

Among Friends

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Exec Secretary: Marisa Johnson, P.O. Box 1157, Histon, Cambridge CB24 9XQ, UK emes@fwccemes.org Tel: +44 (0)122 347 9585

EMES in the autumn

Dear Friends,

I am starting to learn how quickly the deadline for Among Friends comes round. It feels like only a few weeks since the last one! Autumn 2019 is proving to be a busy one for me and I thought you would be interested to hear some of what is going on for the EMES staff right now.

In mid-November I will be attending part of the Europe & Middle East Young Friends (EMEYF) annual meeting at Quaker House in Brussels. Although EMES is for Friends of all ages we recognise that EMEYF has a particular role to fill for Young Adult Friends in our Section. Visiting the EMEYF annual meeting will be particularly special for me not least because I met my wife at the EMEYF annual meeting 20 years ago! I am also looking forward to considering how we can continue to develop and strengthen the relationship between EMES and EMEYF.

Towards the end of November the EMES Peace & Service Consultation is taking place at the Old Abbey in Kortenberg, just outside Brussels. This year around



*Picture of the Old Abbey, Kortenberg
Photo: Michael Eccles*

22 Friends will be gathered to consider public witness and in particular, how we protest. On the Saturday morning three speakers from the Northern Friends Peace Board, Roots of Resistance and Stop Fuelling War will share something of their experience of protests those organisations have been involved with, how and why they feel it works and what lessons have been learned for future protests.

We are also beginning to start working on the details for the next EMES annual meeting, which will be held in Paris on the 30 April – 3 May 2020, when – amongst other things – we shall be saying goodbye to Marisa Johnson, our current Executive Secretary. This explains my change of job title to Executive Secretary Designate, which was approved by the EMES Executive Committee at its September meeting. Watch the website and your inboxes for more information about the 2020 Annual Meeting in the coming weeks.

*Michael Eccles, Executive Secretary Designate,
FWCC-EMES*

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EMES Children & Young People's Consultation

Michael Eccles,
Executive Secretary
Designate, FWCC-
EMES, writes:

18 Friends gathered at Quaker House, Brussels for this event facilitated by Annie Janssen (German YM) and Michael Eccles (EMES) over the weekend of the 5th - 7th July. The Friends present represented the following meetings: Europe & Middle East Young Friends, German YM, Ireland YM, Netherlands YM, Norway YM and Switzerland YM.

One of the first things we realised was that we don't have common terminology (in any language) about what to call young people of different ages, often known as Young Friends. We agreed to use the following terms:

- 12-18 year olds would be known as Juniors (although we later created a subcategory of senior-juniors, for those aged 16-18). Sometimes also known as 'young people'
- 18-35(ish) year olds would be called Young Adult Friends (YAFs)

We then spent time in country groups mapping (literally as Friends were asked to cut their sheets of paper into an outline of their country!) activities for juniors. There are already a variety of activities going on around the Section and quite a bit of intervisitation already going on; many mainland-European Friends have visited Britain YM, Irish juniors have regularly attended the Yorkshire Holiday School in Britain for many years and there are well-developed plans for a group of Norwegian juniors to visit the German YM Easter camp in 2020.

After lunch we met in two groups – younger and



CYP participants outside Quaker House, Brussels

Photo: Michael Eccles

older – at the juniors' request. Older Friends spent time considering how we can best stay in touch and keep each other informed of events going on around Europe for juniors. One change we agreed was to use the EMES website calendar to advertise activities for Friends of all ages, and we are experimenting with different ways of identifying these events.

After our separate meetings, the juniors brought a proposal for a new event for 16-18 year olds (or senior-juniors). They introduced their ideas, and we ended up with a proposal that we all united behind in a worshipful session after our evening meal for an event which will take place on the 27th - 30th December at Quäkerhaus in Bad Pyrmont, Germany. They hope to consider what it means to be a young Friend in the world today. Look out for more information on the EMES website!

We went on to consider a number of other issues, including a future all-age gathering for EMES, and whether we should have a children's programme at EMES annual meetings.

If you want to know more about the weekend or any of this work, please get in touch with Michael Eccles on emes@fwccemes.org.

