



**Friends World Committee  
for Consultation**  
EUROPE & MIDDLE EAST SECTION

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**Exec. Sec: Marisa Johnson**

## **FWCC/EMES Annual Report 2017**

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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 few 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 6<sup>th</sup> 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.

In 2016 a World Plenary Meeting (formerly the Triennial/International Representatives Meeting) was held in Pisac, near Cusco, Peru, from 19-27 January. The theme was *Living the Transformation: Creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of God's children (Romans 8:19)*. See <http://www.fwccworld.org/fwccworld/>. These plenary meetings will be less frequent in future for sustainability reasons. The next is expected to take place in 2023 (the venue to be finalised in 2018).

## Europe & Middle East Section

The FWCC Europe & Middle East Section (EMES) was established in 1938 and now consists of 12 Yearly Meetings, 2 Monthly Meetings and 14 worship groups. Events such as the Annual Meeting, occasional International Family Gatherings, border

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meetings, seminars, peace and service consultations and other activities encourage mutual understanding and the greater involvement of Friends. Two booklets, *Meeting the Spirit* and *Friendly Advice on Quaker Ways*, have been produced, and a newsletter, *Among Friends*, is 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. EMES is a member of Church and Peace and in 2016 was accepted by the Conference of European Churches as an Organisation in Partnership.

Europe & Middle East Young Friends (EMEYF) bring together Friends under the age of 35. It has its own constitution and officers, while all members of its network are part of the Section.

### Some Quaker Addresses in Europe

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### Clerk's Report on the Work of the Trustees/Executive Committee in 2017

FWCC EMES is a charity registered in Scotland. There were changes in the Executive Committee during the year. Those serving as Trustees of the Registered Charity for 2017 were Sue Glover Frykman (Clerk), Martin Touwen (Treasurer), Dag Hovda Sture, Lee Taylor, Paul Sladen (EMEYF – up to the Annual Meeting in May 2017), Saskia Kuhlmann (EMEYF – from the Annual Meeting in May 2017), Leo Wieldraaijer-Vincent (up to April 2017) and Berne Weiss (from the Annual Meeting in May 2017). Marisa Johnson (Executive Secretary and also a Trustee) attended all the Executive Committee meetings, and Julia Ryberg, the Ministry and Outreach Coordinator, attended some but not all. Members of the EMES Executive Committee also meet once a month by Skype

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for a half-hour Meeting for Worship as a way of deepening spiritual fellowship and building community.

In 2017 the Annual Meeting was held in Bonn (Germany) from 4-7 May. The theme, *Vibrant Meetings. Vibrant Section*, was introduced by Simon Best, Head of Learning at Woodbrooke. The Executive Committee met via Skype on 6 January and again on 23 November. Its face-to-face meetings were held at Friargate Quaker Meeting House in York (UK) from 17-19 February, in Bonn immediately prior to the Annual Meeting on 4 May, and at Quaker House in Geneva (Switzerland) from 22-24 September. The Executive Committee meets in different parts of the Section in the spring and autumn in order to connect, worship and socialise with local Friends, listen to their concerns, learn about their work and their Meetings, and in that way be more responsive to their needs. If your Meeting or Group would like to invite the Executive Committee to meet in your area, please contact the Executive Secretary.

**Finance:** We are grateful for the continued support of the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust (JRCT) and especially the funding of the Ministry & Outreach Programme. Support for core activities from Yearly Meetings, Monthly Meetings, Worship Groups and individuals enables us to continue the work of FWCC EMES, and we are most grateful for this. As our Treasurer reminds us, increases in contributions and additional donations to support the work of EMES are always welcome. The independent examiner of our accounts is now Haines Watts Huntingdon. This firm examined the accounts for 2016 (which were presented at the Annual Meeting in 2017) and has been appointed to examine those for 2017, which will be presented by our Treasurer, Martin Touwen, at the Annual Meeting in June 2018. During the year we also appointed an Assistant Treasurer (Penny Heymans, Norway YM) to help with the increased workload.

**Small Grants Fund:** In 2017, the Small Grants Fund, also financed by JRCT, supported the following projects: i) Stop Fuelling War (Cessez d'Alimenter la Guerre), an initiative of Quakers in France, Germany, Belgium and The Netherlands, ii) the Central European Gathering's documentation, history and future project/online platform, iii) support for the travel of Central European Gathering Friends serving in a role, iv) Friends House Moscow's "Meditation of friends 2" and v) Prague Recognised Meeting's Feuerstein's Mediated Learning Experience (MLE) as a means to transmit Quaker values to children project. Details about how to apply for a grant can be found on the FWCC-EMES website: <http://www.fwccemes.org/emes/emes-small-grants-fund-sgf>

**Amari Play Centre, Ramallah:** Thanks to the generous support of a number of trust funds in England and Ireland, Quaker service committees, yearly meetings, Quaker groups and individuals in the Section, enough money has been raised to ensure the continuation of this work, at least in the short-term. Ramallah Friends Meeting is currently considering the possibility of taking more responsibility for this project, and it is hoped that a proposal will be able to be presented to the Annual Meeting in 2018.

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**Staff:** Marisa Johnson (Executive Secretary) and Julia Ryberg (Ministry and Outreach Coordinator) have continued to work closely together. Kim Bond has continued to provide part-time assistance from the FWCC World Office in London. In May, Cedric Krummes was appointed as Organisational Assistant (part-time for the World Office and part-time for EMES). When he left at the end of July, the Executive Committee considered what the next step might be. At its September meeting, and after deep discernment, the committee made the decision to advertise for an Assistant Secretary for EMES. Interviews took place in early December and we were pleased to appoint and welcome Michael Eccles to the EMES team. Michael will take up his duties with EMES in mid-March 2018. He and Marisa will each work 3 days a week, which will increase the capacity of the organisation and make it less vulnerable and more sustainable.

**Intervisitation** is an important activity in our Section and we receive regular reports of this. The EMES staff and trustees also engage in visits to meetings, groups and individuals within the Section. Personal links have been and are still being developed and strengthened with Friends from the other FWCC Sections.

**Partnership agreement with Woodbrooke:** There has been good cooperation between EMES and Woodbrooke over the years and in 2017 we established a partnership agreement between the two organisations, which means that, at least for the time being, Woodbrooke will continue to host and provide technical and administrative support for the EMES 'Quaker in Europe' online programme, host the EMES online information resource and send a staff member to the EMES annual meeting, where they will be able to offer sessions and workshops and raise awareness of how Woodbrooke can support meetings. The EMES staff and some of the EMES trustees also serve as Associate Tutors on Woodbrooke courses. As the new Assistant Secretary will continue to do some work for Woodbrooke, the partnership opportunities between the two organisations will be further strengthened.

The **Quaker Peace and Service Consultation**, which is arranged and managed by EMES, is held each autumn for representatives of the Section's Quaker peace and service organisations and has proved to be an important and popular event.

**FWCC Central Executive Committee:** We value our links with the FWCC World Office and the other FWCC Sections. The EMES Executive Secretary and Clerk are members/trustees of the FWCC Central Executive Committee, which meets face-to-face once a year and, when appropriate, throughout the year via Skype or telephone conference. In 2017 we met at Lake Kivu in Rwanda in April after attending the Africa Section Triennial in Kigali. We had a Skype conference in December. These occasions for talking about our work, sharing our experiences and planning for the future are very valuable and help us to support each other in the work we undertake.

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It is a privilege to serve as Clerk to FWCC-EMES. My hope is that we, in our Section, and indeed around the world, will continue to grow in love, compassion and care for one another and our planet, and to sow the seeds of peace in our own lives and communities.

*Sue Glover Frykman, Clerk*

### **Report from the Executive Secretary**

Ten whole years of service! Now, that is something to celebrate! I give thanks for this opportunity to work, learn and grow among Friends, in this Section and beyond. What an immense privilege, thank you for making this possible for me.

2017 had its blessings, and its challenges. Meeting with the Executive Committee in York in March, and the EMES Annual Meeting in Haus Venusberg, Bonn, in May were very much blessings. I am grateful to Neithard Petry and Janet Kreysa who led the local arrangement committee for the Annual Meeting, and to Simon Best of Woodbrooke for providing the plenary address and a workshop on the theme.

The visit to Rwanda to attend the Africa Section Triennial, and then the meeting of the Central Executive Committee of FWCC was another amazing experience. The beauty of the country, the vibrant welcome of the local Friends' Churches, learning about the history and taking part in the commemorations of the 23<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the genocide, which happened to fall whilst we were there, will stay with me for a long time to come.

In June I was invited to a meeting of the planning group that is working to organise an international conference on Experiment with Light in 2020, to which I was able to contribute my knowledge of Meetings around the Section, and also practical information about venues in various parts of Europe.

Also in June, I travelled to Dunblane in Scotland to attend the Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations of Britain Yearly Meeting and report in particular on our agreed response to the Conference of European Churches' paper on The Future of Europe.

Right at the end of June I very happily attended the Nordic Quaker Gathering in Sweden, which is always a delight to my soul. The programme was very thoughtful and the activities often had a meditative bias, which deepened the experience.

I was very pleased to be asked, together with Gretchen Castle, for input in a weekend Woodbrooke on-line course for Friends in Whanganui Quaker Settlement, Aotearoa New Zealand, on *The Radical Heart of Quakers*, facilitated locally by Ronis Chapman and Michael Searle. The event went very well indeed, and the feedback from it was excellent.

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Britain Yearly Meeting Gathering at Warwick University (Coventry) in August was a bit of a tour de force, especially as I was still recovering from bronchitis. In any event, it was as ever a very fertile networking opportunity.

In September I participated in a Gathering of Italian Friends in Borgo Basino, near Forlì. It was a very special occasion for me, and, whilst the group of Friends is very small and widely scattered, the earnestness of their commitment is very touching.

Following our very pleasant Executive Committee meeting in Geneva as guests of Geneva Monthly Meeting and QUNO in September, I attended QCEA's General Assembly in Brussels in early October. This was a thoroughly interesting and happy occasion, with the team at Quaker House growing and going from strength to strength.

At the end of October I chaired a day conference organised by Church and Peace in Birmingham. This was very well attended, and featured three very good speakers who explored the opportunities and frustrations of trying to work explicitly for peace in some of the mainstream denominations. We had very good feedback on the event, and I hope that enough interest has been generated to increase participation to Church and Peace Annual Meeting, which will take place in the UK in June 2018.

