worship and the sense of unimposing togetherness that we experience in our gatherings.

Algirdas Davidavčius

Malta Worship Group

Our meeting in Malta has settled over the last year and we now have four members and a couple of staunch attenders. We are often joined by visiting Friends which is great, although it has proved difficult to attract Maltese who are strongly Catholic. We are hoping to mount an exhibition around the Quaker Tapestry as part of the European cultural city of the year Valletta activities, and members are working with the refugees here as

well as campaigning against the hunting lobby. We have our website up and running: malta_friends.org

Piers Headley

Middle East Yearly Meeting, Brummana Monthly Meeting

No new development to report in 2014, except the continuing turmoil all around Lebanon, growing influx of refugees, and the burden that this places on a fragile country.

Tony Manasseh, Clerk

Middle East Yearly Meeting, Ramallah Monthly Meeting

The year 2014 was another active year at the Ramallah Friends Meeting (Quakers). The Meeting continued to receive many international delegations who wished to share and learn from the lives and experiences of faithful friends in Palestine. Furthermore, it was a year of intense strife in Israel and Palestine. The Quaker commitment to non-violence was strengthened and affirmed, while prayers for peace rose above the meetinghouse at weekly worship.

The continued commitment of the meeting's clerk, Jean Zaru, allowed many groups and individuals to listen and learn about one woman's commitment to non-violent resistance, born out of deep spiritual searching, in the midst of an oppressive regime of chauvinism, racism and economic injustice. Jean was a speaker at an international YWCA conference, hosted and organised by the Jerusalem YWCA and located in Bethlehem. During her presentation, Jean gave a talk entitled, "Working Together for Equality, Justice and Peace," in which she shared her personal journey to a spirituality which is rooted in the struggle to attain justice for all. [The text of this presentation can be found on the Ramallah Friends' Meeting website: www.rfmq.org.]

Through the year, Jean and members of the meeting received groups from all over the world: Sweden, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Germany, Hungary and the US were just a few of the countries represented by guests moving in and out of the Ramallah community of Friends this past year. All journeyed to Palestine to vary their perspective and to grow in their faith.

The typical summer lull, caused by several factors, was exaggerated this year due to the Israeli offensive on Gaza. However, the autumn and spring of 2014 teemed with curious guests. Many school groups – among them seminaries and universities – provide spring trips to the region for study and growth. However, the purpose of many autumn visits tends to orbit around the olive harvest season. This year was no exception: many internationals visiting the meetinghouse during the autumn were also working on farms in the Palestinian countryside. Many farmers, tending groves that have been in their

families for centuries, face harassment and violence from Israeli settlers whose goal is to intimidate farmers and prevent them from cultivating their land. International groups and individuals are welcomed at this time to literally stand in solidarity. The international presence acts as a deterrent against the psychological and emotional violence of settler harassment.

The autumn also brought activity to the Ramallah Friends Meeting with the addition of several individuals. Jasmine Pierce served as the recently-initiated Friend-in-Residence programme, joining the community during October and November. Part of Jasmine's ministry was to bear witness and provide hospitality. The same week saw the arrival of intern Ariel Royer, sent through our partner Global Ministries, a joint ministry of the United Church of Christ and the Disciples of Christ church, both based in the United States. Ariel provided administrative assistance to Jean in addition to updating the website (www.rfmq.org) and launching a Facebook page (www.Facebook.com/RamallahFriendsMeeting).

A highlight of the autumn and winter at the meeting was the addition of a singing meeting. Each Friday, Friends gathered to share in the soaring acoustics of the meetinghouse, teaching each other songs from their own traditions and enjoying common favourites. The spontaneity of the Ramallah Friends Meeting is one of the aspects that make it such a nourishing and renewing spiritual community.

The other aspect, of course, is the extraordinary depth of the Meeting. The one hundred years in which the Ramallah Friends Meeting has been open to spiritual seekers has seen the spectrum of life in Palestine and its periods of oppression as they wax and wane. Such struggle has strengthened the bonds of the Quaker community in Palestine to the community, ancestral land and to a calling of living a life of non-violence and equality in the face of injustice and aggression.

The year of 2014 was marked by the continued struggle for justice in Palestine. While the world watches from afar, the Ramallah Friends Meeting is heartened in the knowledge that Friends around the world know that, at its core, injustice is an evil afflicting the entire world. The continued solidarity of Friends is a source of hope and encouragement for the Ramallah Friends Meeting.

Jean Zaru, Clerk

Netherlands Yearly Meeting

This is what Dutch Friends did in 2014:

1. Two Dutch Friends still provide courses on non-violent communication in the Middle-East, and others are active in increasing awareness in the Netherlands. These Friends are supported wholeheartedly.

