

Among Friends

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Being Friends

Dear Friends,

At the beginning of October I travelled to Rovaniemi, capital of Lapland, in the North of Finland, for a seminar commemorating the 70th anniversary of the work camps that rebuilt an area devastated during World War II (see article on page 2). The documented history of this act of solidarity and friendship was very affecting and thought provoking.

During a break in the seminar's programme, we visited the Arktikum museum, an impressive building in Rovaniemi, with many fascinating exhibitions about the history, life and culture of this very northerly land. By some strange coincidence, the Arktikum displayed a temporary exhibition entitled "*Wir waren Freunde – We were Friends*" - the encounters of Germans and Finns in Lapland during 1940-1944. Having come from presentations of the huge rebuilding task that followed the complete devastation of the area in 1944-45 by the German army as it withdrew from Lapland (following the terms of the armistice between Finland and the Soviet Union in 1944), and having watched still and moving pictures of the desolation that it left behind, the artefacts such as reproduction of diaries and letters, and pictures showing smiling, uniformed men attending tea dances, sporting events, parades etc. had an eerie feel to them.



View from inside the Arktikum museum
Photo: Marisa Johnson

The exhibition stated that "*In autumn 1940, one started to encounter soldiers speaking foreign languages in railway stations and on the Arctic Ocean Road. Lappish people were amazed by the handsome, uniformed German soldiers that suddenly appeared in their land, taking over the buildings and fields. Thereby, the four-year coexistence of Germans and Finns began and ended dramatically with the destruction of Lapland in the autumn of 1944. All in all, there were approximately 210 000 Germans in the Lapland area. In Rovaniemi alone, there were approximately 6000 Germans, which was almost as big as the local population. Rovaniemi became the centre for Germany's mountain army that included headquarters, military staff and numerous barrack camps with their casinos and prison camps.*"

How can a four-year friendship turn so dramatically and completely and give way to a wave of systematic destructiveness? Such is the logic of war and violence, a pattern of behaviour that is only too visible in our own times too. May we remember when looking at today's enemies that "*We were friends once, and, with God's help, we shall be again*".

Marisa Johnson, Executive Secretary

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Kveekareiden jäljillä Lapissa ja maailmalla

Lapin jälleenrakennukseen liittyvien työleirien muistelu ja maailman kveekaripäivän tapahtuma Rovaniemellä Rovalan Setlementissä 3.- 4.10.2015

Jane Rose, Finland Yearly Meeting, writes

Friends in Finland, together with the Finnish Settlement Foundation, arranged a weekend seminar in Lapland at the beginning of October to commemorate 70 years since the first Quaker run work-camps for rebuilding and reconstruction were held in Finnish Lapland 1945-47. We were delighted to have a complete mix of speakers, many from the Quaker world, representing AFSC, QUNO, EMES, the Finnish International work-camps organisation among others. Almost all of the presentations can be listened to by following the link (or pasting it in your computer browser). All illuminate aspects of (Quaker)



https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCL5w3diDAZ124MIYj_onBOA

One talk, given in Finnish, is an account by a researcher in art education from the University of Lapland, Anniina Koivurova, (through the research project FEENIKS – Art and culture in the post-war reconstruction process of Lapland) into the work of the Canadian Quaker artist Naomi Jackson who was one of the work-camp volunteers 70 years ago, and who particularly worked with the children. Anniina has had access to Naomi Jackson's collection of children's paintings from that time which clearly show the world that children were returning to at the end of the war. These are the children who were sent to Sweden or other places of safety for the duration of the war. The children painted the world about them, their reality. That world showed women cooking in wood fired brick ovens outside, often the only part of their former homes still standing (the oven or fireplace and the chimney stack). There were also many pictures of houses being rebuilt, board by board, nail by nail. The detail is vividly

recorded by the child artists, showing how they understood reconstruction from the inside.



The pictures are part of the following archive source: LMM, NJG 611:1-141. Collection of Naomi Jackson Groves. Rovaniemi: Finland: Provincial Museum of Lapland.