Early in November I travelled to Bad Pymont for the first time, to attend German Yearly Meeting. This was a very joyful occasion, although Friends were grappling with the difficult issue of what to do with the Meeting House and cemetery in the future. I had very many conversations with a good number of Friends, and enjoyed Paul Parker's Cary lecture.

The Peace & Service Consultation took place from 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> November. Andrew Lane (QCEA) and Kristine Hovland (Quaker Service Norway) were the co-clerks, and did an excellent job. They have been appointed for next year as well. We had 19 participants. We worked on clearness processes, which people engaged with and found helpful, and produced a stunning "Quaker star" picture. We experimented with a "silent lunch" which was appreciated by some but was found to be frustrating by others. Overall, there was much buzz and exchange of information and views, and some planning for joint action. It was decided to hold the next consultation in Bad Pymont in Germany.

Talks about the future of the Amari Play Centre are still going on. We are encouraged that the local Meeting of Friends is seeking to take on more responsibility and ownership of this long-standing project, which Friends in Europe and the United States have been very faithfully supporting since 1974.

EMEYF held their Annual Meeting at the end of November, during which I was able to make an enjoyable "guest appearance" by Skype.

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Late in the year we received surprising news about the Quaker Youth Pilgrimage. Apparently the Rossinger legacy had not been fully disbursed to FWCC, and payments totalling over £93,000 were still due! The original payments were made in 2009, and we thought the estate had been wound up in 2010. A very welcome windfall at a crucial time in the development of the Quaker Youth Pilgrimage into a programme that can be offered across the whole Quaker world.

We have been working on a web-site upgrade: progress has been slower than I might have hoped, but I am hopeful that we shall have a much more “responsive” website early in 2018. During 2017 we published 3 issues of *Among Friends* – 138, 139 and 140. We experimented with printing some postcards designed by our Dutch Friend Erik Dries, and these were very popular.

We continue to work closely with the other Sections and with the World Office. We were disappointed that our attempt at employing a full-time Organisational Assistant to support both organisations did not work out. We nevertheless learned a lot from the process.

We continue to work closely also with Woodbrooke, and envisage that our co-operation will be even closer in future.

During 2017 I enrolled on the Soul of Leadership programme, run from Woodbrooke. This is an 18 months programme which I am undertaking mainly in a personal capacity, though I have been able to apply learning and insights from it to my work, particularly in the content of this year’s Peace & Service Consultation.

Once again, I would like to thank my colleagues Julia Ryberg and Kim Bond, our Clerk Sue Glover Frykman and the Friends serving on the Executive Committee for all their hard work and support.

I have saved the best news till last: in December we appointed Michael Eccles to be our Assistant Secretary, from March 2018. Michael and I will each work 3 days per week, which will increase the capacity of the EMES secretariat by 20% at no extra cost, and, by having two people working together, we shall mitigate the risks associated with relying on just one person for most of the core functions. Michael brings such wealth of experience, particularly in development work with Young Adult Friends, and such depth of personal devotion, I know his contribution to our work will be huge, and I cannot wait for our partnership to begin in earnest.

### **International Membership Matters**

During 2017 we received a number of new applications for membership. Meetings for Clearness were held with Friends from Poland, Georgia, Serbia and Latvia, and all resulted in membership status being granted by the International Membership Application Committee. One more visit is due to take place soon to an applicant living in Portugal. The Clerkship of the International Membership Application Committee has passed from Peter Eccles to Hazel Shellens.

*Marisa Johnson, Executive Secretary*

### **Ministry & Outreach Development**

Three gatherings were highlights of the year for me. The Central European Gathering in Brno (Czech Republic) in May, the Baltic gathering in Liepaja (Latvia) in October and the All-Poland gathering in Warsaw in November were signs of growth - in number, experience and spirit - of the Quaker presence in our Section. More detailed reports of these gatherings are available in other parts of the Annual Report.

I was invited to BYM's Quaker Life Representatives Council in October to speak about how Quaker groups in Europe structure themselves and explore worship and fellowship. It was rewarding to share experiences of the wide variety of contexts, joys and concerns among Friends served by the Ministry & Outreach Programme, which has now completed the first of three years in the current funding period by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust.

The Ministry & Outreach Programme has continued to serve individuals and groups across the Section, with developments in Central Europe being much in focus. We support the International Membership Application Committee in organising meetings for clearness for an increasing number of applications. We encourage Friends to visit and serve each other in various capacities.

We have noted an increased interest among Friends to gain knowledge and experience of Quaker roles and processes, not least Quaker decision-making. This is apparent both in established yearly meetings and in small, newer groups. Some groups have also responded to the invitation to document their praxis and history. EMES encourages this documentation, and applications to the Small Grants Fund have included projects of this nature. Supporting the application process for SGF projects is part of the work of the Ministry & Outreach Programme.

The EMES Information Resource (hosted on Woodbrooke's Moodle platform) continues to develop, and Friends are encouraged to offer additions to that pool of material, which we hope will become something of an EMES-wide Faith and Practice. To be included in the Information Resource is original Quaker writing in other languages than English. This material was used for a 6-week online retreat offered by Woodbrooke. The Quaker in Europe online course is still available as a learning resource, and it has been run

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recently in Polish and Czech. The Companion Programme is also available to pair an individual enquirer with a more experienced Friend for a period of structured online interaction.

Other work included exploration of a youth gathering for 16-18 year olds. Although we were not able to deliver that event, there was significant learning for the future and increased awareness of the need to focus on our children and young people.

The upcoming two years will be an exciting time of reflecting on the 10-year history of the Ministry & Outreach Programme and of exploring how its fruits may serve the Quaker presence in EMES beyond 2019.

*Julia Ryberg, Ministry and Outreach Co-ordinator*

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

Palestinians are facing a very challenging time following President Trump's declarations on Jerusalem, and the United Nations status which will have negative consequences on Palestinians who live in Refugee Camps; Amari Camp being one of them. The Health and Education System that UNRWA provides for Palestinian Refugees will be directly affected by lack of funding and continuous support of the donor countries and the international community. In fact, 2017 was not an easy year in the region in general, and in particular for Palestinians, who are facing the Israeli occupation at all levels of their daily lives and existence.

The Amari Play Centre is still functioning and let us hope that it will continue to serve the children in their preschool education in the Amari Refugee Camp. On financial matters, a system has finally been established to pay the salaries of the staff at the Amari Play Centre thanks to the great coordination between EMES and FUM. Thanks to the efforts of both parties for facilitating this important issue.

39 children aged 5 years are registered at the Amari Play Centre for the academic year 2017-2018. The staff have served for more than a decade and the services they provide are the same, namely basic preschool education and providing a healthy and safe place for children to play. All efforts and donations are highly appreciated and will secure the ongoing implementation of the goals and aims since the establishment of the Amari Play Centre 43 years ago.

In the summer of 2017 the Amari Play Centre's play area was renovated by funds secured from a donor from the USA. At the same time, the Amari Play Centre was painted by UNRWA during the renovations to the school in which the Amari Play Centre is located. We still provide light meals and milk for the children at the Play Centre and take them on picnics to nearby areas 2 or 3 times. Occasionally we provide a more substantial meal of chicken and rice. Educational and art materials are also provided so that the children can enjoy art and painting activities.

On behalf of myself and the team at the Amari Play Centre, I would like to thank the Quakers for their thoughts, support and beliefs in the rights of people and children.

*Muna Khleifi, Supervisor*

## Church and Peace

Church and Peace (C&P) held its Annual General Meeting at St. Thomas Cultural Centre in Strasbourg with a thematic part and a meeting for business. The theme was '*Freed from fear, empowered to nonviolence*'. In her introduction, chairperson Antje Heider-Rottwilm reminded us that fear has been a reality for every generation in different forms and said that the words "Do not be afraid" therefore appear frequently in the Bible. Yet people have come to know God as the One who helps us face and overcome fears. As 2017 was the commemoration of Luther's reformation, Antje drew attention to the fact that although Luther first warned against imposing reform with violence, he later praised 'the temporal sword as a work of love'. Violence thus became a shadow side of the Reformation and of the powers and principalities that used it as a means to their political ends. In contrast, Radical Anabaptists and later, peace church reformers, have chosen the way of peace and the practice of nonviolence. Last but not least, Antje reminded us that the reformation is not limited to a particular period, but is rather an ongoing process, an ongoing reformation ('Semper Reformanda'). Now is the time for churches to take the reforming step of faith towards fearlessness grounded in God's love and nonviolence in all areas of life.

A number of interesting workshops were held at the AGM. Andrew Lane (QCEA) explored the steps that churches can take to address fears of migration, terrorism and the militarisation of Europe. Barbara and David Forbes reflected on how churches are or are not resisting nationalism, populism and fascism. Karin Hinrichs (Evangelical Church of Baden) shared the outcome of a consultation on 'just policing'. Recent studies show the need to move away from intervention, whether military or police, towards a more community-rooted prevention of armed conflict. Michel Monod (IFOR) role-played the use of non-violent communication in a post-war situation like Kosovo. James Jacob Fehr (German Mennonite Peace Committee) explored the question of whether in following Jesus we can create paths of transformation into the "upside-down Kingdom of God". Kees Nieuwerth and Kjeld Renato Lings led a workshop on Homosexuality and the Bible. We explored relevant biblical texts with the help of Kjeld Renato's book '*Love lost in translation*'. After a period of silence we listened to three moving personal testimonies. We need to create such safe spaces for dialogue in God's loving presence.

2017 was also a year of great change for C&P. We said farewell to the former General Secretary Davorka Lovrekovic and welcomed the new one, Lydia Funck. Moreover, the office moved from Laufdorf to Wethen where it is again embedded in a community and surrounded by like-minded NGOs. The Administrative Committee met twice and carried the work of C&P forward. Strong statements have been issued e.g. on the European

Union's shift from peace and reconciliation to militarisation, or urging governments to participate in the negotiations on a UN nuclear weapons ban treaty (ICAN).

Recently (January 2018), C&P has reminded WCC about its pledge at Busan to “Undertake, in cooperation with member churches and specialized ministries, a critical analysis of the ‘Responsibility to Prevent, React and Rebuild’ and its relationship to just peace, and its misuse to justify armed interventions”. We asked WCC whether it was still willing to honour this commitment. We are hoping that this will lead to an unambiguous statement from WCC against the military option for R2P and for non-violent ways of intervening in armed conflicts, particularly now that the Vatican is also moving in this direction.