2. Some Monthly Meetings have experimented with semi-programmed elements. At Yearly Meeting in 2014 alternative forms of meeting for worship were used.
3. Two of our Monthly Meetings are willing to connect with other meetings, and some action has been taken but not continued.
4. In 2014 our peace-committee ceased to exist. Two meetings for clearness were held to explore how we commit to our peace testimony and on which level. This is an ongoing process and stimulates commitment and responsibility in our Quaker community. The theme for our Yearly Meeting in 2015 is 'Working on peace; our peace testimony in the 21st century'.
5. We are taking part in the World Council of Churches' process for pronouncing war *illegal* and the 'pilgrimage towards just peace' is an issue we are still working with. This too will be part of our Yearly Meeting.
6. In November 2014 we had a two-day meeting with 40 Friends about the future of our Yearly Meeting. How do we want to invest our assets? How can we reach a balanced budget? In other words, what do we want to achieve, what is our identity and how do we connect our spirituality and our means? We discussed many ideas, such as investing in a better connection with other churches, Quaker flashmobs and New Year greetings cards for people or groups with whom we disagree. What have we done with these ideas? Little. We made some big banners to use at Quaker meetings in order to be visible. Good relations with other churches are something that is going on. But as yet, no flashmobs, greeting cards etc. Still, this topic about our vision and what we do has been investigated at several other special meetings, and this is also a good way of enhancing the involvement and responsibility of individual Friends.
7. We had an autumn meeting with some 40 Friends. Stuart Masters from Woodbrooke guided us through a course on 'The early Quaker vision, the roots of our testimonies and Quaker diversity'. It was very inspiring and deepened our vision.
8. Every year in January a Quaker retreat is held for about 20 Friends. This year's theme was 'Light'. As always, Friends who participate experience a deeper feeling of connectedness and awareness of what it means to be a Quaker in daily life.
9. Our support group for QCEA was again very active; spreading information and stimulating support.
10. Outreach? There is no specific plan, but our four monthly meetings are blooming!

Erik Dries and Wils 't Hart, Representatives

Norway Yearly Meeting

In 2014 Norway Yearly Meeting celebrated the 200th anniversary of Quakers in Norway. At the annual gathering in June our six meetings shared with us their histories and the concerns and witnesses that have engaged Norwegian Friends through these two centuries. In September we co-hosted a research seminar with the University of Stavanger on the theme "Religious Freedom as seen from a Minority Perspective". The

seminar heard twelve papers from across a broad spectrum of specialists and keynote lectures from Ben Pink Dandelion and Ingunn Folkestad Breistein. A report of the seminar will be available from March 2015 in English. Our celebration of and reflection on our history and role in Norway will continue through 2018, the bicentennial of the founding of our yearly meeting, when we will publish a *festschrift*. 2014 also saw the arrival of the first draft of a 'faith and practice' for Norway YM, which we hope to finalise and publish in these bicentennial years.

Stephen Collett, Clerk

Poland, Warsaw & Poznan Worship Groups

The year 2014 was the fifth year of Warsaw Friends Meeting activity. We meet regularly in The Reformed Congregation in Warsaw. Our meetings take place in Congregation House, al. Solidarnosci 76A. We started to meet on each Sunday at 1 PM. Number of members (formally attenders) of the meeting is eight not counting children. During 2014 Warsaw Meeting had visitors from all over Poland and other countries. The guests were inter alia a group of Australian Quakers and Julia Ryberg from EMES.

Warsaw Friends Meeting manages as well nationwide quaker discussion group <http://groups.google.com/group/kwakrzy> (30 members) and co-manages open forum about Quakerism <http://www.kwakrzy.fora.pl/> (49 members). Warsaw group administrates the website www.kwakrzy.pl / www.rtppl.pl which is the official site of Warsaw Friends Meeting, but is also open for other quaker initiatives in Poland.

Representatives of Warsaw group were in Vienna, Austria, where XVII Central European Gathering of Friends (CEG) was organized. For the first time representative of Warsaw Meeting took part in EMES Annual Meeting which took place in Strasbourg. One of Warsaw Meeting member (Marta) travelled to Kenya to meet with pastoral Friends in that distant country in Africa. Her open letter to pastor Hanningtone Atenya and Kenyan Quakers you can find on our website.

In 2014 we organized a 2nd Poland Friends Gathering. About 15 Friends and friends of Friends gathered in November in Warsaw. The Polish contingent came from Warsaw and all over Poland:

Poznan, Torun, Sopot, Rzeszow, Szczytno; visitors from abroad were from the Czech Republic and Sweden. The weather outside left much to be desired; inside, hearts were warm, old Friends were reunited and new friends were made. The substance of gathering: reports from several Polish local meetings; desires to start meetings in

Trojmiasto (Gdansk, Sopot, Gdynia) and Rzeszow; talks on the spirituality of the early Quakers, the essence of Quakerism (seen subjectively), and the Quakers in Europe project; the uphill struggle to compile a glossary of suitable Polish equivalents for Quaker terms; an account of an event at the brand-new Museum of the History of Polish Jews on hate speech; a meditation focusing on our unease and how to deal with it; worship sharing; and, of course, the meeting for worship itself. During gathering Friends were invited to participate in interviews conducted by student of sociology who writes thesis about Polish Quaker society.

Warsaw Friends continue cooperation with Orionine Congregation who coorganizes ecumenical meetings of different churches in Warsaw for 15 years. During summertime (July, August, September) our regular meetings moved to Orionine parish, ul. Lindleya 12, due to school holiday break in The Reformed Congregation in Warsaw. The provincial of Orionine Fathers Antoni Wita was our guest during one of the meetings and Warsaw Quakers were invited to take part in monthly ecumenical meetings. Lectures and discussions were organized like in previous years. Inter alia, in February we had a very interesting discussion with catholic priest Piotr Burgonski, on the topic: "Quakers and Catholics - together or separately?". In November an author of Polish biography of William Penn – Dr Piotr Robak came from Lodz to give a lecture about early Quakers. It was really great experience for both sides – historian and participants, and long and engaging conversations took place after the lecture.