Pentti Lemmentyinen, the current director of Finnish Settlement and Neighbourhood Houses, gave a presentation on the work of the Finnish Settlement movement past and present. I have been unable to obtain the very touching photo which was used in his talk, but by following the link (or pasting it in the browser of your computer) you should get directly to a sepia photo of Martti, an image of great immediacy and poignancy.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detailpage&v=FVSCMM3vcaM#t=1247

Martti is one of almost 500,000 refugees, from the part of Finnish Karelia which was ceded to Russia in 1944, who had to be integrated into Finland towards the end of WWII. Pentti Lemmentyinen, felt Martti represents something positive from that time with which we today can also connect; clear eyes with no fear and trusting that he would be cared for. The situation is mirrored today, some 70 years later, as unprecedented numbers of migrants, especially from Iraq, Afghanistan and Somalia, are arriving in northern Finland



through Sweden. They too 'accompanied us' through the weekend seminar and would seem to be equally trusting of our engagement and support for their needs. (all pictures by Naomi Jackson)

Hadewijch Touwen: Inimitable Friend

Gordon Matthews, Britain Yearly Meeting, writes:

Intermittent encounters with Hadewijch Touwen over the past 35 years or so have left me with the impression of an eminently practical, competent, friendly, loving and caring person. She was also artistic and creative. Sasha and I will always treasure our marriage certificate, which is a delightful collage carefully crafted by Hadewijch in her inimitable style and signed by her along with all the other witnesses to our marriage.

A good many years ago I enjoyed the privilege of attending Hadewijch and Martin's wedding in Hamburg. I had got to know them both when serving as secretary to Europe and Middle East Young Friends (EMEYF). Hadewijch was clerk and Martin was treasurer. It was a pleasure to work together with them at organising the EMEYF spring gathering in Copenhagen in 1987.

Later that year Hadewijch and I accompanied a small group of Young Friends from around Europe on a week-long visit to Taizé, the community in the east of France which every year attracts thousands of young people from throughout Europe and beyond.

I first came across Hadewijch when she was a student helper at Woodbrooke, in the days when there was a small team of young people working in the kitchen and doing painting and decorating. I was living at Woodbrooke whilst doing a postgraduate teacher training course at Birmingham University. This is a long time ago, so I have only a vague memory of Hadewijch at that time – wearing overalls, so she must have been doing some painting.

I also have a vague memory of visiting Hadewijch and Martin a couple of years after their marriage – in Amersfoot, if I remember rightly. I have a much clearer memory of them both visiting me in Laufdorf fairly soon after I moved to Germany to work for Church and Peace.

Yesterday, whilst sorting through some old correspondence, I came across two postcards from Hadewijch and Martin, both of them written by Hadewijch. On 21 December 1991 she wrote: "Today is the shortest day of the year and short and dark and wet it is! But we don't mind, inside it is warm and gemütlich. ... We hope you spend cheerful Christmas days and then jump into a happy and blessed new year, with love, Hadewijch." On Sunday 31 October 1993, almost exactly 22 years ago, she wrote about their new baby: "It is incredible how time-consuming such a



Hadewijch Touwen Photo: *Alexandra Bosbeer*

tiny human being is! But every day we think her more wonderful and beautiful."

Others can testify better than I can to Hadewijch's sojourn on this planet as daughter, mother, and wife. I can testify to her active, loving presence as a Quaker. She served Netherlands Yearly Meeting as Secretary for 13 years. I recently came across the following quotation from the psychotherapist Alfred Adler: "It is easier to fight for one's principles than to live up to them." Some of us Quakers are better at fighting (without outward weapons, of course) for our principles than we are at living up to them. Hadewijch, however, lived up to all that one might hope for from a Quaker with integrity.

During the past couple of years Hadewijch has been an especially supportive and non-judgemental friend. I remember well an enjoyable weekend spent around a year ago with Hadewijch and Martin in Deventer. I'm grateful for the grace of God which shone through Hadewijch.

Cathars and Quakers in the Languedoc - a shared journey

Kerstin Mangels, German YM with *Meg Hill*, Britain YM write:

When I read the invitation on the EMES Website, I had no idea who or what the Cathars were. The dictionary told me, that the Cathars (also called Albigenses) were disciples of a religious movement between the 12. and 14. century. After 1100 the Cathar-Movement spread over to Antwerp, Leuven, Bruges, Utrecht, Liège, Cologne, Trier, Reims, London, Strasbourg. But their main territory was in the Languedoc, in South of France. That is where we travelled to.