*In 2018 the AGM and a thematic conference will be held in the United Kingdom from 21-24 June at High Leigh Conference Centre, Hertfordshire.*

Last but not least, C&P has issued a **request for financial support**. If you can, please send a donation in support of the work that is so close to our hearts as Friends. *Germany: IBAN DE33 3506 0190 1014 3800 15, BIC: GENODED1DKD; United Kingdom: cheque to Gerald Drewett, 39 Postwood Green, Hertford Heath SG13 7QJ or transfer by BACS to sort code 16 58 10, account 20745001 and send an email notification to [gerald.drewett@ntlworld.com](mailto:gerald.drewett@ntlworld.com)*

*Kees Nieuwerth*

## Reports from Yearly Meetings, Monthly Meetings and Groups

### Belgium and Luxembourg Yearly Meeting

Our small but lively Yearly Meeting currently counts 40 members, some 50 attenders and 5 children. Meetings for Worship are held every Sunday and Wednesday in Brussels, approximately once per month in Luxembourg for a small group of Friends and attenders and twice per month in Gent – from small beginnings, this group has grown to be a regular, interested and committed meeting.

As was the case last year, we have continued to be concerned about the global political situation and, closer to home, the migrant situation that has not improved. Several members of our meeting are involved in offering accommodation to those who are forced to sleep outside in one of the Brussels parks.

Our Residential Yearly Meeting was held in May at Madeghem youth hostel, near Brugge, where the topic was: “Quaker lives, personal lives – what can I say?” Twenty-six adult Friends attended, as well as three children. We were pleased to be joined by Friends from Britain Yearly Meeting, France Yearly Meeting and Netherlands Yearly Meeting, as well as by a representative of EMES. As in 2016, the yearly meeting was

organised with an 'Open Space' method of programming where Friends attending the gathering were invited to put forward subjects for workshops they wished to hold and these were put into the timetable: there were three or four such sessions for each timeslot and Friends could choose which groups they wished to take part in, with the possibility of moving between workshops. Broadly, the subjects of the workshops could be divided into four groups: nurturing and developing our meeting; examining our faith; living our faith; and living as Quakers in the world.

This year's 'Quakers without Borders' ran from 1 - 3 September 2017. This was the 60th Border Meeting, and we were delighted to welcome sixty-three Friends and Young Friends from continental Europe, Great Britain, Ireland, the Republic of Georgia, and Russia, and one non-Quaker invited speaker. It was a wonderfully diverse, rich and enlightening weekend.

A number of study groups take place within the Meeting, including a regular *Deepening our Spirituality* group, and another group that met regularly to study selected paragraphs of *Quaker Faith & Practice*. This now having come to its natural end, we are embarking on the 'Becoming Friends' study group, using material from Woodbrooke. We have continued our *Stepping Stones* after Sunday Meeting for Worship – these are worship-sharing meetings where we explore issues relevant to Quakers.

We have tried to maintain our monthly children's meeting but have been sad to see the children and young people slowly stop attending and are currently undergoing a process of discernment as to how we can encourage children and young friends to play a full part in the life of our Meeting. We have continued to organise All-Age Meetings for Worship periodically as well as a candle-lit Meeting for Worship on 24 December.

In December we organised a Community Day at which some 20 Friends were present. This day was a combination of reflexion on our history and how this impacts on how we perceive ourselves as Quakers and our action in the world, with more light-hearted but no less appreciated 'relaxation' through singing. This last activity has led to us beginning a monthly singing group before Meeting for Worship.

Our Ministry & Oversight Group, Service to the Meeting Group and Finance Group all met regularly throughout the year. It being the end of our Triennium, several roles came to the end of the period of service. While it is a constant challenge with a meeting as small as ours not to fill posts with the same Friends, we are delighted to have some new Friends and attenders who have accepted a role in the meeting. This is also a source of new energy in our Meetings for Business, which are well-attended.

Among the more informal activities we have organised, there are regular bring and share lunches and periodic suppers or social events to fund raise for a cause chosen by the

Friend organising the supper.

The Luxembourg group meets several times a year, usually once a month for nine or ten months out of the year, most often on the last Sunday of the month, but this can vary depending on how many people are available. Generally, the group meets in January through June and September through November, but again this varies. The group does not have its own worship space or but meets at the local Amnesty International office. There are currently five regular attenders, with two who visit a couple of times a year from the UK and another two or so who attend occasionally. The mailing list of past and present attenders, (including the Clerk of BLYM in Brussels) is about 20, not all of whom live in the area. Most of the regular attenders are not full members of the Society of Friends. Generally only adults attend our Meetings for Worship in Luxembourg, and although the group has held a couple of family Meetings for Worship which included some six attenders' children in recent years, this was not part of the activities in 2017.

*Ruth Harland, Clerk, and Phil Gaskell, Assistant Clerk*

## Britain Yearly Meeting

The theme of our Yearly Meeting Gathering 2017 (which encompassed our Yearly Meeting for business), held at Warwick University was *Movement Building*, taking as pointers Heart (conviction) - Head (capability, right actions) – Hands (action stories) – Feet (working with others). We were invited to discern through worship what God requires of us. We were delighted to see so many FWCC and especially EMES Friends there.

The other notable event in our business calendar was the experiment of holding Meeting for Sufferings (BYM's Executive Committee) outside London for the first time. Manchester Friends, most of whom had no prior experience of Sufferings, or other national involvement, were invited to participate. Our December Meeting for Sufferings was also the Young People's Participation Day when 40 young people, staff and volunteers joined Meeting for Sufferings for the day. The whole group had opening worship together, and young people joined Meeting for Sufferings to discuss whether to revise Quaker Faith and Practice, and the Sanctuary Everywhere manifesto, giving their own report of the event at the end of the day.

Throughout the year, Britain Yearly Meeting has been dealing with a number of matters of concern. We have opened up a concern about the more vulnerable Friends amongst us and how we should best care for one another. We have also looked to broaden our message about inclusion and diversity, staying alert to exclusive language and ways of working. At the end of the year, Meeting for Sufferings agreed to recommend to Yearly Meeting 2018 to start a revision of our book of discipline. Meeting for Sufferings also recommended that if a Revision Committee is appointed it should be given the scope to

exercise imagination in how the next version should be compiled, to reflect our diversity of belief.

We have been progressing our commitment to environmental sustainability under Minute 36 (2011 YM in Canterbury) and the FWCC global call (Pisac 2016). We need to keep reflecting on and considering this commitment and to - without guilt - recognise the loneliness of the “green crusader” and act out of love towards all in our meetings. We see this as long-term work which must be grounded in Quaker faith. We try to follow five strands of our work: ministry, community, faithfulness, right-ordering and witness, as a way of embedding the commitment through faithful, loving and truthful lives. Some good news is that Friends House won an award for reducing its carbon footprint by 29% since 2009, though we should not be complacent. BYM has also seconded to FWCC a Sustainability Communications Officer, whose role is to gather and share Quaker sustainability witness taking place across the Quaker world, so that we can take forward the FWCC global call together.

Our Trustees at local and national levels stand at the forefront of stewardship for our finance and property. On completion of our Heritage (buildings) survey, we learned that the number of meeting houses recorded in the survey was 345, 46% of which are listed as protected under our laws. Our local meetings are constantly challenged by faithful considerations of how best to use or dispose of our buildings, an experience shared by many EMES Friends beyond Britain.

During this year, our Recording Clerk, Paul Parker attended an interfaith meeting on Brexit at Lambeth Place, discussing what kind of country and society we want to become. We received and endorsed the Conference of European Churches (CEC) draft *Open Letter on the Future of Europe* and its statement of solidarity with refugees and commitment to a more just society, as well as the FWCC response (A European Quaker contribution). Beyond this, the hearts and minds of many Friends up and down the country are engaged with Brexit and its potential consequences.

We have drafted a ‘Sanctuary Everywhere’ Manifesto which is consistent with our historical witness against slavery and our Testimony to Equality, without appearing naïve about modern global politics and society. For more information about this initiative, please see our BYM website at <http://quaker.org.uk/news-and-events/news/quakers-challenge-immigration-policy>. At the same time we have supported the work carried out on limited funds by the Quaker Housing Trust in the face of the current, shocking housing situation. Quaker Peace and Social Witness (QPSW) continues to work on peace and conciliation overseas, peace education at home, economic and criminal justice, and work on migration, especially through its Forced Migration Advisory Group.

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Our commitment to international affairs is undiminished. Britain Yearly Meeting issued a statement expressing our concerns as a faith body about the international tensions created by President Trump. Our Trustees met early in 2017, as they do every year, with the Directors of the Quaker Council for European Affairs and Quaker United Nations Office. Furthermore, they have approved further funding for QUNO Geneva over the next three years to support the work on Climate Change.

BYM's Quaker World Relations Committee has continued to interact with the world family of Friends, as well as to articulate the diversity of the Quaker world to British Friends. An innovation this year was to host four Friends from different parts of the Quaker world (Bolivia, India, Rwanda and South Africa) at Yearly Meeting Gathering, and also for a programme of visits to meetings around the country. We have tried to broaden our connections with British Friends, whether by inviting Friends to join the online QWRC network for an exchange of views and to pool our understanding of international Quaker developments, by meeting in different parts of the country and engaging with local Friends, or by asking for support from individual Friends or Meetings to host Friends from overseas as part of inter-visitation.

2017 has been a busy year, and we hope to build on it in the next one. We look forward to welcoming many of you to Friends House London for our Yearly Meeting in 2018, from the 4-7 May.

*Ann Floyd, Clerk of Quaker World Relations Committee*

## Czech Republic, Prague Meeting

2017 was a busy, exciting and challenging year. We have seen our numbers rise, with an average meeting attendance of 8-9. There are now six Quakers in the Czech Republic compared to 3 last year, and next year a Quaker Worship Group will open in Brno, a welcome addition to the Prague Meeting and the Plzen Worship Group. Children continue to be important members of our gatherings.

Our publicity has evolved wonderfully, with a great new logo, facebook page, flyers, T-shirts etc., and *Being a Quaker* translated into Czech.

We have been involved in ecclesiastical activities, opening our doors to visitors in June on Prague's Night of Churches. We named our event Night without Churches (*Noc bez kostelů*) and shared singing, silence and conversation with a number of interested people. At a suggestion from EMES, we sent a representative to the Conference of European Churches, who met with local and international participants.

Several Friends joined the Civil March for Aleppo as it passed through the Czech Republic from Berlin to Syria (<http://thefamilywithoutborders.com>), and a march to

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protest against a conference organised by Czech politicians and attended by, for example, Marine Le Pen and Geert Wilders

Thanks to our grant from Bader Philanthropies (bader.org), we have been able to support events such as Joyful Noise ([www.jnoise.cz](http://www.jnoise.cz)), a Gospel singing weekend held in Brno and a new translation into Czech of Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, a poetry collection which resonates with Quakers. Both activities were organised by regular attenders at our Meetings for Worship.