Michał Kolakowski-Mickiewicz

Portugal, Lisbon Area Informal Worship Group

The small meeting in Cascais has nothing special to report for 2014. We are still here though!

Matias Linder

Russia, Moscow Monthly Meeting

Moscow Monthly Meeting is a small Quaker community. It is also international, with Russian, American and Bulgarian Friends. We have our silent worship on Saturdays at 14.00 and meet at the premises of the Russian charity foundation "Big Change", which helps residents or former residents of orphanages. Our small Quaker community contributes to this foundation with voluntary help. Until last June, Johan Maurer, an American Friend, served as the clerk of our Meeting. We hope that he and his wife Judy will soon be back in Moscow after a sabbatical year. Our big concern during the past year has been

the deteriorating situation in Eastern Ukraine. We prayed for a peace in our neighbouring country and made a few public statements on this issue. Last September we welcomed two young American Friends from Oregon, Anna Thomas and Kara Maurer, who will spend a year in Moscow and become a part of our Meeting during this time. I visited Lugansk in Eastern Ukraine in October and reported on how things in the area were going. My report was distributed among European Friends. I also talked about my impressions to the Board of Friends House Moscow.

On 31th October I received a letter from Scarsdale Friends Meeting in the US signed by its clerk Ginny Blanford. This letter endorsed our peaceful efforts: *Our shared historical commitment to peace and equality encourages us to hold in the Light those who are suffering because of these conflicts, as well as those who are engaging in the violence. We fervently hope that this conflict will soon end, and we appreciate the ongoing work you are doing to alleviate suffering amongst ethnic minorities and underserved groups in the larger population, and your efforts to protect the environment.*

As I write (15th February 2015), a ceasefire in Eastern Ukraine has begun. We pray that this time it will hold and give a real hope for a peace.

Misha Roshchin, Clerk

Russia, Friends House Moscow (Dom Druzei)

Current situation in Russia

One of the unpleasant sides of life in our undemocratic society is that regime leaders can do almost whatever they want and do not pay much attention to the population's needs. Another side is that only the official viewpoint is allowed on television and in most other media. The result of this is a militaristic hysteria, developed for the purpose of "uniting the nation in the face of outer threats". Looking for enemies to justify aggressive foreign policy has become the main message of TV programmes that Russians watch daily.

Projects

Alternatives to Violence Project – Russia: In 2014, the work of the project was again focused on the provinces. AVP Russia has a tendency to become a professional organisation. Every facilitator but two is a professional psychologist. The facilitators work independently; they give very good workshops, but AVP was never intended to be so professionalised. If AVP Russia is going to grow, it needs to attract more people and different kinds of people. It needs to have a broader base.

Alternatives to Violence Project – Ukraine: We can see that the project is developing. In 2014 we supported them twice. People involved with the project are enthusiastic and have plans to spread their activity into several other regions of the country. A facilitators' team was established in Kiev, and the capital has become a very active place

for AVP work. Workshops were held in Odessa, Kiev and Kharkov. Kharkov was chosen because there are many refugees there from the war zone.

Helping Children to Stay with Their Families (year 2). Dzerzhinsk, Nizhegorodskaya oblast: The continuation of the project appeared to be even more successful than in the first year. There was more interest in the project and more active participation. From the project report: “The project was intended as psychological consultations for families in precarious situations. 47 consultations were carried out with such families. Diagnostic work was done with both children and parents. A total of 21 people took part: 11 adults and 10 children. Common problems in families with special educational needs included: domestic violence, alcoholic parents, conflicts and aggression. At joint consultations, parents and young people discussed their complaints against each other and drew up agreements about contentious issues. Analysis showed that at the end of work with 6 families, parent-child relationships were becoming more harmonious and there was less conflict between family members. In 3 families, constructive arrangements for bringing up children were drawn up and parents have gradually begun to apply them with their children.”

Good to Have Many Children. Dzerzhinsk, Nizhegorodskaya oblast: This was a one-year project. From the coordinator’s report on the project: “Thanks to the project, the parents learned much that was new to them: where they can go for help when problems arise in family relationships; where and with whom they can resolve issues about housing. They received 11 free consultations with a qualified attorney. Some mothers learned how to restrain the excessive demands they made on members of their families; some, on the other hand, learned how not to be too dependent on family members and, in particular, on their children. Each participant had the opportunity to resolve actual problems in cooperation with her children. The children experienced positive interactions in conflict situations with their siblings.

As a result of the realisation of the project, our city strengthened its system of support for families with many children. The system is designed to improve the role of women and mothers within the family and to increase respect for mothers in society as a whole. This will help to reduce the risk of social orphanages, since social awareness enlarges the moral resources of the mother and of the family. A brochure entitled “Lots of Kids? That’s Great!” was distributed among families who have many children.”

Alternative Service Office (Kazan, Tatarstan): This year Gyerman and Nina held about 500 individual consultations. They filed about 300 appeals to the officials. Their work in Tatarstan is a good example for other regions – they have 12-15 applications for alternative service every half year in contrast to 2-3 in Bashkorkostan, a nearby region. Gyerman will not apply for our support in 2015, as he thinks he can find the money somewhere else.