A shared interest in the life and beliefs of the Cathars and of Quakers brought 24 people together in September 2015. We travelled from Great Britain, Ireland, USA, Switzerland, Andorra and Germany. Half were Quakers, half could be described as seekers. Our group spent time each day in a short period of worship, and some sharing about Cathar and Quaker belief before setting off to explore the “Pays Cathar” with its seemingly impregnable castles hilltops, and the villages and beautiful countryside in which they lived.

The Cathars (“pure”), called themselves simply “Good Christians” or “Bonshommes / Bonsfemmes”. The Cathars came together in their communities to try to re-discover what they felt that early Christians, as expressed particularly in the Gospel of John, had understood and tried to live by. They were pacifists, refused to swear oaths and pay tithes to the church, and regarded the crucifix as an instrument of torture.



A Castle in the “Pays Cathar” Photo: Kerstin Mangels

The Catholic church called them heretics, and the Pope ordered a crusade against his fellow -Christians to destroy them, as did the French King, who saw it as a way to expand his kingdom. By 1320 no Cathars remained, Hundreds had been burnt at the stake, and the survivors converted back to Catholicism, or fled to other countries.

They built no churches and no scripture has remained – nearly all of what we know comes from the Inquisition, which is of course one-sided. So we don’t really know much about them.

We also visited Congenies, the French Quaker Centre near Nimes. There we had a talk from Francoise Tomlin, a French Friend, on the origins of the group there who had become Quakers en masse in the early C19th.

We took from this gathering the knowledge that the spirit re-emerges in different places and at different times – but it is the same spirit. How we live out its inspiration in our own times is the discipline under which we choose to live.

As a group we had a great time, serious discussions and a lot of fun. In the evenings we learned about the French full-length three-course menu at a long table - which I will never forget. Thanks to Kris Misselbrook, of the “Associations Bonshommes” a Friend living in France who had organised this tour so well !!

Our bus driver, Jorge, joined us in Meeting for Worship, and announced at the end of the tour “You are my favourite heretics!”



In search of the Cathars

Photo: Kris Misselbrook

European Quaker peaceworker placements research

Haifa Rashed, Britain Yearly Meeting, writes:

What impact do the European based peaceworker and programme assistant schemes have on the lives of the young people who participate in them?

"Best internship-type opportunity going, with excellent support and payment"

(Former QUNO programme assistant)

The question of how Quakers can appeal to and engage with young people is often asked and as a former Quaker UN Office (QUNO) Geneva programme assistant I wanted to find out how effective the various European work placements and their related organisations are at sharing Quaker ideas, values and practices. Furthermore I was interested to discover to what extent these schemes encourage and support growth in the area of an individual's spirituality in relation to their social justice work, or 'living faith in action'. Thanks to an Eva Koch scholarship from Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre in Birmingham, England I was able to conduct the research this summer by creating an online survey and interviewing former peaceworkers. I received 64 responses to the survey from people who had worked in the last 20-odd years as UK peaceworkers with Quaker Peace and Social Witness, programme assistants at QUNO in Geneva or the Quaker Council for European Affairs in Brussels as well as the recent Britain Yearly Meeting and Young Friends General Meeting Interns.

The overall responses were very positive: 91% of respondents said they would recommend their placement scheme to others interested in applying, 89% felt that their placement contributed to their understanding of Quaker beliefs, processes and practices and 81% are still engaged with Quakerism in some form.

The prime motivation of those undertaking the schemes was to gain work experience in the field of peace/social justice/human rights. The second main motivation was the fact that these schemes are paid – as some remarked this is very unusual in these sectors where unpaid internships are still commonplace. 92% of former peaceworkers surveyed have been involved with peace/social justice work or activism after their placement, either personally or professionally. Many

referred to their peaceworker year as being fundamental to their future career path.