In addition we also supported 3 further projects. Two, nearing completion, are the Single Parent project and the Prague Peace Trail. The former involved an attender working for 6 months to counsel and support single parents and their children, a sector of society still discriminated against here. The Prague Peace Trail will enable visitors to the city to follow a route which will take them to places linked to local people who worked for peace. It will be in Czech and English and will be fully available as an application or paper map in 2018.

The third project (for which we supplemented our Bader funding with some funding from the EMES Small Grants Fund) will enable us to develop Quaker-friendly materials for children, under the guidance of an attender who is following a course at the Department of Quaker Studies, University of Birmingham, UK. The materials will be used initially in Prague and then the wider Czech Republic, and in future could be adapted for use by other Friends.

We continue to be active in the Central European Group (CEG) which had 2 preparatory meetings and its AGM in the Czech Republic. With Friends from the whole region we will benefit from another EMES small grant to document the history of Quakers and Quakerism in the area.

Throughout the year we have opened the Prague Quaker space to visitors – to the Quaker Esperanto Society and to individuals of different nationalities passing through.

With so many changes, so much going on and so many interested and passionate people involved, we have inevitably faced some challenges. We have had to look at our ways of communicating with one another, to consider how we can continue to grow despite our differences, always remembering our spiritual roots and the need to care for and respect one another. To this end, we have been well supported by our CEG Elders and EMES Friends and had our first Threshing Meeting in November.

As is traditional, we ended the year on a harmonious note – singing carols in a Prague farmers' market and then under Charles Bridge – and are now looking forward to the year ahead.

*Liz Coling, Clerk*

## Denmark Yearly Meeting

With a membership of only 25, Denmark Yearly Meeting is struggling both economically and to maintain a reasonable level of activity. It also has difficulty attracting enough members to attend Meeting for Worship on Sundays in Copenhagen, due to them being scattered throughout the country.

Fortunately, our few members in Jutland have been active in informing about Friends. In August a meeting was arranged in Aarhus, which some interested persons attended. As part of activities related to Aarhus being the European City of Culture in 2017, Quakers were also active in a “day of silence” in one of the churches.

In January our oldest member – 102 years – passed away after having been very active in our meeting in younger years. Our youngest member grew up in a Quaker environment in the USA and is now married and studying medicine in Copenhagen. During the autumn she arranged weekly evening meditations in our premises in Copenhagen, introducing 10-20 participants to Quaker silence. She was the only member (with husband and baby) who was able to attend the Nordic Quaker Gathering in Sweden. She appreciated her conversation with Marisa Johnson and found a strong feeling of community amongst Nordic Friends. Another of our members very much enjoyed taking part in Britain Yearly Meeting in 2017, which confirmed her feeling of being a Quaker at heart.

Our website is: [www.kvaekerne.dk](http://www.kvaekerne.dk) and our email address: [kvaekerne@gmail.com](mailto:kvaekerne@gmail.com)

*Danish Friends*

## Estonia – The Tallinn Meeting Group

Our group meets in Tallinn once a month. We have 13 members of whom 5-7 come to meetings regularly. Two members have expressed the wish for us to have membership in the international organisation. We met more frequently, whenever the needs of special projects and campaigns deemed it necessary. We meet in members' homes since we do not have a room of our own.

Our members have participated in conferences and at different regional meetings organised by EMES. Greater emphasis is being placed on spreading the word about Quakers among young people, especially the university students. A large project was the compiling of an Estonian language edition of Ben Pink Dandelion's book “Living the Quaker Way” for publication.

Quakers from different parts of the world have visited us. We have also hosted, whenever possible, friends from regions near Estonia. 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

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with other meetings and would greatly appreciate insight on best practices for bringing in new members or attendees.

In recent years, interest in Quakerism has increased among the young, especially in the areas of Fair Trade, gender equality, and tensions among religions in the hope of finding answers in Quaker teachings and practices. Our greatest challenge is to attract young people to our movement and to enhance the participation of present members. With that in mind, we are planning to register the Tallinn Meeting Group with the State registry as an NGO.

Our group is open to everybody, regardless of age or gender. We look forward to working together with Quakers in the different parts of the world.  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/370861096287140/>

*Roland Rand*

### **Finland Yearly Meeting**

2017 was a fairly active year for Finland Yearly Meeting. The yearly meeting has three regular groups for worship: one in Helsinki, one in Tampere and the Northern Friends based in Lapland and other Northern areas. The Helsinki and Tampere groups gather for meeting for worship once a week, while the Northern Friends keep in close touch but meet on a more irregular basis due to their long distances.

Finland Yearly Meeting had two official meetings in 2017: first in March and later in November in Ilkko, near Tampere. The business part of our meetings involved drafting a joint letter to the government of Finland expressing our grave concern for unjust deportations of asylum seekers, and making the decision to start compensating the climate costs of our travels as a YM. The most beloved parts of the meetings, however, seemed to be when we shared our personal thoughts and beliefs in worship in order to get to know one another at a more profound level.

A third joint meeting took place in June, not in Finland but in our neighbouring country Sweden, where we encouraged Friends and their families to join the Nordic Quaker Gathering in Kungälv. We were delighted that almost twenty of us, including several children, participated.

During the year, we were also fortunate to have several Friends visit us from other countries. These included a long time LGBT rights activist and a Friend from Britain, Clare Dimyon, who visited us on her '1800s tracks' of Daniel Wheeler heading to St. Petersburg. Two of us also joined with Friends throughout Europe and the Middle East for the FWCC-EMES Annual Meeting in Bonn, one joined Britain Yearly Meeting in Warwick and two attended the QCEA conference, *Sanctuary Everywhere*, in December.

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It is heart-warming to find younger Friends and Attenders wanting to be actively involved in our community.

FYM was also happy to take part in the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of KVT, the Finnish Branch of Service Civil International. The branch has its origins in Quaker peace work as it was founded in 1947 after American Friends Service Committee sent volunteers to help rebuild Finnish Lapland after the Second World War.

*Leena Lampela, Clerk*

## France Yearly Meeting

The seeds that French Quakers have been sowing these last few years regarding their identity has emerged from the ground. Our Quaker identity, in each one of us and in our community looks strong and lively. The wish to express it through action is now being felt. Each one is sharing the Light in their own way in their life, in a spirit of witness: through a commitment, through a caring action, with a smile. Just as in the colibri tale, each one is doing her or his bit.

During our annual gathering, the presenters showed us how important it is not to underestimate the role of the colibri. Great motions are born from a first wing flapping. This manifestation, illustrated with various examples, reminds us that our activism is anchored in our spirituality.

Today, our work is particularly expressed in one collective action: Stop Fuelling War, in which we are joining with other groups. Also, we have, all 60 of us, contributed to the creation of our first publication of a French version of Faith and Practice and the writing up of our personal Spiritual Journey which will serve our outreach and our in-reach. All of these activities bear witness to the unity of our community. We are now questioning our will to carry out a project in common.

*Sylvette Thompson, Clerk*

## Georgia Worship Group

The Republic of Georgia continued its efforts for European integration in 2017. Georgian citizens were able to travel to Schengen countries without visas. 2017 was an interesting and full year and for Georgian friends. We organised several events to attract people to learn about Quakerism, including a conference. Georgians of different ages, including young people, learned about philosophy of Quakers through these events. Representatives of Georgian friends attended Quaker gatherings in Brussels and Germany and are very grateful for such possibilities.

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With the financial help of friends from Cambridge, UK, Georgian friends were able rent an apartment for their Meetings for Worship. This is a great help, because having a permanent place to meet is very important.

Friends in Georgia would like to express their gratitude to Friends in Europe for their support.

*Georgian Friends Worship Group*

## German Yearly Meeting

Friends in Germany have continued to engage with the thorny question of the future of our one meeting house – Quäkerhaus in Bad Pyrmont. This beautiful, historical building – especially its main hall, a place of worship beloved by so many of us – has become unsustainable unless we can find a way to breathe new life into it. One vision that is being explored is the possibility of a conversion to a conference centre which could be used by Society of Friends as well as other organisations. A planning group has been formed to explore this and other possibilities. The process is painful but necessary, and the questions we must ask ourselves along the way go to the heart of the matter: what sort of Quaker future do we envisage for ourselves and our descendants? Through a generous donation, a fund has been launched to help finance the process of decision-making and the respective planning costs – quotes from architects, etc. – and the fund is open for further contributions. Meanwhile, we have continued to reduce our costs in other ways, taking on more tasks ourselves, through voluntary action.

Many friends within the Yearly Meeting feel a passionate concern to bear witness to our peace testimony in relation to the planned increase in operational readiness of atomic weapons on German soil. In 1960, Friends demonstrated against atomic weapons and 50 years later the German parliament affirmed by a large majority the removal of atomic weapons from our country, but up till now no German government has acted to put this resolution into practice. The current climate of mutual threat between the US and North Korea shows how vital it is to live out our peace testimony by speaking out on this issue. We support the Friends among us who have formed a network and are carrying out this important work.

We are reconnecting with our Quaker roots through an ongoing project to create and publish a German translation of George Fox's diaries. This work has also been made possible by a generous donation.

Young Friends have reached out to their elders by movingly expressing their desire for a few “godparents” to be identified from within our Yearly Meeting who can accompany them on their spiritual journey, to help them “open a space for dialogue about such questions as what am I searching for, what moves me, what does it mean to me to be a Quaker”. This process is now being put into motion.

Our 87<sup>th</sup> annual meeting in Bad Pyrmont was attended by 205 people, including children and young people, as well as almost 20 Friends from other Yearly Meetings. The 2017 Richard L. Cary Lecture, given by Paul Parker, Recording Clerk of Britain Yearly Meeting, was entitled “Special offer! What do we Quakers have to offer the world in these turbulent times?” Paul urged us not to “hide our light under a bushel” but to have the courage to be open about our Quakerism, clearly stating what we believe, and acting on these beliefs. If we fail to do so, it is as if we are all taking part in a shared picnic, but one where the picnic baskets we have brought remain firmly closed. Spiritual nourishment, both for ourselves and others, only takes place when we are ready to open up our baskets and spread out and share the contents.