A Quaker Hospice in Switzerland?

Othmar F. Arnold, Switzerland Yearly Meeting, writes:

The kingdom of God has little to do with church and religion - serving God is about serving humanity. (Leonhard Ragaz)

The project “Old Cheese Dairy” in Tenna is a civil-society initiative based on a leading by an individual Friend, financially supported by Friends from Switzerland, Germany and Canada. The Tenna Hospice Association is building spirited space for communal-living during the last period of life.

The entire project is inspired by Quaker and Franciscan spirituality. The building and the concept of care embody community, equality, integrity and simplicity. The ageing and the dying are valued as unique human beings in the image of God. They are not failing bodies with multi-morbidity that need to be treated. Each person is viewed as self-determining and capable, regardless of changing faculties and agency. And it is Spirit-led, an expression of lived faith.

Living well and in dignity to the last breath and being able to die in peace are universal human needs. In a remote area it is difficult to age in place. I have witnessed - with increasing mobility challenges or failing memory - how it becomes too cumbersome to live in a 300-year-old farm house on a steep slope. Or, when a partner dies, it becomes too lonely to remain at home. With the transition from extended family networks to small nuclear families, it is the right time to create a special care place in this mountain region for those who can no longer manage at home, and for those who do not want to move to a care institution in an urban environment.

The Tenna Hospice Association is building a dwelling with six housing units that are barrier-free. People with varied abilities and care needs will form an intentional community, with continued support, care, and assistance from family caregivers, volunteers as well



New Life for an old Cheese Factory in Safien Valley

Photo: Othmar F. Arnold

as ambulatory nursing and palliative care services. A 24-hour presence will address human security and the ills of social isolation and loneliness.

Members of the Tenna Hospice Association develop a high competency in palliative, dementia, and spiritual care. A network of health professionals will support this initiative. The ongoing operations will be self-supporting. Residential fees will be significantly lower than in a care home. A solidarity fund will raise money for situations of hardship and uninsured care needs.

The construction project will cost CHF 3.5 Mio. 80% of the donations come from people with strong ties to the Safien Valley. In order to offer living space at an affordable rate for everyone, the Tenna Hospice Association is still looking for CHF 700'000 in donations, interest free loans, or legacies. The completion is expected by the end of 2020.

Friends in Switzerland take a keen interest in this hospice project. The topics of ageing and dying have been on the agenda of several gatherings in recent years. Friends also care about the implications of the ever-rising cost of care. This initiative is supported as a local service project by the Zurich Worship group and Geneva MM.

For more information (mostly in German) visit our website at www.tennahospiz.ch, or write to othmar@tennahospiz.ch. Postal Address: Ausserberg 30, CH 7106 Tenna GR, Switzerland

Families exploring love at Woodbrooke

Solveig-Karin Erdal, Sweden YM, writes:

In July, Woodbrooke was somewhat livelier than we imagine it is usually, with children exploring the paths in the garden and making use of the toys and sport equipment. Woodbrooke had a family weekend, with a course on Being a Quaker Parent for parents and some grandparents, and Exploring Worship as the theme for the children who gathered in groups from the very youngest ones to the teenagers.

We, one family from the very north and another from the very south of Sweden, went to get more insight into what is particular to being a Quaker parent and let our children learn more about Quakers.

To me, my take home message is that of love. Love is one of those clichés that I often find difficult to know what it is and how it looks in action. When parents shared that love was the most important, it felt like a truism. But, love was present. At first, the love in the care that was taken to make sure that everyone could have a great weekend. Us parents were told to be as we are, to carry whatever we carried with us, to join or not join the sessions as it suited us and met our needs. There were plenty of volunteers taking care of the children and guiding them through various ways of exploring worship. We also had sessions together, and could introduce ourselves as family units and as individuals.

It is wonderful how during just a few days, those separate family units started building community. Soon, we would go from being one line of random people queuing for meals, to be a community looking after each other, helping each other across families and enjoying the company. We felt that we got to know each other both in the family dimension and a bit more in depth.