After 88% of respondents indicated their interest in being part of an informal network of former peaceworkers, I have established a mentoring scheme connecting current and former peaceworkers, and I am planning future alumni social events and activism collaboration opportunities. Quakers across Europe have been supporting these schemes for many years and the survey results demonstrate the positive impact they have had on the spiritual and professional lives of the young people who participate in them. The complete research findings report will be available electronically from the Woodbrooke website. For a PDF copy of the report or any further information, please email rashedhaifa@gmail.com

The Eva Koch scholarship at Woodbrooke runs over a six-week period each year. The aim of the Scholarship is to give an opportunity for a short period of reflection, research and writing. For more see woodbrooke.org.uk.

Quaker Peace and Social Witness (QPSW) UK Peaceworker scheme

Each year, Britain Yearly Meeting recruits people who want an opportunity to apply their commitment to working for peace, and funds a placement for each of them with an organisation working on an aspect of peace in the UK or overseas. Placements have been in organisations across the UK including Campaign Against the Arms Trade, ForcesWatch and the Oxford Research Group. Peaceworkers are paid an entry-level salary. See www.quaker.org.uk/qpsw-placements-and-peaceworkers for more.

Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) Geneva Programme Assistants

Each year QUNO Geneva hires between one and three Programme Assistants to assist on its work areas such as Human Rights and Refugees, Peacebuilding, Climate Change and Food and Sustainability. Programme Assistants are typically university graduates and are provided with accommodation, a travel pass and a monthly stipend. QUNO New York also hires Programme Assistants. For more see <http://quno.org/programme-assistants>.

Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA) Brussels Programme Assistants

Each year QCEA hires between two and three Programme Assistants to assist on its work areas such as hate crime and social conflict, economic justice, peace and sustainability. Programme Assistants are typically university graduates (and usually aged under 30) and are provided with accommodation and a monthly stipend. For more see <http://www.qcea.org/home/involved/vacancies/>

Young Friends General Meeting (YFGM) and Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) Internship.

Since 2013, YFGM and BYM have combined to recruit a YFGM Co-ordinator and BYM Communications & Services Assistant. This role is based at Friends House, London. Unlike the other placements, this is described as an 'internship' and lasts for 10 months.

There are also one-year work placements operating in the USA with **Quaker Voluntary Service** and **QUNO New York**.

Down by the Balaton

Dag H. Sture, Norway Yearly Meeting write:

36 young people from 8 to 23 years of age enjoyed a week of friendship, peacemaking and bathing in the great lake of Balaton, Hungary from July 6th to 12th. Budapest Friend Zsuzsanna Eastland raised the concern at the EMES Annual Meeting in 2013, and with the help of European Friends and others, the camp was held this summer at Szepezdfürdő.

The youngsters came from four ethnic groups – Serbian, Rumanian, Slovakian and Hungarian. There has been considerable tension between different ethnic groups in Hungary, mostly for historical reasons. Zsuzsa Eastland's idea is to start working with young people, as a way of making peace in a long time perspective. If we let them get to know each other, form friendships and discover that the «others» are remarkably like themselves, they will hopefully take that experience with them further into adulthood.

They sang peace songs together in a choir, lead by Norwegian Friend Dag H. Sture, they practised their English with native speaker Jasmine Piercy from Quaker Voluntary Action, and they enjoyed bathing in the delightfully warm water of lake Balaton. Singing English songs, Zumba dancing and folk instrument playing also took place in the evenings. In their free time most of the kids played and had fun together across group divisions. Many of them made friends with people from other groups. Guided by responsible and caring teachers and leaders, they behaved very well, and gave much positive feedback.

Hungarian Friend Anett Riboczi held most of the



threads together, being bilingual in Hungarian and English, translating, planning and coordinating events as the camp went on. Jasmine's husband Alexander Gorbenko and Zsuzsa Eastland's friend Jenny Edwards also helped running the activities. Under shifting weather conditions, from sunny 40 degrees C to a regular rainstorm, everybody did their part to adapt as the camp went on. In between planned activities, people enjoyed just being together in the camp area.



During the week there was an outing, crossing the lake on a ferry and looking at the magnificent view of the lake from a tower on a hilltop. The schedule also contained talks about similarities in personal names and loanwords across the different language divisions in the region. There was also a session of art activities during the camp. Sunday evening a small concert was held in the village, where the groups contributed with their own songs, as well as singing what they had learnt at the camp. Some instrumental folk music was also performed at the concert.