*Annie Janssen, Representative*

## **Hungary, Budapest Worship Group**

We meet for Meeting for Worship on the first Sunday in every month except the summer. Several of us participated in the Central European Gathering (CEG) Preparatory Meeting in Brno in February, 2017. We also attended the CEG in May 2017. Several Friends and guests participated in the Peace trail walk - the theme was Peace inside – Peace outside. As we were brushing up our knowledge on history, we could share our insights on democracy, competition between peers/nations (learning about the underlying ideology of the Olympic Games) and the representation of our civic rights. Our aim was to use the walk as a tool for out-reach and meeting for learning.

In June we started to organise the CEG in 2018 - choosing the venue and collecting ideas for the programme. In August, Vera Várady and Éva Katona attended a MfW in Copenhagen. It was a good opportunity to learn about initiatives and new ways of doing outreach. We also heard a very brief summary of the Nordic Quaker Gathering and its individual messages to Friends. Friends from the US visited us in Budapest and there was an opportunity to share our experiences and insights on different topics. Éva Katona also participated in the KES (Esperanto Speaking Quaker Group) in Prague.

A border meeting in Serbia was organised by Vera Várady, who is also involved in serving meals to homeless people and those in need. Our Friend Berne Weiss is currently serving on the EMES Executive Committee.

*Éva Katona*

## **Hungary, Evangelical Friends Church in Tolna**

Last year in October we bought an old house in Kölked for our Gipsy Mission Centre. This is our new project! Our Gipsy Mission is growing. If you have time, please visit our Gipsy Mission in South Hungary, Croatia and Serbia. Thank you for your prayers.

*Pastor Antal Frei*

## Ireland Yearly Meeting

During 2017 two local Friends from Dublin, inspired by past Friends who travelled in ministry, have travelled together on Sunday mornings to join with different Meetings in Ireland and plan to visit all 28 Meetings including Worship Groups. They have found a warm welcome among Irish Friends and have been enriched by worshipping with a wider Quaker Community. They particularly enjoyed sharing a cup of tea after meeting for worship. Their journey has shown the diversity of Friends across the island but also demonstrates that Meeting for Worship on a Sunday is fundamental in supporting the Quaker spiritual life in Ireland.

Ireland Yearly Meeting was held in High School, Rathgar, Dublin in April 2017. The theme was a quotation from Mahatma Gandhi “Live Simply, so that others may simply live.” The gathering was intentional in creating space for worshipping together as we tried to balance business and spiritual nourishment.

All Preparative Meetings were asked to consider and discuss a number of questions circulated by Yearly Meeting’s Committee relating to same sex Quaker marriage. A special Yearly Meeting on this topic will be held in 2018.

There is a growing concern among Quakers in Ireland regarding refugees and asylum seekers. Individuals have made commitments to assist refugees including English language tuition and befriending and have been taking positive steps to become more informed about the refugee situation. The Welcoming Refugees Group organised a discussion session at Yearly Meeting on “A new life - an inclusive society - insights into enforced migration” which included speakers from Syria and Afghanistan.

Following the death of a Friend, Dublin Friends facilitated a Safe Talk workshop to be alert for the signs of suicide. This short training programme is available in over 20 countries through [livingworks.net](http://livingworks.net).

Quaker Service continues to support some of the most vulnerable people in Northern Ireland through services including Quaker Cottage, a cross community family crisis centre and Quaker Connections, a volunteer programme in Northern Ireland prisons offering befriending and support services. Five Young Friends ran the Belfast Marathon Relay in May to raise funds for the Teenage Project at Quaker Cottage. Supported by Friends across Ulster, the aptly named Pace Committee far exceeded their original target, raising £3664 for the project.

In answer to the spiritual call from Quakers around the world to live more sustainably and fairly on the earth, Ireland Yearly Meeting is reviewing its investment strategy and has made a commitment to divest of fossil fuel shares and consider positive social

investments. Meetings in Ireland have each developed and implemented a sustainability plan, supported by the Eco Quakers Committee.

Caring for older meeting houses can be a burden. However, Friends are creatively using these worship spaces as an outreach resource by sharing our meeting houses and our Quaker heritage with the local community. The newly restored Quaker Meeting House in Hillsborough was part of the European Heritage Open Day, Eustace Street Meeting House welcomed approximately 500 visitors for a series of short talks on Culture Night in Dublin and Edenderry Meeting was selected by Offaly County Council as their project for Heritage Week entitled “Early Friends in Edenderry”.

In February, Ireland Youth Committee invited Woodbrooke on the Road to Ireland to arrange a retreat for Young Friends. The theme of light in times of darkness was explored, inspired by Matthew 4:16, particularly relevant to current events in the world. Ireland Youth Committee look forward to welcoming European and Middle Eastern Young Friends during the Spring Gathering to be held in Ireland in 2018.

Junior Yearly Meeting, the annual gathering for 14-18 year olds was held in the Moyallon Centre in April. The theme for the gathering was “Be patterns, be examples” a Quaker perspective on leadership. Through workshops they discussed Quaker Innovators, core Quaker values and formulating alternatives to violence.

*Judith Poole*

## **Italy: Bologna Worship Group**

We meet twice a month (2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday) at 11 am in a local library. We are hoping that a “silent room” destined for use of different religions or meditation groups will shortly be made available (to us as well) in the said library (specialising in “peace” themes). We keep in touch with isolated friends. One Italian Quaker attended the EMES 2017 Annual Meeting in Bonn and another one attended the QUNO gathering “Sanctuary everywhere” in December 2017. Two members of the Bologna group have registered for the June 2018 EMES gathering in Norway. One of us is involved in “Helping the helpers” project (for seminars and supervision on psychosocial ways to contain consequences of migrant’s trauma). Another Italian Quaker continues long-term involvement for sustainable growth and fostering communities to be aware and active on climate change.

We try to keep our Facebook page up to date – mostly our Clerk does it! The work in Dozza prison started by our founder (P-C Bori) more than 10 years ago continues to be a group concern under the lead of Fabian Lang. Fabian has also led a project to host more than two hundred migrants -mostly minors - for Xmas dinner cooked by migrants with traditional food. The event was recorded by the local news channel.

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On the anniversary of the death of Prof. Bori a meeting of remembrance “Quaker style”, together with his family and friends, was again organised.

Lucia welcomed two families from Gaza into her home in Italy in 2017-18, for specialised medical treatment of their children. The building in progress of a medical Centre in Weh, Cameroon, is also a group concern (see [www.wehcenter.org](http://www.wehcenter.org)).

*Lucia Biondelli and Cecilia Clementel*

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

2017 was a very important year for all Latvian Quakers and those interested in the Quaker way. The Riga Quaker group was re-established and Quakerism in Latvia is growing. The Liepaja Worship Group consists of five people with different religious backgrounds who have found Quaker silent worship to be a unifying point for coming together once a month. There are Buddhists, atheists, Unitarians and one Quaker and each of us share our own views and experiences.

Another important event in 2017 was the gathering of Quakers and seekers from the Baltic countries in Liepaja from 20-22 October, with a view to re-establishing a united community of Baltic Quakers after more than a 10 year interval from the first Baltic meeting in Nida, in Lithuania, in 2004. In Liepaja experienced Friends gathered from together Russia and Sweden, with three seekers from Estonia and another three from Lithuania and from Latvia. These days were a blessing and at the beginning of year 2018 we hope to have one more Quaker in Latvia and one in Estonia.

*Inese Ansule, International Member*

### **Malta Worship Group**

The meeting here in Malta is still meeting every month with a couple of new regular attenders and sometimes boosted by visitors to the isles. We are still very few and do enjoy visitors!

*Piers Headley*

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

The Brummana Monthly Meeting is not doing so well. Attendance is shrinking for several reasons ranging from travel to the absence of spiritual uplift. However, very few of us continue to meet on Sunday, for worship and a friendly conversation. Twice a year we welcome Friends coming for the school board meetings, and this year we were very happy to have the clerk of the Ramallah Meeting, Saleem Zaru, pay us a visit and join us in a meeting for worship.

Brummana and Ramallah Meetings have a long history of togetherness and commitment to common causes. Unfortunately, due to the occupation and conflicts in the region, it

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was difficult to exchange visits or hold Yearly Meetings. The visit by the clerk of Ramallah Meeting evoked feelings of nostalgia, and we agreed to work again on reviving our Yearly Meetings and improve personal contacts.

Brummana High School is doing well, and we are comforted by the presence of several members of our Meeting on its board of governors. The tennis tournament, again a Quaker legacy, continues to be held in summer.

Young members of Quaker families seem to be drifting away from the Meeting, not unlike young people belonging to other churches. Perhaps, in these complex times we live in, and in this war ridden land of peace that knows no peace, the message of hope, love, justice and peace seems detached from reality. Yet again, it is precisely in such difficult times that Quakers around the world come together to embrace the cause of peace and justice. The BDS movement supported by AFSC was a step towards ending the Israeli occupation. We would like to call on Friends throughout the world to be vociferous against violence, injustice and wars. So many parts of the world need hope and need peace. Maybe the following inspiring words from the 5<sup>th</sup> Edition of *Advices and Queries* (Britain) 24.33 can provide some guidance:

*All forms of non-violent resistance are certainly much better than appeasement, which has come to mean the avoidance of violence by a surrender to injustice at the expense of the sufferings of others and not of one's self, by the giving away of something that is not ours to give. This meaning of appeasement, the buying of peace for ourselves temporarily by pandering to international blackmail, has rightly come to be despised and to be regarded as an encouragement to aggressors and despots. It should be distinguished sharply from the admission, which personal or international integrity might sometimes demand, that we have made a mistake or have ourselves done wrong, and are ready to make open amends or to reverse our policy. No considerations of national or international prestige should prevent the correction of error when it is realised. This is a sine qua non in the search for truth, and is evidence of strength and not of weakness of personal or of national character, even when it means temporary humiliation. (Kathleen Lonsdale, 1953)*

Sami Cortas

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

Ramallah Friends Meeting (RFM) remains dedicated to its mission of worship and service, adapting its ministries to the changing circumstances in in our community and the wider region.

This past year marked the 50th year that the Palestinian people have suffered under an increasingly restrictive military occupation. While 70 years have passed since the *Nakbah* – the catastrophe that produced the first wave of massive displacement and brought about the Palestine refugee crisis. Our hearts are stirred by all persons who

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continue to be displaced and affected by war and conflict, especially in Syria, Iraq and Yemen.

The year 2017 also marked a milestone in the life of Ramallah Friends Meeting community. Jean Zaru stepped down from the position of clerk, which she has held since 1987, enabling her to focus entirely on the Meeting's ministry of education and hospitality. The clerkship was assumed by Saleem Zaru. A life-long RFM member and Ramallah Friends School graduate, Saleem has selflessly dedicated himself to serve the Ramallah community. He also works as the Executive Director of the United Palestinian Appeal (UPA). We warmly welcome Saleem and are certain that he will continue RFM's ministry in good faith and with great hope.