Our very last session was one where children and parents exchanged gifts and symbols of affection and



Playing at Woodbrooke Photo: Solveig Karin Edal

love. First, the children brought beautiful sequins to be wrapped in beautiful tissue to exemplify how we all carry the light within ourselves. The parents had in creative ways in words, drawings and with origami, expressed their love and pride for their children, and each child was called and given this manifestation of love in front of everyone else. This was so powerful and I have gone back to that rainstorm of love when I needed support in my parenting. Although other sessions were interesting, thought provoking and memorable, this moment of intensely manifesting the love to each child in the room, and the family bonds to their parents and guardians, was so strong and impressing.

Quaker Voluntary Action are looking for Friends who would be interested in serving as trustees to help planning future developments, supporting our worker Hannah, and maybe carrying out the occasional individual task.

Other roles are available including receiving and acknowledging donations, helping with publicity and Working Retreats. More information from Hannah: mail@qva.org.uk

Travelling young ministers from the FWCC Section of the Americas

Michael Eccles, Executive Secretary Designate, FWCC-EMES, writes:

In April and May 2019 two Young Adult Friends (YAFs), from Mexico and the USA, visited Europe. They attended Ireland Yearly Meeting, the EMES Annual Meeting in Budapest and Young Friends General Meeting in Liverpool. They also visited Woodbrooke and Friends House, London.

This exciting intervisitation project was a new initiative partly funded by the FWCC World Office Young Adult Friends Development Fund. The fund was created from Quaker Youth Pilgrimage money and it is hoped that it will generate similarly powerful experiences of deep spiritual connection and encouragement for Young Adult Friends around the world.

The visitors were Yulieed Avila, a member of the General Meeting of Friends from Mexico and Ashley Weinacht from Northwest Yearly Meeting. Ashley and Yulieed spent approximately 2 weeks in Europe; in Ireland, Britain and Hungary. During the visit they met with YAFs in Dublin, London and Russia (via skype) as well as at Young Friends General Meeting in Liverpool. They also met Friends of all ages at Ireland YM, at Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, at Friends House in London and at the EMES Annual Meeting in Budapest. It was a busy time for them!

Ashley and Yulieed led programmed worship one evening at the EMES annual meeting which was a profoundly deep experience for many Friends. They both showed leadership skills in the leading of this worship and Ashley showed a natural talent for giving prepared ministry.

This was a pilot programme put together with a fairly short time-frame. EMES feels that it was very much a success. Ashley and Yulieed both felt very positive about the visit and about what they had learned about Quakers in Europe. We hope that the seeds sown will lead to more interactions between young Friends worldwide, recognising that this may take time.

We would like to thank the FWCC World Office and Section of the Americas for the support they gave to this project.



Ashley & Yulieed with Tas Cooper in London

Photo: Yulieed Avila

Yulieed and Ashley identified a number of their highlights as follows:

- The entire trip was a learning experience
- I learned that many people grapple with similar questions, such as why God would allow evil if He is sovereign and good, how Jesus could be both fully divine and fully man
- I also learned that Yearly Meetings around the world are also asking similar questions. The one I heard the most often was, "How do we keep the young people in the meeting?" This caught my attention, because the same question is being asked in North American churches as well
- This trip challenged me, stretched me, frustrated me, grew me, and blessed me far more than I could ever have anticipated. It was an adventure of a lifetime, and I will forever be grateful for the opportunity to have been a part of it
- If I am asked what message I will take home, like to my church home, is that we as Friends, must remember our role in society to become a stronger, lover community that is enthusiast in the work of social change

Goodbye Am'ari Play Centre

Marisa Johnson, Executive Secretary EMES, writes about the end of an era, and a much loved project:

My first trip abroad when I took up the role of EMES Secretary in early 2008 was to Ramallah, to visit the Am'ari Play Centre, a venerable institution already at the time, but one that faced many challenges and complexities. I went with my predecessor, Bronwyn Harwood, who explained the background to me and introduced me to the staff and management. We stayed in accommodation on the campus of the Ramallah Girls' School, a very peaceful spot in a busy city, but were woken up one night by the sound of gunfire.