What rests with the Friends that ran the camp, is the memory of the lively, trusting, gentle and lovely kids that patiently held out choir rehearsals in body temperature, as well as rejoicing in the wonderful surroundings of Hungary's most popular recreational area. As they went on learning English, language became less of an obstacle for communication. Also, we appreciate very much the good support from their teachers and leaders, who managed their groups so well during the week. All in all, the camp gives good hopes for future peace work with young people in this area.



All Photos in this article by Dag H. Sture

The William Edmundson Homecoming 2015

Rachel M Bewley-Bateman, Ireland Yearly Meeting, writes:

William Edmundson was born in the North of England in 1627 and joined William Cromwell's Parliamentary army. After a period of seeking, he left the army and converted to Quakerism on hearing James Naylor preaching. He returned to Ireland where he established the first Quaker Meeting in Ireland in 1654 in Lurgan, Co. Armagh. After a long and active life in service of the Truth, he was buried in the Irish midlands, in the Friends Burial Ground, Rosenallis, just a few miles from Mountmellick, in Co. Laois. Edmundson and other Friends had settled in this area from 1659, developing businesses, schools and Quaker Meetings.

James E. Edmundson is an 8th great grandson of William Edmundson. The William Edmundson Homecoming was a result of over 30 years research into his family history. James and family members travelled from Virginia, USA, to meet in Mountmellick from 21-27 July 2015 with other descendants of William Edmundson. A very full programme of events had been arranged for the week, which included the two-day Mountmellick Friends Summer School. The Mountmellick Heritage Society, Mountmellick Development Association, Dublin Friends Historical Committee and others in the local community enthusiastically contributed to the success of this occasion. There are few Friends living in the area now, but the week was well supported and on Sunday morning Meeting for Worship was held in the old Mountmellick Friends Meeting House, which is now a Church of Ireland Social Centre. About 80 people attended, including about two dozen Quakers from various parts of Ireland,

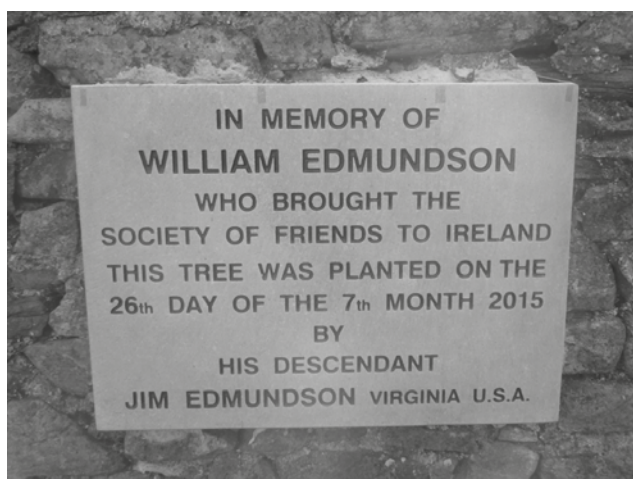


Presentation of Mountmellick Work (White on white embroidery developed by Quakers) Photo: Kevin Byrne

as well as strong ecumenical support from the local community. The warmth of the welcome from the people of Mountmellick was palpable. Every shop seemed to have white Mountmellick embroidery in the window and a variety of exhibitions took place around the town in addition to the talks and lectures.

Mountmellick was once known as the little Manchester of Ireland due to the presence of a large and diverse industrial base, which included an iron foundry, breweries, tanneries, flax and cotton mills. Traces of Mountmellick's rich heritage as a Quaker settlement remain in its Victorian and Georgian architecture. During the industrial revolution, this quiet residential town in the Irish midlands gave its name to the world renowned Victorian White on White Embroidery called Mountmellick work. Girls were instructed in the embroidery as a way to earn money for their books. A Government report of 1858 states that the needlework was taught in the Mountmellick Quaker School both in fancy and plain designs. These designs were inspired by the flora and fauna found in the surrounding area. By 1890 there were 50 women employed in producing embroidery.