In seeking to build a culture of peace and nonviolence, radiating from the heart of Ramallah out into the wider world, the ministries of the Ramallah Friends Meeting include:

- First-Day unprogrammed worship each Sunday morning at 10:30 a.m. A regular core community, including several children, is enhanced by visitors from near and far.
- Midweek Worship every third Thursday.
- Dialogues and educational programs on Sundays and throughout each week, including lectures, ecumenical dialogue with seekers passionate for a better understanding of the reality in which we live and how we might transform it non-violently towards greater justice and equality.
- The maintenance of the historic Meeting House with its traditional stone building, surrounded by a large, peaceful garden with native plants.
- Meditations, articles and other news posted on RFM's website and Facebook page.

We received groups of all sizes and from a variety of countries beginning within the first few days in January and continuing regularly throughout the year. Indeed, the year 2017 might be described as one of the busiest ever. Here is a partial list of visitors:

Quaker organisations/groups: American Friends Service Committee, Friends United Meeting, FWCC-EMES, QVA (UK), Britain Yearly Meeting, Germany Meeting friends, Max Carter Group, Chico Meeting (California), friends from Peckham Quaker Meeting & Norwich Quaker Meeting.

Local organisations: AFSC Jerusalem, SIRAJ Bethlehem, EAPPI Jerusalem, SABEEL, Swedish Theological Institute (Jerusalem), Holy Land Trust, Grace Tours, Wi'am Center, Danish House in Ramallah.

Educational organisations from the USA: Swarthmore College, Princeton Theological Seminary, Westmont College, Westtown School, Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity

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School NY, Kennesaw State University, Middle East Studies Program and Kivu Gap year.

Other religious groups: Catholics, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Mennonites, Presbyterians, Friends of Sabeel (France), United Church of Christ in Canada, and the United Church of Christ (USA).

Other groups included: Catholic News Service, Aphorisma Publishing Company-Berlin, a French Journalist and a Doctoral Student from Lund, Sweden.

Another highlight for Ramallah Friends Meeting (RFM) in 2017 was the feature of Jean Zaru, as one of the “Twelve Faces of Hope” by the World Council of Churches. Jean and eleven other interfaith leaders were featured in reflections about peace and justice in the Holy Land. Jean’s inspiring video is available on the Meeting’s website, [www.rfmq.org](http://www.rfmq.org).

The Ramallah Friends Meeting continues to sustain its strength and vitality with the support of many friends locally and globally. EMES helps connect RFM with the wider world of Friends. Additional support is offered by the Friends of Ramallah Friends Meeting-Quaker (FRFMQ) with its eight steering committee members hailing from the US, the UK, Germany and Ramallah. In Ramallah, this was the first full year with a part-time Administrative Assistant, Tatiana Maayeh. Her assistance has been invaluable, along with long-time gate/grounds keeper George.

The Meeting is considering employing a Ministry Associate in order to lay the groundwork for expanded service to the community, hopefully working with the Amari Play Centre located in the nearby Amari refugee camp as well as other potential new projects, such as a revitalised First Day School, youth programmes and renewed ties with Bru-manna Friends Meeting in Lebanon.

*Saleem Zaru, Clerk*

## Netherlands Yearly Meeting

In May we had our Yearly Meeting, targeting “Living the Transformation 2”: Building Bridges (to Peace). We built paper bridges and wrote peace messages on them. It was lots of fun. Kees Nieuwerth gave a talk about Inclusive Peace, a project of the World Council of Churches, a new approach in working for peace.

Ongoing activities in 2017 included:

- Demonstrations “Grandparents for the climate”, every two weeks in front of the Dutch Parliament in The Hague.
- Eurosatory, preparing demonstrations against the arms trade.
- Courses in Palestine, Israel and Croatia.
- Supporting refugees in Calais and Brussels with knitted scarfs and hats (an activity with other churches).
- This year the action started to assemble People of Good Will into “the Order of the Teaspoon” (see [www.theelepeltjes.nl](http://www.theelepeltjes.nl)) according to an idea of Amoz Oz.

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Since our Yearly Meeting only consists of 81 members, we are not able to start major projects. We know, however, that the majority of our members are still fully engaged in supporting refugees, homeless people and caregiving.

In the autumn of 2017 we had meetings with about 25 / 30 of us. On Sept 30<sup>th</sup> the theme was fire and air (spirit): why are you a Quaker, what does it give you, what is so beautiful, how do you show your enthusiasm for Quakerism, what do Quakers do in the Netherlands? On November 11<sup>th</sup> the theme was earth and water: so, get to work, overcome obstacles, cross mountains and rivers and keep your fire burning.

The intention was threefold:

- Make a plan for yourself, with actions, time and a partner who will ask you about progress.
- Make a plan as monthly meeting and put the actions on every business meeting agenda.
- Are we efficient as a yearly meeting?

Some of the outcome, actions of individuals and meetings:

- Gather good stories for the website
- Use twitter for outreach
- Use drawing skills for Quaker purposes
- Translate German articles
- Translate English articles
- Write articles for our magazine
- Spread our Quaker magazine among friends and family
- Talk enthusiastically about Quakers
- Fold little birds, write little messages on them and leave them in books etc
- Get two new members in our monthly meeting by the end of 2018
- Tell my grandchildren about Quakers
- Get in touch with the mosque in our town
- Start a discussion group every two weeks
- Get our name out in our town via local newspapers etc
- Start little adds “why am I a Quaker” in local church magazines.
- A small group to investigate the efficiency of Quaker habits and structures and talk with key figures about it.

We had also someone interviewing us as individuals on film the first day: ‘tell me in a couple of minutes what makes you a Quaker, why are you a Quaker’. The result inspired a small group to set up a Dutch ‘Quaker Speak’.

*Erik Dries and Wils't Hart, Representatives*

## Norway Yearly Meeting

Norway Yearly Meeting is still a small meeting, though we continue to grow – although slowly. We enjoy some activities that happen every year – like our Yearly Meeting in June, and we also have a gathering twice a year in the mountains in the south of Norway. This year we also had a retreat, with the theme “Truth and Grace”, where 11 friends attended.

Our Yearly Meeting in 2017 was together with Friends from Denmark, Sweden and Finland at the Folk High School in Kungälv, Sweden. The theme for the weekend was “Am I my brother’s keeper?” and our Friend from Finland, Jaana Erkkila-Hill introduced the theme before we worked on this in different ways. It was good to be together with Friends from the other three Nordic countries, and we are looking forward to the next time.

In October Hanne Hognestad held the radio worship on the main radio channel for four days. It is heard by more than a million listeners, and although we haven’t got new members because of this, we hope it will make us more known. Hanne will have a new week with this worship in 2018 as well. In the autumn quite a few of us had a workshop on how to grow and how to become more known. We came up with a lot of ideas we can work with in the coming year. We have translated into Norwegian the book “Truth of the Heart: An Anthology of George Fox” by Rex Ambler, and we hope this will inspire many people here in Norway. We have just started our anniversary year and we are very much looking forward to celebrating our 200 years here in Norway.

*Hanne Hognestad, Clerk*

## Poland, Warsaw & Poznan Worship Groups

There are regular Meetings for Worship in Warsaw, Poznan and Bialystok. In Warsaw we had our first business meeting in 2017. We have started the process of nominating a clerk and a treasurer (we have a nominating committee) but the nomination process is difficult due to the small number of people. In spite of the formal difficulties, the group is growing spiritually and we feel that we are a real community. We are very lucky because we actually have three different places available where we can meet. Most often we meet in an attendee’s private flat and are very grateful for this possibility.

The all-Poland Gathering has taken place regularly every year since 2013, in the autumn (2013-Poznań, 2014-Warsaw, 2015-Warsaw, 2016-Białystok and 2017-Warsaw). In 2016, in Białystok, we took part in Woodbrooke-on-the-Road workshops on Quaker spirituality and the Quaker decision-making. The three publications on Quakerism that were translated into Polish in 2016, thanks to the support of the Small Grants Fund, are now playing a remarkable role in outreach. A member of the Bialystok worship group has translated ‘Advices and Queries’ into Polish and, thanks to the support of the Small Grants Fund, the Polish translation of the text will soon be published. We are also

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planning a Polish-Russian meeting in Moscow. One of the reasons for this is that most of our members speak Russian.

Since October 2017 the Bialystok group has been meeting every Sunday in a room at the University of Bialystok from 10.30-11.30 am. In April 2018 six people from our group will attend the Central European Gathering in Budapest. This event will certainly strengthen our Quaker identity and allow us to experience Quaker spiritual life more fully.

*Polish Friends*

## Portugal, Lisbon Area Informal Worship Group

We are still coming together as a meeting and hoping to change venues shortly. We wish to get to a point of 8 or so regular attenders, after a sufficient number of us has transferred membership to international status, and from that point Lisbon Monthly Meeting.

*Pascal Ansell*

## Russia, Moscow Monthly Meeting

This year was interesting and challenging for our meeting. We had some changes in our community. American Friends from North-West Yearly Meeting Johan and Judy Maurer left Moscow in the middle of October 2017, but at the same time new Friends arrived from Ukraine and Sweden. As in previous years, Moscow Meeting continued its collaboration with the charitable fund "Big Change" to help people from orphanages to complete their secondary education.

Starting from the second half of October, Moscow Friends decided to have a weekly worship sharing after the silent worship. This gives more strength to our meeting and helps Friends to understand each other better. Also, we now have more young people and children coming to our meeting. So by this time a real process of regeneration is going on inside the meeting. Our new member Vladimir Afonin animated well our spiritual life with his deep insights. He is a leader of a small theatre, where a presentation using silent worship is performed. During this year I continued my monitoring work in Ukraine and my report on my trip to Crimea was published by QCEA. Together with QGSDC, Sasha (Alex) Lipatov and I are preparing a project "Helpline for the LGBT in Russia".

*Misha Roshchin, Clerk*

## Russia, Friends House Moscow (Dom Druzei)

In 2017, we focused our work on two main issues – external social projects and Quaker outreach work among Russian-speaking people. Our projects included Alternatives to Violence Project in Ukraine, School Mediation Project and Help for Children with Special Needs (psychological and medical consultations for children with special needs

and their families in Dzerzhinsk, Nizhegorodskaya oblast), Alternative Service Office (the support to COs in Kazan, Tatarstan), Distribution of Alternativshchik newsletter (the information for COs and potential COs all over Russia), Workshops for School Mediation Groups (in seven Russian cities), and Refugee School in Moscow. Our outreach work was based mainly on the translation of Quaker literature and other materials into Russian. Three big books and about 50 articles were published at Quakers.ru website and in Wikipedia. Another important part of the work was Meditation of friends (mainly thematic sessions).