The Play Centre was a project taken up by the then Service Committee of the Europe and Middle East Section of FWCC in the 1970s. After successful work in Algeria, Friends were looking for another project to initiate jointly, and responded to the vision of local Friend Violet Zaru to provide pre-school education in one of the largest refugee camps on the outskirts of Ramallah, the Am'ari camp. The United Nations Refugees and Work Agency (UNRWA), which is responsible for the provision of health and education to Palestinian refugees, entered into a contract with the Europe and Near East Section of FWCC (as it was then called) in 1974 and provided premises from which the play centre could run. Between 45 and 50 5-year old children were served by the project, enjoying a year's pre-school education not otherwise available, at very low cost to the families, and an opportunity to play and learn in a safe space, with a small outdoor playground, in a setting full of overcrowded housing, and hardly any outdoor play space. Milk was also provided, and sandwiches twice a week. Local people came to think very highly indeed of this facility in their tough environment.

After the EMES Service Committee ceased to exist the management of the play centre became somewhat adrift, and the then director of the Friends United Meeting's (FUM) schools in Ramallah, Colin South, took that on as part of his remit as FUM Representative in Ramallah. This important link remained in place until the last Quaker Director, Joyce Ajlouni, left the post in 2017 to become General Secretary of American Friends Service Committee (AFSC). Funding for the project was raised through EMES in Europe and through FUM in the United States. Many Friends and Meetings have supported the project loyally over the decades, and Am'ari came to hold a very



Am'ari Play Centre

Photo: Marisa Johnson

special place in the heart of many.

After Violet Zaru's death a local co-ordinator was employed, Muna Khleifi, who looked after the project for many years. Governance arrangements were not always very clear or satisfactory, so EMES sought to find a more experienced organisation to take over the management of the play centre. In 2009 Lindsey Cook and Vanoush Kassis undertook a comprehensive review of arrangements, and recommended that a Quaker organisation be found to fulfil this role. For a couple of years Quaker Service Norway took responsibility for the running of the project, due to its expertise in providing funding and oversight for 13 kindergartens in Gaza, the Palestinian Early Childhood Education Programme (PECEP). However, the difficulties in communication between Gaza and the West Bank and other local challenges made the arrangement impossible. Governance then reverted to EMES, which set up a Local Management Group.

Things became very difficult in 2018 when the Play Centre's bank account was closed down, because the Play Centre was not registered with the Palestinian Authority – which did not exist when the project was set up. This made the payments of salaries and incidental expenses each month extremely challenging. For a while, payments were routed through the Friends Schools in Ramallah, but this was not satisfactory, and put the school at risk of “money laundering” provisions. For a while FUM made the payments direct to staff from the US, but had to stop doing this abruptly due to the introduction of more restrictive banking laws in the US. At this point EMES took on the task of making payments directly to the employees, but we too ran into the same banking issues,

and needed to find a permanent solution in order for the project to remain viable.

At this point, the possibility emerged of a rescue plan through United Palestinian Appeal (UPA), a US and Middle East based charity of which Saleem Zaru, nephew of Violet, and currently clerk of the Ramallah Friends Meeting, is director. UPA has experience of running educational and health-related programmes in Palestine and in refugee camps elsewhere in the Middle East, so this seemed the perfect solution. It would also maintain the close links between local and international Friends and the project, and provide continuity as well as bringing the project up to date, with registration through the relevant authorities.

In order for UPA to take over the project it was necessary for EMES and FUM to close down the existing arrangements, and discharge all accrued liabilities, mainly severance pay for each individual member of staff – the coordinator, Muna Khleifi, the principal teacher Wafiyeh Said Atiyeh Ali Saleh and two teaching assistants, Rima Sha'ban Daoud Abu Qdameh and Arij Salah Eddin Mohamad Nasif. Between them, they had given over 60 years of service to the project! It was therefore with some regret, but also with confidence in the future, that the FUM director, Kelly Kellum, and I met with the staff at the end of May to thank them for their service and ask them to sign receipts for severance pay, thereby discharging EMES and FUM of any further obligations. It was a poignant occasion.