The Mountmellick Development Association (MDA) hosted 20 panels from the Quaker Tapestry Exhibition in 2013 and the organisers were delighted with the numbers who visited on that occasion. Mountmellick White embroidery is still being taught and produced. I was invited back in August to officially open their four new kitchens for start-up businesses. Mountmellick is proud of its Quaker history and I find it refreshing to see the energy and enthusiasm of the people of this midland town.



*Memorial stone in Friends Burial Ground, Rosenallis
Photo: Rachel M. Bewley Bateman*

News from Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre

Online learning for European Friends

Due to popular demand, Woodbrooke is increasing the number and range of online courses in 2016 to nine. There will be a selection of short and long retreats as well as webinars on Quaker history. See the course listings below.

Three one-day online retreats:

12 to 13 February: Open to New Light

9 to 10 June: The Sacred in the Everyday

18 to 19 November: Sacred Reading

An online retreat running over six weeks:

7 April – 19 May: Deepening the Life of the Spirit

Two series of webinars on early Quakers and Quakerism:

7 April to 12 May: Exploring the Early Quaker Vision: Six Thursday Evenings

1 November to 6 December: Exploring the Life and Writings of James Nayler: Six Tuesday Evenings

Clerking courses:

11 April to 22 May: Being a Quaker Clerk

3 October to 13 November: Being a Quaker Clerk

Creative courses:

7 March to 15 May: Life Artistry

To book your place visit www.woodbrooke.org.uk or call us on +44(0)121 472 5171

Woodbrooke-on-the-Road in Europe

Woodbrooke-on-the-Road is a travelling teaching service which offers meetings and other Quaker groups from local worship groups to regional gatherings and even whole Yearly Meetings a well-structured learning and sharing experience. With the aim to provide new insights into Quaker history, theology, spirituality, testimony and community. Since 2003, Woodbrooke have delivered hundreds of events to different meetings across Europe, from Svartbäcken, Sweden to Litomysl, Czech Republic. Most of our events are



Friends' exploring the meaning of light – Photo: Woodbrooke

one-day workshops but we can lead longer events.

Please contact us to ask how we could support your Quaker community. Support is available from the Corder & Gwen Catchpool Fund.

For information about holding a Woodbrooke on-the-Road event, please call +44(0)121 472 5171 or email off-site@woodbrooke.org.uk

'Soul of Leadership' with The Shalem Institute

Soul of Leadership is Woodbrooke's 18-month programme for anyone in a leadership role. It has proven popular with European Friends taking part in the four 4-day residentials at Woodbrooke. Gerrit Jan describes his Soul of Leadership experience:

"I was not disappointed as this curriculum; it has introduced me to new ways of leadership and introduced me to the beneficial Quaker-practice of clearness-committees. Soul of Leadership has worked for me in a wonderful way."

The first Soul of Leadership residential starts in January 2016, with the last one taking place in June 2017.

For information about joining Soul of Leadership, please call +44(0)121 472 5171 or email enquiries@woodbrooke.org.uk

For more information about all of Woodbrooke's learning programmes visit www.woodbrooke.org.uk

A peace mission to Kosovo

Kees Nieuwerth, Netherlands Yearly Meeting, writes:

Recently Church and Peace held its Conference in Pristina – Kosovo.

We were invited by one a small Protestant Evangelical Church, the Fellowship of the Lord's People' which in recent years joined the network of Church and Peace.

These Annual General Meetings are of course very important for the members, spread out as they are over all of Europe. They provide an opportunity to share about projects and activities, study a theme and exchange views in small groups, as well as deal with the usual agenda: report of the Administrative Committee (= the Board), finances, plans for the future.

We were warmly welcomed by our hosts. Amongst them many young people, who not only took part enthusiastically in the proceedings, but also prepared breakfast for us every day! Nevertheless, as one of our hosts expressed it: "Welcome to the land of the broken bridges"!