Social media are important instruments for the outreach activity. The Russian language Quaker Facebook group is the busiest place for the online communication for those who are interested in Quakerism. Vkontakte.ru is the second main social media platform we use.

*Sergei Grushko*

## **Spain, Madrid Worship Group**

This year has been a good year for the Madrid Group. As in previous years we continue to receive many requests for information about the Society of Friends. We keep in touch with some of the new inquirers residing outside Madrid who wish to maintain contact because of their interest in Quakerism. We had some visitors that were members of our Meeting while they lived in Madrid and now reside outside Spain. On the contrary we said goodbye to Friend Alina Nakos from the USA who lived in Madrid for some time and moved to Maastricht to study Public Policy and Human Development. We have new regular attenders and we continue and enjoy our Bible study before Meeting for Worship.

Carmen attended the EMES Annual Meeting in Germany and brought some new breeze back to the group.

We were invited to the presentation of a book whose main character was a descendant woman of a Quaker family; although the character did not really portray Quaker beliefs or practices. The writer, Berna Gonzalez Harbour, was widely interviewed on the radio and she used the opportunity to speak very well and emphasised very positively Quaker work during the Spanish civil war. Quaker work during the Spanish civil war (1936-1939) and later on in refugee camps in France has produced several requests for information; one in particular refers to an article that appeared in local newspapers in Southeast Spain (Murcia) identifying Francesca Wilson as a recognised Quaker and great benefactor and organiser of help for the Spanish population during our civil war. Many other Quakers joined her and fed thousands and thousands of Spaniards. We have in mind to do some research on this subject.

*Carmen Alcalde*

## Sweden Yearly Meeting

The year 2017 was a year to remember. The most dramatic and tragic happening was the so called terror attack in the middle of Stockholm a very ordinary Friday afternoon. People were hurt and killed by a truck. Many Friends had planned to go to Stockholm that very afternoon to attend Interim Yearly Meeting. Annika myself already on a train when it was stopped halfway, as no trains were allowed into Stockholm, and had to return home. Other people planning to attend that very afternoon found that all the trains bound for Stockholm were cancelled. Interim Yearly Meeting met on Saturday with many of us still at home, holding both the Meeting and the victims in the Light.

In June many Scandinavian Friends met at the Nordic Quaker Gathering in Kungälv near Gothenburg. This happens every third or fourth year and is the chance to have not only our national Yearly Meetings and a joint theme, but also to see old and new Friends.

To our joy, the UN passed its ban against nuclear weapons on July 7<sup>th</sup> and was now only waiting for all countries to ratify it. Despite the fact that Sweden had taken an active part in promoting the ban, it was hesitant about ratification, apparently influenced by warnings from the Nato alliance. Many small local Meetings around Sweden had their first Meeting for Business in many years and sent letters to Margot Wallström, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, urging the Swedish Government to sign and ratify the ban. So far, nothing has happened, although we are delighted that the Nobel Peace Prize this year was given to ICAN (the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons).

2017 was also a year in which a number of new members joined Sweden Yearly Meeting, when the Worship Groups around the country were active and many study circles and retreats about different themes were held at the Quaker Centre in Stockholm and the Quaker Retreat Centre at Svartbäcken, near Rimbo.

*Annika Hollsing and Patricia Nilsson, Representatives*

## Switzerland Yearly Meeting

Our yearly retreat in February covered the theme “Mindfulness – Achtsamkeit”. 20 Friends met for a weekend in the Montmirail Community near Lake Neuchatel and were led through the weekend by an experienced teacher of mindfulness.

Our Yearly Meeting in 2017 focused on the topic “An exploration of Roots and what may be growing from them”. The 500th anniversary of the reformation inspired us to look into the reformation and our own roots during that time. We also looked into the present (in workshops on for example our identity, our practice, the great work of QUNO) and our future, by trying to find out how to change our structures, in order to carry on despite our decreasing numbers.

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The Clerk-situation that we mentioned in our last year's report has not changed. We still weren't able to find new Co-Clerks and currently have an acting Clerk-team until our next Yearly Meeting. The decreasing number of members makes it ever more difficult to find enough Friends for all jobs.

In the French speaking part of Switzerland we have Geneva Monthly Meeting and a very small worship group in Lausanne. In the German speaking part we have four worship groups, of which Zurich (including the small worship group in Romanshorn) is the biggest. Zurich is doing some organisational work for the other groups, the groups in Basel and Berne are very small now. On the hopeful side, in Ligerz on Lake Biel, a new small worship group has been started last month.

Five Friends have left us this year: Yvette Roux, Marianne Gunther, Fritz Renken, Lothar Belck and Ursula Schuppli, they are much missed.

*Anne Lotte Heyn-Cossalter, Rorie Nazareth and Thomas Gorr, acting Co-Clerks of Switzerland YM*

## Europe & Middle East Young Friends (EMEYF)

EMEYF came together as a community twice in 2017: in Marszewiec, Poland for Spring Gathering, and in Brussels, Belgium for our Annual Meeting. Both events drew more participants than any of us could remember having in previous years.

Spring Gathering took place 10-17 April in the Polish village of Marszewiec, near Poznan. 33 Young Friends came together and lived as a spiritual community for a week. Meetings for worship and creative workshops were a part of the week, along with discernments and brainstorming on sustainability. Inspired by the FWCC plenary in Peru in 2016, we exchanged ideas on how to advance sustainability in our own lives as well as in our local meetings, yearly meetings, and as EMEYF itself. Eating vegetarian together with mostly locally sourced vegetables was a tangible step we could take there and then. We put much time and energy into our meetings for business, and tackled important issues we had to discern as a community.

From 23-26 November we came together again, this time in Brussels. During these days we had meetings for business and explored this beautiful city. In the evenings we had sessions centred on our archives, as part of the Living Archives Project. We read about EMEYF's history and came up with some new ways to bring that history to the attention of European Quakers of all ages, including a relaunch of EMEYF's former newsletter, Willy & Penn, but this time online! The all-new W&P can be found here: <https://willyandpenn.wordpress.com/> - everyone is invited to offer content, should they feel so moved.

Next spring, 25 March to 2 April, EMEYF will gather in Moyallon, Northern Ireland,

and make trips to Dublin and Belfast. We hope to meet up with many Irish Quakers. For more information, see [www.emeyf.org](http://www.emeyf.org) or our facebook group.

*Renke Meuwese*

## **Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA) - A European Quaker contribution to politics**

In 2017, QCEA continued to work to bring a Quaker vision of peace, justice and equality to Europe and its institutions. In 2017 we delivered the radical message of our supporters to hard-to-reach policymakers in one of the most important cities on the planet.

It has involved speaking to audiences in the European Parliament, and at a film screening in a cinema we hired. It has brought together people as diverse as homeless migrants and the Chair of the European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee, at our offices in Quaker House Brussels. And our Peace and Human Rights programmes are well underway. All this was achieved with support of our pan-European network of volunteers and a new staffing structure identified by the previous year's organisational review, reaching our full complement of staff in May 2017.

Our Peace Programme finalised a major research project which documents civilian peacebuilding tools, with a view to demonstrating that there are proven alternatives to military responses when addressing insecurity. The resulting report, *Building Peace Together*, has just been published on our website and will form the base of our peace advocacy work in 2018.

Meanwhile, our Human Rights Programme has been building on its work on child immigration detention, using our research to bring together policymakers, civil society and faith groups with an interest in this issue. We also began preparing our human rights work for 2018, including *Helping the Helpers*, a pilot project which will offer psychological support to those working with refugees.

In summer, we held a Study Tour which brought over twenty Quakers from across Europe on a tour of the European institutions in Brussels and Strasbourg. And in December, we held a major conference with QSPW, *#SanctuaryEverywhere*, which brought together over 100 Quakers, policymakers and human rights advocates in Brussels for a weekend. We shared our work, built bridges between grassroots activists and EU staff, and provided training on the importance of the European Convention on Human Rights for 30 attendees.

QCEA receives more than half of its funding from donations from Friends. Without you none of this would be possible. Thank you.

*Andrew Lane, Director*

## Quaker United Nations Office and Committee (Geneva)

QUNO Geneva had a productive year of work in its four linked programmes. QUNO's Human Impacts of Climate Change programme offers quiet diplomacy at the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change to help build communication and understanding between countries. In 2017, we held three dinners for climate negotiators to discuss sensitive issues facing the negotiations and were involved in side events focused on urgent climate action, visionary leadership for clean energy, sustainable lifestyles, and risks of geo-engineering. One outcome of these events was the publication, *A Negotiator's Toolkit: Engaging busy Ministries with concise arguments for urgent climate action*. We also attended the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and held two meetings with IPCC scientists and faith representatives to discuss the latest science and to encourage sufficient research on sustainable lifestyles. To document and share worldwide Quaker activities on climate change, we also created [quakersandclimatechange.com](http://quakersandclimatechange.com).

Our Food & Sustainability (F&S) programme was invited to an expert meeting of UN agencies about achieving the Sustainable Development Goal 2 (SDG 2) on eliminating hunger, followed by the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) in New York, where QUNO delivered the civil society statement on SDG 2. In November, the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture established a working group to focus on the article that concerns Farmers' Rights. As its implementation has been controversial from the beginning of the Treaty, this development is positive. QUNO has hosted several consultations and written targeted publications highlighting the importance of the rights of small-scale farmers and specific means to support them.

Throughout 2017, the Human Rights & Refugees programme worked to support the role of civil society in the process to adopt a Global Compact on Migration. We engaged with human rights mechanisms to underline that the Migration Compact must be built on existing international human rights law. Last year, the right to conscientious objection to military service—another key area of our work—was reaffirmed in a resolution by the Human Rights Council. We welcome this resolution and will work with conscientious objectors to provide clear advice to States through a report that the resolution requests.

Our Peace & Disarmament programme collaborated with colleagues in Geneva and New York to link the areas of human rights and sustaining peace through the UN's Universal Periodic Review (UPR). We brought grassroots representatives to share their experiences with diplomats and to explore ways the UPR could better support peacebuilding and violence reduction. We also explored opportunities for crosscutting approaches that better address the complex causes of injustice and violence, through presenting our joint research with F&S and the UN's Food and Agricultural Organization on the role of farmer seed systems in local peacebuilding efforts.