At the same time, we gave notice to UNRWA of our intention to cease the provision of the centre, recommending that the agreement be passed to UPA. Saleem Zaru met with UNRWA representatives, and UPA's legal team worked with UNRWA on drawing up a draft contract. We were hopeful all through the summer that the Play Centre could reopen in the new school year. It was therefore both a shock and a surprise when, in September, we heard from UNRWA that "a local kindergarten run by the Women's Center in Am'ari camp has recently expanded and have taken in the additional students, starting this school year. Hence, there is no longer a need for UNRWA-UPA cooperation on this particular issue." We also heard that our former staff intended to set up an alternative play group in the camp on premises made available by the local Popular



*Am'ari Play
Centre in action
Photos: Marisa
Johnson*



Committee, so we gifted all the furniture and resources from the EMES/FUM project to them, in the hope that this legacy will enable them to continue to serve their community.

The EMES Secretaries and Executive Committee would like to express deep gratitude to the many Friends and Meetings in Europe who have supported the Am'ari Play Centre over the decades, especially Friends in Zurich and Switzerland Yearly Meeting, Quaker Service Sweden, Hulpfonds of Netherlands Yearly Meeting, Quäkerhilfe of German Yearly Meeting, and the C.B & H.H. Taylor 1984 Trust. Their faithful support has enabled us to keep the service going over so many years.

Equality / Gleichwürdigkeit / #TestimonyTrain

Eloise, Britain Yearly Meeting, writes:

I was born with a family I didn't know I had, and when I joined the Religious Society of Friends I found that family and they've taught me so much about the person I am, and want to be.

Equality seems like the perfect topic for me to write about as a gay woman. At my first meeting for worship in 2018, I read Advices and Queries from cover to cover in rushed hopes to find answers to life's great questions. I realise now that only how I live my life can provide those, but #17 really stuck with me and has started me down that path. I've been fortunate to grow up in a culture, country, and time when many great strides have been made towards equality, but travelling to Morocco at the end of 2018 and seeing how homosexuality is still illegal and something to be hidden for your own safety reminds me that there are still opportunities to improve both home and abroad.

It is not our creed, social class, outward appearance or choice of partner(s) that defines us. It is the Light within and our response to it that shows who we are. The idea that every face is an equal beacon of Love and Hope enables me to recognise good intentions behind seemingly harsh words and spurs me to educate those who don't understand the negativity they project. Ministry, whether silent or vocal, is equal from any source and it's this which inspires me to reach for universal equality in my dealings with people from all walks of life.

I strive not to be simply a Friend to the few, or even the many, but to all.

Ich wurde mit einer Familie geboren, von der ich nicht wusste, dass ich sie habe und als ich der Religiösen Gesellschaft der Freunde beitrug, fand ich diese Familie und sie haben mir so viel über die Person beigebracht, die ich bin und die ich sein möchte.

Gleichstellung scheint für mich als schwule Frau das perfekte Thema zu sein. Bei meinem ersten Gottesdienst-Treffen im Jahr 2018 las ich Ratschläge und Fragen von vorne bis hinten in der Hoffnung, Antworten auf die großen Fragen des Lebens zu finden. Ich verstehe jetzt, dass nur wie ich mein Leben lebe diese Antworten bieten kann, aber # 17 ist wirklich bei mir geblieben und hat mich auf diesen Weg gebracht. Ich hatte das Glück, in einer Kultur, einem Land und einer Zeit aufzuwachsen, in der viele große Schritte in Richtung Gleichstellung unternommen wurden, aber Ende 2018 nach Marokko zu reisen bin und zu sehen, wie illegal Homosexualität dort ist und etwas, das man verstecken muss zur eigenen Sicherheit, erinnert mich daran, dass es immer noch Gelegenheiten gibt, etwas im In- und Ausland zu verbessern.