During times of war the infrastructure is bombed first... roads and bridges. Entire villages are also burned and bombed. And these parts of the Balkan have had their share of wars: first the Ottoman Turks invaded, conquered and ruled this region for centuries.... We were taken to a war memorial which commemorates this battle in 1389 (!) in which 40.000 lives were lost... A memorial where in recent history Milosevic called for a new war on Serbia's neighbours! Instead we sang Kyrie there, asking for peace. After the Turkish rule came the first world war, the second world war and the wars when former Yugoslavia broke apart.

After much struggle Kosovo has been an independent nation for just seven years now! United Nation peacekeepers (KFOR) are still stationed in the country. Several languages are spoken: Albanese, Serbian, Turkish, Roma. There are still tensions between the Kosovo-Albanese majority and the Serbian minority in the northern parts. So much so that whilst we were there literally was a physical fight in Parliament over the rights of the Serbians.

During an excursion we were shown century old churches and monasteries, beautifully decorated with frescos, which the Serbian Orthodox Church claims



Church and Peace AGM Photo: Annemarie Müller

are the cradle of Serbian civilization and are deemed to be 'extraterritorial', not deemed part of Kosovo and therefore are guarded by KFOR-troops.

During our time in Pristina, C&P organised a public event in a local hotel. Religious leaders from the Muslim majority (90%), the Serbian Orthodox church, the Roman Catholic church, the Protestant church and the tiny Jewish community were invited to share their vision of living peacefully together in Kosovo today. C&P presented some examples of peace projects by its members, particularly in some other areas of the Balkans. Since the national television and some newspapers were at this gathering, this offered a peaceful counterweight to the rather aggressive and worrying tensions in the national parliament! After all, the overarching theme of our meeting was: the fruit of righteousness will be peace (Isaiah 32).

It should therefore not be underestimated that this meeting also was a peace mission in the sense that it meant important support for this small church in Pristina attempting to be a peace church in Kosovo here and now. They were happy with these peace builders from at least 18 different nations visiting them, particularly those from Bosnia and even Russia!

We heard a good reflection on our theme by Leonardo Emberti Gialloreti of the Saint Egidio Community in Rome. One quote: 'To the rulers of this world we say: war is not overcome by war. It is a fraud! War always gets out of hand. Do not be deceived! War makes entire

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Supporting Peace in Ukraine

John Lampen, Britain Yearly Meeting, writes:

At the 2104 EMES Annual Meeting our Friends Mikhail (Mischa) Roschin from Moscow Monthly Meeting and Roland Rand from Talinn Worship Group came with a concern to visit the conflict areas in Ukraine and explore peace-building possibilities. After a time of discernment, the Meeting supported this concern, set up a support group and agreed to hold any money contributed towards their costs.

A small-scale appeal brought in an astonishing £10,000 from Friends. After the costs of our Friends' visits (*reported in Among Friends n° 131*) were met, over €4000 remained in hand. The support group decided this should be shared between three peace-building projects recommended by Roland and Mischa.

Friends House Moscow has been providing Alternatives to Violence (AVP) workshops with displaced people in Ukraine, and we were able to give just over €2000 to this work. All in all, they held 27 workshops for refugees: 11 in Odessa, 13 in Kharkov, and 3 in Slavyansk and Kramatorsk, two cities near the "front line". Twenty of the workshops were for children and teenager. One participant said: "I liked that I had the opportunity to share my thoughts, the friendly atmosphere, to hear the experience of other people".

The Odessa Regional Mediation Group (with whom some Friends have worked) resolves conflicts and arguments in criminal and civil proceedings, and community and ethnic conflicts; it gives training in non-violent conflict resolution and conflict resolution skills in the secondary and higher education systems, the judicial system, the social services and work with families. Its staff have experience in facilitating intercommunity dialogue in the Northern Caucasus

and some former Soviet Republics. So it was well-placed to bring these skills to the outbreak of violence in Ukraine, and its efforts have been recognized by the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). We were able to give them €1500.

Our third contribution (€1600) was to a summer camp near Odessa supported by the Talinn Worship Group. It hosted eight families: 11 parents, 11 children above the age of 15 years and 7 children of 10-15. They were displaced people from the Lugansk and Donetsk regions and the Crimea, recommended by charities and Social Services. It offered a safe space for these people displaced by military action to feel at ease, rejuvenate themselves, relax and strengthen their family relationships.