Outreach

Both this year and last year our outreach work was based mainly on **the Quaker literature translation project** supported by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust. In general the project is continuing successfully. We managed to find translators for the books and chose texts for translation. But getting permission to translate books or even finding a person to whom we could apply for this permission is not always easy.

The most important part of the implementation of the project was the launch of the new website using the old domain name quakers.ru, but with new useful features, for example, searching for keywords, and counting the number of downloads. It is more user-friendly and easy to update. It uses more pictures and has an improved structure. The website is updated almost daily. Social networks are important instruments for outreach work. This year the Russian language Quaker Facebook group became the busiest among our other online Quaker communities.

Visits and networking: Julia Ryberg of EMES and Natasha travelled in the ministry, on behalf of EMES, to the Baltic countries from August 9–17. They visited Friends and Quaker groups in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia.

From Natasha's and Julia's report to EMES:

"It was a necessity for there to be two of us travelling together. We complemented each other in more ways than the obvious linguistic one...We shared deeply about our respective ministries, about the challenges and blessings of our spiritual lives."

Sergei Grushko and Natasha Zhuravenkova

Spain, Barcelona Monthly Meeting

Barcelona meeting has grown throughout 2014. We now meet twice a month with typically 5 to 10 attendees. Currently, with a small influx of new members, both local and ex-patriots, the Meeting seems to have gained a new lease of life.

In September we made a meeting trip to Montblanc in Tarragona (southern Catalunya) to visit Nancy, the meeting's founder and have a meeting for worship in a local meeting place for artists.

The sad news of the year is that meeting founder Gerard died in January. He is survived by Nancy. Although health problems have reduced her mobility and made it impossible for her to attend, she is still in touch with various members by phone and occasional visits to her home.

History of the Meeting

Barcelona Meeting was founded by an American couple, Nancy and Gerard Negelspach, in the mid 1960s. In recent years attendance has fluctuated with an average of around 6 or 7 (but sometimes only 2 or 3), a mix of local people and ex-patriots, usually with more of the latter.

Individual Testimonies

I came to Barcelona meeting in the summer shortly after I moved here and found it a welcoming community with whom I can share spirituality, friendship and some language and cultural exchange. (Jonathan Riddell)

I came to know about the Quakers by studying about the life of Thomas Story Kirkbride, an American Quaker who revolutionised American psychiatry. I was living in Bilbao then and when I came back to Barcelona the first thing I did was to make contact with the group here. So impressed I was about the Quakers' ideas that I wanted to know more about these people and share time with them. Now I've spent more or less two years knowing Quakerism and the Quakers and I'm so happy to say that I've found a place for me between them. (Jesús Espinoza)

“Por sus obras los conoceréis”. me interesé en los cuáqueros a partir de un programa de una serie de la BBC “Beautiful Minds”, dedicado a la astrónoma Jocelyn Bell Burnell, que me impresionó por su autenticidad, y también me gustaban mucho Judi Dench y A.S.Byatt y Margareth Drabble y todas han sido alumnas de una escuela cuáquera femenina en York. Todo esto me hizo sentir curiosidad por el espíritu respetuoso y libre que manifestaban. Busqué en Internet y Carolyn vino a visitarnos y más tarde Nancy y Gerard nos invitaron a visitarles en Montblanch y allí supimos del libro que trata de la actividad de los cuáqueros durante la guerra española. Compartimos el encuentro de duelo con Nancy y más tarde, cuando supimos de la conferencia de J.B. Burnell en Birmingham acudimos y residimos en el Centro de Estudios Cuáqueros. Nos gustó mucho la experiencia.

I encountered the Quakers when I first moved to England in 2008, in Oxford. I had never heard of this group before, but was delighted to find out that its principles, values and causes were open-minded, inclusive, humanitarian and spiritual, and above all devoted to service. I felt overjoyed about it and loved the idea of ‘collective silence’ in which everyone's way of ‘being spiritual’ is honoured. Phil and I moved to Barcelona last September and attended our first meeting on October 11th 2014, when coincidentally Julia Ryberg and Catharina Gustafsson were visiting on behalf of the EMES Ministry and Outreach Programme. It felt very welcoming and just being there helped us feel part of a larger ‘plot’ and yet part of the local community. (Anita Ribeiro)

I moved here in June and I am pleased to be able to assist in keeping the Meeting alive and visible to any other Friends or enquirers visiting or living in Barcelona. We are trying hard to make sure we meet on a regular basis (on the 1st and 3rd Sundays of the month) so that regular and casual attenders know when to come along. Having said that, I really like the informal nature of this group, although I appreciate that some structure is needed to keep it all together. When we visited Nancy, the Barcelona Meeting founding member, earlier this year, it was great to hear how happy she is that the Meeting is continuing to stay strong through the commitment shown by other members who have been here a while (Gerry and Mariah). I hope the new kids on the block can now help it to flourish too. (Nigel Harris)

Members of Barcelona Meeting

Spain, Madrid Worship Group

2014 was a year with joys and challenges for Madrid Worship Group. We enjoyed having Friends visitors and also a variety of seekers coming to Meeting for Worship to explore what Quakers are like. A great joy was the birth of Frida, the daughter of Kerstern and Marco. Unfortunately, they left for New York at the end of the year because Marco found a new job there.