In recent years when it has become more difficult to raise non-Quaker funds for our work, we are very grateful to Quaker meetings and individuals who provide most of our financial support. Thank you!

*Stephen Schenck*

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

The Quaker United Nations Committee in New York has ten members: five appointed by the Board of the [American Friends Service Committee](#) (AFSC) and five by the [Friends World Committee for Consultation](#)'s (FWCC) Central Executive Committee. The Committee is responsible for setting programme priorities, recommending programme plans and priorities to the AFSC Board of Directors and monitoring and evaluating the work of QUNO New York.

In March we had our first extended face to face meeting starting in Quaker House in New York then moving to Pendle Hill in Pennsylvania. The October meeting was a virtual meeting with two three hour sessions held over two days, technically supported by AFSC Meeting Support Services.

The findings of the QUNO evaluation of two major pieces of work, *Review of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture* and the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals*, were extremely positive. The evaluator found that QUNO's convening power and approach is unique, explicitly rooted in Quaker practice and principles, which distinguishes QUNO from other actors, and contributes significantly to its success. It also mentioned its role in leading the involvement of civil society in sustainable peace efforts and its wide and relevant networks and relationships.

In the midst of US threats of reduced funding to the UN, QUNO's two programmes, Peacebuilding and Prevention of Violent Conflict continue to be more important than ever. Both programmes have had major success in 2017: The Prevention Programme in leading civil society involvement, facilitation work, linking up with human rights agendas in Geneva and the Swiss-China dialogue on prevention. The Peacebuilding programme has strong collaboration in the New York Peacebuilding Group, which opened space for close involvement in the drafting of the Secretary General's report on Sustaining Peace due out in 2018.

AFSC General Secretary Shan Cretin retired in April 2017 and Joyce Ajlouny took over on 1<sup>st</sup> September. QUNO continues to work closely with AFSC, its core funder, especially in its international programmes, giving QUNO's programmes a lived experience of people in fragile and conflict-affected environments.

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At the end of 2017, Fellow Kimberly Ai-Lin Loh joined the QUNO team to work on peacekeeping policy development. In September, programme assistants Evie McCullough and Grace Ishimwe also joined the team.

Many QUNC representatives ended their term of office in 2017, which means at the March meeting in 2018 there will be many new faces. My term of office ended in 2017, but was extended after the co-clerk asked to be released from the committee. It has been a privilege to serve on this committee and to gain invaluable insights into the impressive work that QUNO does on behalf of Friends.

*Penny Heymans, Oslo*

*Penny also writes: Another area of opportunity is emerging with American Friends Service Committee's (AFSC) global Shared Security initiative.*

*In early October, the Security Council agreed to recommend António Guterres as Secretary General of the UN, in a process that was more open than in previous years. Guterres has experience as a former head of state, and has deep knowledge of the UN system. With his emphasis on prevention of violent conflict and sustainable peace his appointment has been greeted with enthusiasm.*

*The election of Donald Trump as President of the US and Britain's decision to leave the EU has shocked many. There is now a growing concern that the new US administration is working on a plan to withdraw funding, or even to withdraw entirely from the United Nations. QUNO will work closely with colleagues at Friends Committee on National Legislation (FNCL) in Washington and AFSC on the likelihood of such actions moving ahead, and what the impact could be for the US and globally.*

*In October, the committee approved moving QUNO to one face-to-face meeting a year not two. The second meeting will be a virtual meeting instead. We are learning from QUNO Geneva, who has been using this system for some time.*

*As QUNO starts to focus more on external fund-raising, a recent highlight was partnering with QUNO Geneva and AFSC as part of an AFSC-led proposal for the MacArthur Foundation's "\$100 million and change" competition.*

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

## Quaker Voluntary Action

"Let your lives speak" was the heading on our programme leaflet for 2017 and I am happy to report that Friends have once again supported our planned working retreats. The Bamford project went ahead as a joint venture with the community and the "green" themed visit to Slovenia proved popular. Tensions in the Middle East continued to be high but we were fortunately able to send our usual visit to Ramallah.

I have to report that a change in personnel is underway – Jasmine Piercy who has done great work as our coordinator for the last ten years has decided that the time has come to pursue other opportunities and she officially left us at the end of 2017. We have appointed a new coordinator – Hannah Brock – and she will be taking on the role in mid-January. In the meantime, she and Jasmine will be working together on the handover.

Please do remember our website [www.qva.org.uk](http://www.qva.org.uk) for more information about us – I would also like to tell people that QVA is run voluntarily by a small group of trustees, whom I would like to thank for their work and support. We are always glad to hear from any of our supporters who can offer help. We are extremely grateful to all those Friends who have offered assistance both practical and financial.

*Jane Robinson, Clerk to QVA Trustees*

## Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre

Woodbrooke aims to widen the accessibility of its learning so that more people can deepen their own spiritual practice, improve their understanding of the Quaker way and feel better supported in their meetings. We are increasingly global in our outlook and reach.

Here are some of our highlights from 2017:

- In February we held a conference on ‘Forced Migration’ – with almost 80 people, working with the Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network, Quaker Council on European Affairs, Quaker United Nations Office and Quaker Peace and Social Witness. This explored how Friends can work, collectively and locally, for justice and compassion for all those seeking refuge in Europe
- We ran a Woodbrooke On-the-Road in Moyallon for Young Adult Friends in Ireland. This retreat was supported by The Catchpool Fund.
- The Catchpool Fund gave £3827 in bursaries for Friends from Europe to come to Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre for courses, including participants on Equipping for Ministry and the Young Adult Leadership Programme and we are pleased to have another Friend starting the Equipping for Ministry programme in 2018.
- Friends from the following countries participated in one or more of online courses, retreats and webinars: Finland, Switzerland, Italy, Sweden, Germany, Slovenia, France, Netherlands, Belgium and Denmark.
- We were delighted to welcome a participant from Italy on our extended Young Adult Leadership Programme in 2016-17.
- Simon Best, Woodbrooke’s Head of Learning, was pleased to attend the EMES Annual Meeting at Haus Venusberg, Bonn, Germany and to speak on the theme of ‘Vibrant Meetings, Vibrant Section’. He said, “It was wonderful to be able to

join Friends from all over the Section and hear about the life in their meetings, new initiatives and new growth in people and in the spirit.”

- The second run of the online course we ran in partnership with Lancaster University using the Future Learn platform attracted 2,500 participants. This was a 3 week free course on Radical Spirituality: the Early History of the Quakers. It will run again in April 2018.
- In early 2018, we ran a joint event with QCEA on ‘Quakers and European Politics’ here at Woodbrooke.

Sandra Berry, Director of Woodbrooke, said *“It is wonderful to see how the spirit flows through Woodbrooke’s learning. Our learning is enriched and deepened by the all the connections made with Friends across FWCC.”*

Over the years, many Friends from throughout EMES have enrolled on our research degree programmes, and we are now taking applications for the wholly online PG Certificate and MA Quakerism in the Modern World which we run with Lancaster University. Whether Friends travel to the UK, participate in an online course or experience our travelling teaching service where they are, there are many ways of engaging the inspiring with the learning Woodbrooke has to offer.

*Martin Layton, Senior Programme Leader for off-site and online learning*

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**Yearly Meetings in 2018**

| <b>YM</b>            | <b>When</b>        | <b>Contact</b>   |
|----------------------|--------------------|--|
| Finland              | 27-29 April 2018   | <a href="mailto:lampelanleena@gmail.com">lampelanleena@gmail.com</a>           |
| Britain              | 4-7 May 2018       | <a href="mailto:ymg@quaker.org.uk">ymg@quaker.org.uk</a>                       |
| Denmark              | 5-6 May 2018       | <a href="mailto:post@kvaekerne.dk">post@kvaekerne.dk</a>                       |
| Belgium & Luxembourg | 10-13 May 2018     | <a href="mailto:quakerclerk@gmail.com">quakerclerk@gmail.com</a>               |
| Sweden               | 10-13 May 2018     | <a href="mailto:kvakargarden@kvakare.se">kvakargarden@kvakare.se</a>           |
| Switzerland          | 18-21 May 2018     | <a href="mailto:symclerk@swiss-quakers.ch">symclerk@swiss-quakers.ch</a>       |
| Netherlands          | 25-27 May 2018     | <a href="mailto:secretariaat@dequakers.nl">secretariaat@dequakers.nl</a>       |
| EMES Annual Meeting  | 21-24 June 2018    | <a href="mailto:emes@fwccemes.org">emes@fwccemes.org</a>                       |
| Ireland              | 18-22 July 2018    | <a href="mailto:office@quakers-in-ireland.ie">office@quakers-in-ireland.ie</a> |
| Norway               | 9-12 August 2018   | <a href="mailto:kveker@kveker.org">kveker@kveker.org</a>                       |
| German               | 25-28 October 2018 | <a href="mailto:clerks@quaker.org">clerks@quaker.org</a>                       |
| France               | 27-30 October 2018 | <a href="mailto:assembleedefrance@gmail.com">assembleedefrance@gmail.com</a>   |

**Other events in 2018 (fuller details on <http://www.fwccemes.org/calendar/>)**

| <b>Event</b>  | <b>When</b>             | <b>Contact</b>  |
|---|-------------------------|---|
| Grenztreffen Switzerland/Germany/France             | 6 – 8 April 2018        | <a href="mailto:grenztreffenCHD@quaker.org">grenztreffenCHD@quaker.org</a>                    |
| EMEYF Spring Gathering                              | 25 March – 2 April 2018 | <a href="mailto:emeyf@qcea.org">emeyf@qcea.org</a>  |
| Central European Gathering                          | 12 -15 April 2018       | Jola Grabowska  |
| Gathering of Friends in Italy                       | 1 – 2 September 2018    | <a href="mailto:luciabiondelli@gmail.com">luciabiondelli@gmail.com</a>                        |
| Border Meeting                                      | 7 – 9 September 2018    | <a href="http://grenztreffen.be/index.php/en-GB/">http://grenztreffen.be/index.php/en-GB/</a> |
| Peace & Service Consultation in Kortenberg, Belgium | 16 – 18 November 2018   | <a href="mailto:emes@fwccemes.org">emes@fwccemes.org</a>                                      |

## CONTRIBUTING TO FWCC EMES

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

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

**Beneficiary Bank SWIFT:** CAFBGB21XXX

Beneficiary's Bank name and address:

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

**IBAN No** – GB73CAFB40524000025578

**Account Name** – CAF Bank Ltd

FWCC EMES

**Account Number** – 00025578

**Sort Code** – 40-52-40

### **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.