Alla Soroka, the organiser, reported: "The team of organizers, in addition to an AVP team, consisted of a sports instructor, art therapist and physician. We balanced our schedule, so that the families could relax on the beach in the morning and evening, as this is the safest time for sunbathing. Creative workshops were at lunch time. Training and family work, when people were most likely to be active, was before and after dinner, when it was cooler." Alla's report can be read on the FWCC-EMES website.

The situation in Eastern Ukraine is calmer, following the February 2015 Minsk Peace Agreement. An uneasy ceasefire is largely holding, though there are sporadic skirmishes. But there is little progress towards peace and a political accommodation. In this tense context, every initiative to rebuild trust, friendship and forgiveness between "Ukrainians" and "Russians" is welcome; and Friends are grateful that they were able in a small way to contribute to this.

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peoples inhuman. Let us start afresh from dialogue, which is a unique art, an irreplaceable medicine that brings reconciliation among peoples'.

As always there was a small but good presence of Friends at this meeting: from Germany, from Switzerland, France, Britain and myself on behalf of EMES. This was my last time to have the honour to represent EMES

at Church and Peace meetings.

But then, C&P nominated and appointed both Barbara Forbes (BYM) and myself as members of the Administrative Committee during this Annual General Meeting.

Next year we will meet in Paris and be able to join the protest against the arms fair there!

Diary Dates 2015

More dates for 2015 are available on the website: www.fwccemes.org. Please send items for inclusion in the diary to Marisa Johnson at emes@fwccemes.org.

4-6 December: Castle or Community? Quakers' role in building the new Europe. A QCEA/QPSW Conference, Brussels. Contact conference@qcea.org

19-27 January 2016: FWCC International Meeting of Representatives/World Plenary, Pisac, Peru. <http://www.fwcc.world/peru/index.html>

1-3 April 2016: German-speaking gathering in Rheinfelden. Information from zeitschrift@quaeker.org

5-8 May 2016: Sweden Yearly Meeting

13-16 May 2016: Switzerland Yearly Meeting

27-30 May 2016: Britain Yearly Meeting

13-17 June 2016: Protest outside Eurosatory Arms Fair, Paris. Information from karina.knight-spencer@orange.fr

30 July – 7 August 2016: "European Quakers of all ages Gathering". See below

EMEYF All-Age Gathering, Bonn, Summer 2016

Summer 2016 will see the first all-age gathering of Quakers from Europe and the Middle East for many years. The beautiful Haus Venusberg, near Bonn, Germany, will host up to 185 Friends to worship, play, sing, talk, dance and make friends.

What was most important to you as a teenager? How do the changes of young adulthood shape who we are? Does our faith change as we mature? How do we feel about death, and beyond? We will explore these questions and more as we come together with Friends of all ages to grow together as a community that spans Quaker worship groups from Ireland to Palestine.

Over the last 30 years European and Middle Eastern Young Friends (EMEYF) has brought together young adult Quakers from across the region for twice-yearly gatherings. Current and former EMEYFers are keen to celebrate this anniversary, and also to connect with Friends of all ages who may not have attended other EMEYF events. We hope to welcome participants from all areas of the European and Middle Eastern Section, so are seeking funding for people who may otherwise find it more difficult to attend.

The week-long gathering aims to bring together all generations in an exploration of 'The Adventures of Life'. Each day will draw its theme from a different stage of life, helping us to learn from one another's experiences, memories, hopes and expectations.

The programme for children and younger Friends will run alongside that for adults, with many all-age sessions of play, worship and discussion. Volunteers for practical roles or to contribute to the programme are welcome.

'The Adventures of Life' will take place at Haus Venusberg, near Bonn, Germany, from Saturday 30th July to Sunday 7th August 2016. The final deadline for registration is 30th April. We look forward to sharing this experience with you.

Jenny McCarthy, Peter Doubtfire EMEYF Contact via emeyf@qcea.org

Among Friends is the newsletter of Europe and Middle East Section of Friends World Committee for Consultation. We want Among Friends to reflect the diversity of Quaker life and experience across the Section and welcome articles, photos and news of forthcoming events.

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Deadline for Among Friends 135: 1 March 2016