The year presented some challenges when two of our four years attenders felt that accepting homosexuality was something they could not tolerate and left the group without having the opportunity to discuss it or hold this issue in the Light in order to find inspiration and understanding.

We continued discussing the Advices and Queries, participated in the EMES Annual Meeting in Strasbourg and Carmen went to Barcelona for a weekend to attend a special gathering with the Barcelona Group. Julia Ryberg and Catharina Gustafsson from Sweden and Astrid Bruhn from the Canary Islands were there too.

Although the group has been severely reduced, we are now two, we still feel strong to continue our regular Meeting for Worship. We plan to improve our web page in Spanish and we feel part of the worldwide Quaker family. All of you are welcome to visit us.

We look forward to the possibility of having a Gathering of Iberian Friends in 2015!

Ah! And the small ecological vegetable garden that we planted gave us good tomatoes, green peppers, green beans, some onions, lettuces and leeks!

Carmen Alcalde

Sweden Yearly Meeting

Working backwards through 2014, in November two members of the Quaker Service Committee visited Bangladesh and the organisation that conducts the projects for which we receive Swedish government aid. Two people from the organisation through which financial support is applied for accompanied them to conduct a Learning Review on Religion and Gender Equality. This involved interviewing the project stakeholders/beneficiaries and documenting their responses. Links were strengthened with both organisations as a result, which made the visit particularly fruitful (see <http://www.kvakare.se/index.php/in-english/quaker-service-sweden/>). In the same month, two members of the committee attended the EMES Peace and Service Consultation in Belgium, which provides a valuable opportunity for the various Quaker bodies to connect and exchange ideas, experiences and information.

In both the spring and autumn, a full programme of Quaker activities was offered at the Friends Centre in Stockholm and at Svartbäcken, the Yearly Meeting's Retreat Centre near Rimbo. The programme included weekend retreats, one-day retreats, learning about Quaker practices, poetry evenings and study evenings on the topic of sustainability. In the summer the now traditional 'all-age' camp was held at Svartbäcken. This is an opportunity for people to get together in a relaxed atmosphere and enjoy each others' company.

Yearly Meeting (YM) was held at the end of May, at Svartbäcken. The theme was *The gospel according to Quakers – how might Christian foundations give us light and guidance in our inner search, in our community and in our witness to the world?* In addition to hearing reports about the work of the various YM committees and groups, this is an opportunity for us to get together as a Quaker family for worship, study, reflection, business and fun and to welcome visitors from other Yearly Meetings.

During 2014 the various constituent Meetings and Worship Groups were actively involved with various social issues, such as supporting local clergy in their stand against the rise of racism and fascism in Sweden and supporting the work of the Salvation Army in Stockholm to help people in vulnerable situations. It is also good to report that in 2014 the small Worship Groups in Rimbo, Lund and Umeå began to meet more regularly again.

The Experiment with Light group continues to meet regularly at the Friends Centre in Stockholm. Worship sharing on a particular topic before the Thursday evening Meeting for Worship in Stockholm is also ongoing. The Småland Worship Group has borrowed this concept and now holds 'worship sharing' study sessions prior to Meeting for Worship at its monthly meets, which have enriched the time spent together.

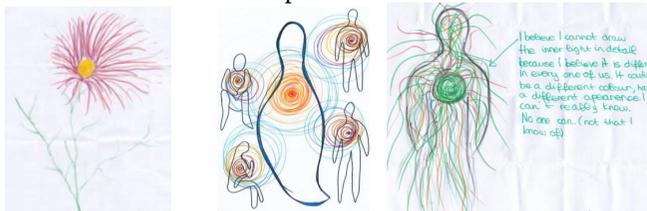
Sue Glover Frykman and Pontus Rancken, Representatives

Switzerland Yearly Meeting

The 2014 annual gathering of Switzerland Yearly Meeting was held 6-9 June at the Haus für Bildung und Begegnung, in Herzberg near Aarau. The theme was around celebrating the role of Quakers in Swiss society, past, present and future and included activities for children and playing of a traditional Swiss alphorn. The weekend was enriched by guests from Britain YM, Germany YM, QUNO, and FWCC.

Another significant gathering was held from 14-16 February at Montmirail near Neuchâtel on the writings of John Woolman. The Autumn meeting of German speaking Friends, was held on 16 November on the theme "One Direction, Two Paths". What has now become an annual tradition for Geneva and Lausanne Friends, the Mystery Tour, took place in September with 22 participants enjoying decoupage and a walk in the beautiful autumn sunshine. And the spiritual life of the 3 German-speaking groups has been enriched by regular visits of an elder who leads talks on spiritual themes.