Es sind nicht unser Glaubensbekenntnis, unsere soziale Klasse, unser äußeres Erscheinungsbild oder die Wahl der Partner, die uns ausmachen. Es ist das Licht in uns und unsere Reaktion darauf, die zeigt, wer wir sind. Die Vorstellung, dass jedes Gesicht ein Leuchtfeuer der Liebe und der Hoffnung ist, ermöglicht es mir, gute Absichten hinter scheinbar harten Worten zu erkennen und spornt mich an, diejenigen aufzuklären, die die Negativität die sie projizieren nicht verstehen. (Geistiger) Dienst, ob leise oder laut, ist von jeder Quelle gleich und es inspiriert mich, im Umgang mit Menschen aus allen Gesellschaftsschichten nach allgemeiner Gleichberechtigung zu streben.

Ich bemühe mich, nicht nur ein Freund der Wenigen oder gar der Vielen zu sein, sondern allen.

For more articles like this read EMEYF's blog at: <https://willyandpenn.com/>

Conference of European Churches (CEC) Peace Conference, Paris, September 2019

Judith Roads, Britain Yearly Meeting and France Yearly Meeting, writes:

Good news! The Christian community in Europe is moving towards a collective Task Force for peace building in our continent. To be formal, this umbrella body is the Conference of European Churches or CEC, representing 118 Orthodox, Protestant, Anglican and Old Catholic churches. Quakers are represented by EMES. QCEA has participated in past general assemblies. A conference for creating the ground work for the Task Force met in Paris in September – I was asked to represent EMES. The conference aim was to:

Reflect on the past as well as provide a greater understanding for the context in which we live today. Reconciliation for peace as desired and as experienced in the different churches of CEC can then become a central leitmotif for CEC in its wider engagement in society.

About 40-50 people attended all or part of the gathering. I encountered colleagues from Norway, Germany, Hungary, France, Italy, Spain, Ireland, UK, Netherlands, Denmark, Serbia, Oman, Sweden, Cyprus and Lebanon. We participated collectively in prayers led by Lutherans, French Protestants, Anglicans and Eastern Orthodox.

There were several sessions in which participants commented on what they saw as a twentieth-century colonial mentality, touching on minorities and majorities, xenophobia, inequality, the tragedy of European geopolitics and the apparent failure of the UN to date. Participants returned frequently to the failure of the 1919 Versailles Treaty and the subsequent march to a second

war. One of my few spoken contributions commented that we should not forget to bring along with us the grassroots of our membership, or 'Friends on the bench'. The remainder of that session returned several times to this as a practical step, steering the thinking of the participants away from policies, values and protocols, often the preferred language of diplomats.

A trip to Versailles to see the Galerie des Glaces where the 1919 Treaty was signed was intriguing. This historical reminder was intended to spark the development of a draft version of a proposed Paris 2019 Peace Treaty (or covenant - with God, I imagine - in conventional Christian language).

I felt privileged to be able to participate and to represent the European Quaker community at this significant peace initiative. I and several others stressed that the time for merely talking was over and we should be ready for some practical steps to be formulated. The materials from Friends House Library and from QCEA were enthusiastically seized on. A new copy of Jean Zaru's book *Occupied with Peace* that I had taken along was purchased. I felt there was so much more we Quakers could have offered the conference, had the timetable been less rigid and pre-determined. Maybe the opportunity will yet emerge?

Links:

<https://www.ceceurope.org/who-we-are/introduction/>

<https://www.facebook.com/ceceurope/>

<https://mailchi.mp/cec-kek/news-from-cec-1071181>



Participants at the Peace Conference

Photo: Judith Roads

Quaker United Nations Summer School: A Friend's Introduction to Geneva

Detmer Yens Kremer, Netherlands Yearly Meeting, writes:

I am someone with a desire to work on human rights, and I knew Geneva was a place I had to understand, but I remained uncertain of how. The United Nations, and its many different mechanisms, committees, and conventions, often feels far away from our daily lives. It also is a difficult place to get access to, with many unwritten rules and insider tricks. Enter the Quaker United Nations Summer School, which I attended in July. For two weeks together with young committed people from all over the world, and many of them Quaker, I dove into the procedures and institutions that make up the UN system. I got to talk to countless of activists, diplomats, and scholars who work on issues ranging from nuclear disarmament to LGBTI+ refugees. We got to witness a Human Rights Council in session and wander the grounds of the United Nations complex in Geneva. Most importantly, everyone was honest about how the system works, and sometimes does not work. It was an eye-opening experience that made international human rights work feel more real and possible.