We are now about 80 Friends and 90 friends of Friends included on our mailing list, with the number of Friends continuing to decrease (down from 89 last year). The average age is well over 70, though in some local groups, notably Geneva, the number of children has been growing and a Children's Meeting is now held each month with good attendance. To encourage outreach, a children's booklet published in 2010 by Britain Yearly Meeting entitled *Quaker Meeting and Me* has been translated into French with the title *le Culte quaker et moi*. Also as a form of outreach, Geneva Monthly Meeting joined in a series of exchanges organised by Geneva's interreligious platform in November. About a dozen guests joined meeting for worship, including five who also joined Children's Meeting and participated in drawing what the Inner Light meant to them. Here are a few examples:



Following the integration of the Lausanne group with Geneva Monthly Meeting, there are now four regional groups (Bern, Basel, Geneva, and Zürich). To lighten the administrative tasks of SYM and avoid duplication, contributions to service projects have now been delegated to the local groups and the SYM Service Committee has been eliminated. For the same reason, organising the SYM Annual Meeting is now being rotated between the German-speaking groups and Geneva Monthly Meeting.

There continue to be three Business Meetings a year, the principle one taking place during the Yearly Meeting, which is attended by about 45 to 50 members and representatives of other Yearly Meetings and Quaker organisations. The two other Business meetings are held in the Spring and Autumn and are attended by about 15 people. The Spring meeting focuses on planning the Yearly Meeting and acceptance of the accounts from the year before. The Autumn meeting deals mainly with the budget and nominations for the next year.

Two publications are produced several times a year, *Entre Amis* and *News and Views of Geneva Friends*, which contain much information about the activities of Swiss Friends and, along with the SYM Annual Meeting, help to overcome our linguistic differences and bring us together as one community.

Swiss Friends

Europe & Middle East Young Friends (EMEYF)

For EMEYF, 2014 was a year of moving beyond borders and conventions. We started to look at our place in Europe in a new light, and continued to rework our structure. Both turned out to be ways of living adventurously as well as faithfully, exploring where we are led as a community.

There have been two gatherings in 2014. In April we met in Ohrid, Macedonia for our Spring Gathering. We engaged with each other on the topic of borders, between, inside and around us. Macedonia provided us with a historical and political situation that made us rethink the concept of external borders: in an area where borders are heavily and violently disputed, where the topics of identity and borders are mixed up, and where refugees are still crossing today. But Macedonia also provided us with a soothing and inspiring natural setting that helped us to think about our inner borders. At the lake, we had meeting for worship, journalled and shared some deep conversation. One day, we climbed a (very snowy!) mountain, aiming to reach the top and look down on three countries. It was so foggy and snowy that when we stood there, we could only see the sky and the clouds, above and below us. Only our mobiles beeped when we picked up signals from different countries: Welcome to Albania, to Greece, to Macedonia...

We were inspired to think about our own borders by our contacts with the people of Ohrid - this was the first time EMEYF went to a place without a community of local Friends. Meeting them is usually one of the biggest benefits of our Gatherings, but this time we experienced that not relying on Friends made us open to meet friends, who just knocked on our door and stayed for tea and for our meeting for worship for business. Are we too self-centred sometimes and therefore not open and inviting? What borders do we need to cross to let our lives speak? When invited for dinner at the eco-hostel where we volunteered for a day, we were asked to have a short period of expectant worship

with them, and after we shook hands, our host asked: “So, are we Quakers now?” – a question we keep asking ourselves while growing in our faith and our faith community.

In November we met in Bad Pyrmont, Germany for our Annual Meeting. We appointed some new members to the Communications Committee, and developed a plan for a new style of our own annual report. After two years of reviewing nearly everything we do – our roles and our relationship to other Quaker organisations – we arrived at reviewing how we make ourselves seen and how we communicate. We hope to find ways to produce an Annual Report that is more reflective of us as the vibrant and diverse community we are.

Resulting from the review of our interaction with QCEA and EMES in 2013, both relationships have been deepened in 2014. A number of EMEYFers took part in the QCEA Study Tour to Brussels and Strasbourg. It’s important that young Quakers are informed about the workings of the EU and know how we can impact it – and it is important that young voices are heard as part of “our Quaker voice in Europe”. Therefore, EMEYF supported QCEA in organising the Study Tour financially and provided some ideas about how to make the Study Tour a more inclusive event.

Maybe it was our biggest weakness that facilitated our most valuable experiences: From the end of Annual Meeting 2013 until the end of Annual Meeting 2014, EMEYF had no clerk and we decided not to act on this until we were ready. This posed significant challenges for the rest of the Communications Committee and may have tested the patience of our partner organisations. However, holding ourselves in this vulnerable place strengthened us as a community! Holding meeting for worship for business without a designated clerk made clerking a communal task and the discernment a communal experience. Various members with no previous recording experience tried their hand at recording, with great success – and, more importantly, the whole meeting was incredibly gathered and connected. We experienced Quakerism as a “doing-it-together” faith, and discovered, at the heart of our vulnerability and weakness, our courage. As our epistle says “We move forward in hope and live adventurously.”

Spring Gathering 2015 will take place in Ureki, Georgia, from 4-11 April. The theme will be *Living as one faith among many*, in order to “explore Quakerism within a wider community and in a world where there are not many Quakers”. For many years Georgian young Friends have tried to participate in EMEYF events, but have been prevented, time and time again, by visa troubles. We can’t wait longer, and look forward to finally meeting them.

We thank all Yearly, Area and Local Meetings, as well as individuals and JRCT for their financial support. Please spread the word about EMEYF – we are inviting all Friends in the section aged 18 to 35ish to join us in our journey.

Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA) – “Your Quaker Voice in Europe”

The Quaker Council for European Affairs is the advocacy voice of Quakers across Europe. Perhaps because many Friends are keenly aware of living our witness, the difference between EMES and QCEA can be difficult for some to understand. I see it as the distinction between ‘doing’ and ‘being’: the staff at QCEA serve to ‘do’ advocacy for Quaker concerns. We represent Quakers at Europe (at the Council of Europe and the European Union) and Quakers in Europe (Friends who are part of EMES).

Visiting all of you in your gatherings – quarterly, yearly and regional meetings – is such a wonderful way for QCEA staff to connect with you whom we represent. Keep inviting us – we love to share what we do!

Of the two institutions with which we engage, the Council of Europe (CoE) is larger. There are 47 members – all EU Member States plus every country in Europe from Iceland to Russia except Belarus. The CoE is in many ways the benchmark for human rights protection in Europe: membership means that a country has signed the European Convention on Human Rights. The EU is in the process of working out how it can accede to the CoE Convention. In 2014, QCEA brought a group of Friends to visit the European Court of Human Rights, where cases relevant to the Convention are decided. The group also had the opportunity to both engage with protesters of different views about Ukraine and to observe a Parliamentary Assembly debate.

In addition to outreach, one of our important topics in 2014 was our work on free trade. The EU is negotiating a free trade agreement with the US and recently finalised one with Canada. Both include an investor-state dispute settlement mechanism, which would permit companies to sue national governments for loss of profit. These mechanisms are being used in other parts of the world to attack public health and environmental legislation: suits by tobacco companies claiming loss of profit for plain packaging requirements for cigarettes are some of the more famous examples of these tribunals in action. You can read about ISDS in a publication that QCEA helped publish: <http://corporateeurope.org/international-trade/2014/11/ceta-trading-away-democracy>. We called on Friends to respond to the public consultation, and many Quakers were among the 150,000 respondents, the great majority of whom voiced opposition to ISDS.

The European Parliamentary elections in May 2014 have meant a new composition in the European Parliament, and then the induction of a new set of European Union Commissioners and a new organisational structure. QCEA was part of a network which

achieved 199 signatures to a pledge to uphold human rights (see stand4humanrights.org). We also promoted the European Parliament's support for the recognition of Palestine in a historic vote which took place in December.

It is a privilege to serve Quaker values, and we have a wonderful staff team who will let you know how you can become engaged in areas of our work which interest you the most. QCEA as an organisation is grappling with an income which is below the level needed for sustainability of the organisation. I wish to appeal to each of you: can you give a bit to help ensure that Quakers have a voice at these institutions?

Alexandra Bosbeer, Representative

Quaker United Nations Office and Committee (Geneva)

In 2014, QUNO's Food and Sustainability programme hosted two consultations, bringing together experts from farmers' organisations, the UN system, state trade negotiators and academia to foster understanding and strategise on how QUNO can best support decision makers to protect food security. Participants agreed that there is a need to shift the narrative that underpins the current trade and investment system. To that end, we commissioned *Trade Liberalization and Food Security: Examining the Linkages*, a paper by Professor Jennifer Clapp of the University of Waterloo. The paper challenges the concept of economic efficiency in the context of agricultural trade and examines how it affects broader social goals, such as the human right to adequate food, decent work and ecological diversity.

In our human rights work, a significant recent achievement was the issuing of new guidelines on refugee status relating to military service by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). QUNO contributed to the development of these guidelines by highlighting the nature of the persecution faced by conscientious objectors and promoting awareness of the types of protection that should be offered. On the issue of children of prisoners, we held a side event at the March session of the Human Rights Council and a follow-up event at the UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in Vienna in April, and produced a pamphlet and a short video to bring the topic to a wider audience. We were pleased to see The Committee on the Rights of the Child take up the specific issue of children of parents sentenced to death or executed and that issue was also raised in the Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review process.

Now in our second year of quiet diplomacy work at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) negotiations, QUNO continued to bring together highly diverse groups of delegates for off-the-record dinners to help facilitate communication and build understanding. In support of this work we published *Moving Forward in International Negotiations*, which presented four examples of complex multilateral processes and the innovative approaches used to build consensus, and *A Call*

to Conscience, a booklet profiling Quaker experiences in facing the challenge of climate change. We also participated in a consultation with the UN Special Rapporteur John Knox and leading non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working to strengthen human rights protection in climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts. At the UNFCCC Conference of Parties (COP) 20 in Lima, Peru in December, we co-hosted a side event entitled Climate Change Threatening Human Rights, and we are exploring additional ways to encourage human rights protection through both the UNFCCC and the Human Rights Council.

Together with our partners in the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform, we guided the development of the White Paper on Peacebuilding, which was completed at the end of 2014. As the UN peacebuilding architecture undergoes a 10-year review, the White Paper aims to broaden this discussion by presenting a variety of perspectives, from the local to international level, on how societies can most effectively move towards sustainable peace with the assistance of the UN and the international community. In June 2014, at the Meeting of the Parties of the Aarhus Convention in Maastricht, QUNO presented an event and briefing paper showing how the legal provisions of the Aarhus Convention can be used in peacebuilding and the prevention of destructive conflict around natural resources.

QUNO Geneva also hosts an annual Summer School, which we coordinate together with Britain Yearly Meeting. The two-week programme is open to persons aged 20-26 who are interested in international affairs and learning more about our work with the UN. Applications are now being accepted for the 2015 Summer School, which will take place from 5-17 July. More information is available at quno.org.

Stephen Schenck, Communications Coordinator

Quaker United Nations Office in New York

Last year I started my report by saying that 2013 was exciting year at QUNO-New York, 2014 has been no less exciting! This was my third year as FWCC-EMES representative at Quaker United Nations Committee and it is a privilege to support Quaker work in this way.

The QUNO-NY committee held its first virtual meeting in 2014, following the very good example set by QUNO-Geneva. We had technical support from AFSC, which certainly helped us get comfortable with both the technology (WebEx) and the slightly different discipline necessary for a virtual Quaker business meeting. The intention is that a virtual meeting will replace one of our two face-to-face committee meetings a year.

After completing her term as programme assistant, Rachel Singleton-Polster took up the new post as QUNO Fellow researching on how QUNO could tackle promoting change

through peaceful means at the UN, one of the four strategies for QUNO in 2015, the other three are: (1) Local perspectives in the work of the UN Peacebuilding Commission; (2) Promote peacebuilding and peace issues within the 2015 SDG framework; (3) Coordinate work at the UN of direct interest to Friends.

In October we said goodbye to Sarah Clarke, representative, who leaves QUNO at the end of 2014 after many years service. And in 2015 we will welcome Rachel F. Madenyika as she takes up the post of representative.

At our October meeting, Welling Hall (FWCC Section of the Americas representative) led us through some thought provoking and interesting exercises, which highlighted the complexity of work at the UN. In one exercise we role-played a UN session on Goal 16 (the “Peace Goal”) of the Sustainable Development Goals. We were all assigned a country and given the job to argue our country’s hopes and objections to the various aspects of Goal 16. These exercises were part of the committee’s wish to orientate itself on the work at the UN in which QUNO is involved.

2015 will be a key year for the United Nations: the Sustainable Development Goals will be finalised, Climate Change negotiations continue with the important COP21 meeting in Paris in December. The 2015 review of Peace Building Commission and a review of Peace Operations will begin. All these are issues in which QUNO is involved.

You can read more about QUNO work on their website www.quno.org where you can also sign up for their monthly updates.

Penny Heymans, Oslo

Quaker Voluntary Action

The year 2014 has once again been active and we have continued with the final year of our appeal for supporting the work at Ramallah Meeting. We intend to place Friends in Residence in Ramallah during 2015 and our worker, Jasmine, has spent some time there this autumn to prepare the way for this. We have enjoyed hearing her account of working in the garden accompanied by the resident tortoise!

Our programme of retreats has again been popular and our latest newsletter contains some inspiring accounts and photographs. The newsletter can be downloaded from our website (<http://www.qva.org.uk/>) and we are also happy to send copies by email on request. Our programme for 2015 includes some new ventures – a sustainability retreat in Freiburg, Germany, and also support for a children’s project run by Hungarian Friends.

We would like to thank all those who have supported QVA's work in 2014 – practically, prayerfully and financially; including of course those who have contributed directly to the Appeal already mentioned.

I do however have to end with some sad news. Some of you may have known Martin Smith, who was one of the founding trustees of QVA. Martin collapsed and died while out cycling at the beginning of 2014. His experience, enthusiasm and commitment will be sadly missed by QVA, but we are determined to continue with the active programme he helped to establish.

Jane Robinson, Clerk

Yearly Meetings in 2015

Yearly Meeting	When	Contact
Denmark	29-30 March	post@kvaekerne.dk
Ireland	9-12 April	office@quakers-in-ireland.ie
Britain	1-4 May	Paul Parker, Recording Clerk, Friends House, 173 Euston Road London NW1 2AX ymg@quaker.org.uk
Belgium & Luxembourg	6-8 May	quakerclerk@gmail.com
Netherlands	29-31 May	secretariaat@dequakers.nl
Switzerland	6-9 June	symclerk@swiss-quakers.ch
Sweden	25-28 June	kvakargarden@kvakare.se
Norway	25-28 June	kveker@kveker.org
France	16-19 July	assembleedefrance@gmail.com
Finland	3-4 October	jaanaerkkilaja@gmail.com
German	22-25 October	clerks@quaeker.org

Other events in 2015

Event	When	Contact
Grenztreffen Switzerland/Germany/France	27-29 March	Brigitte Seger
EMEYF Spring Gathering	4-11 April	emeyf@qcea.org
EMES Annual Meeting	4-7 June	emes@fwccemes.org
Central European Gathering	22-25 May	Vera Varadi
Border Meeting	18-20 September	http://grenztreffen.be/index.php/en-GB/
Peace & Service Consultation in Brussels, Belgium	20-22 November	emes@fwccemes.org

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:

CAF Bank

Bank – HSBC City Corporate Banking Centre

SWIFT BIC Code – MIDLGB22XXX

IBAN No – GB48MIDL40053072138549

Account Name – CAF Bank Ltd

For Credit to (enter in field 72) – FWCC EMES 405240 00025578

Account Number – 72138549

Sort Code – 40-05-30

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, Martin Touwen, for further information or to inform us of bank transfers you are making.