Currently, I work at Quaker United Nations Office as the Programme Assistant for Human Impacts of Climate Change, and an exciting responsibility I have is to organise the next Quaker United Nations Office Summer School. As someone from a small rural community in the north of the Netherlands with no prior connections or experience to Geneva, I am thrilled to organise a summer school that introduces fellow young people to this strange system and understand how we can create change both at home and in Geneva. The next edition of the summer school is from the 5th to the 16th of July, and more information can be found at <https://quno.org/geneva-summer-school>, with the closing date for applications being 15th of January 2020. The sessions will include many interesting talks from specialists in fields such as human rights, climate change, economic systems, peacebuilding, disarmament and migrant justice, as well as skill-building specific to how to work in places like Geneva. Whether you know you want to work on international justice, or if the United Nations has barely crossed your mind, this is powerful opportunity to learn so much while meeting incredible people from across the globe.



Quaker United Nations Summer School

Photo: Detmer Yens Kremer

News from Woodbrooke



Woodbrooke is building European connections

Blog by *Jon Martin*, Woodbrooke's new Communications Manager:

While Britain's relationship to Europe on a political level continues to be uncertain, at Woodbrooke we're committed to being a part of the European community of Quakers.

Online worship

In March, Maud Grainger - our Faith in Action Programmes Tutor - co-lead, with staff from QCEA the 'Brexit, the EU and you' study tour in Brussels that included an online meeting for worship which saw those in Brussels joined by Friends from around Europe.

In October we came together again with EMES and QCEA to hold a space online for Quakers concerned about Brexit to come together in the Quaker practice of silent waiting and listening. Brexit, and similar trends elsewhere will affect us all. Those who gathered online across three Sunday evenings and one Thursday evening expressed their thankfulness at the opportunity coming together presented. Nationalities present included Friends from Scotland, France, Germany, Belgium, Ireland, England, Latvia, Slovenia, Netherlands, Wales, Norway and possibly more –whom connected via technology regardless of national borders and geography.

Woodbrooke holds a regular online worship on Wednesday at 9:30 (GMT)/10.30 (CET) and Friday at 13:00 (GMT)/14.00 (CET) each week. These are already blessed with attendance from Friends around the world and in response to the Brexit worship we're working with EMES to hopefully offer more online worship in the spirit of building connections and community across Europe in particular.

You can join our online worship at:

www.woodbrooke.org.uk/online-mfw

Online courses

Our European Quaker Voices online course, led by Jasmine Piercy and Michael Eccles, also shows the potential of online connections. The 6-week long online retreat for European Quakers saw Friends from several European countries building an online community together.

This year we've seen a broader range of Friends getting involved in all our online courses which is fantastic. We're excited at the potential online learning has to connect people all around the world to share learning and build community. Our online offering for 2020 already includes courses on spiritual practice, peace education, Quaker history, roles training and Bible study. Find the up to date list at:

www.woodbrooke.org.uk/online

European Friends at Woodbrooke

I spend a lot of my energy working with online communities but I understand the importance of place and face to face communication. This is also what we hear from Friends who visit Woodbrooke. We know of Friends from: Latvia, Sweden, Hungary, Poland, Switzerland and the Netherlands who have recently made the trip to Woodbrooke - some for courses and others to be Friends in Residence. What's great is that we have a fund to help cover the costs of Friends visiting from across Europe so if this interests you, please don't hesitate to check it out:

www.woodbrooke.org.uk/catchpool-fund/

Woodbrooke where you are

Finally, one of the things we're most excited about is our work bringing Woodbrooke closer to where Quaker communities are. Face to face gathering doesn't just have to be at Woodbrooke. Over the coming years we hope to do lots more with Quaker meetings wherever they are, including Europe. We had an excellent response to our Woodbrooke on the Road course held in Freiburg on 12 to 13 October. Delivered in German by our brilliant tutors Suzanne and Esther, it's hopefully one of many courses we can offer over the coming years, building on our existing experience of delivering workshops in Poland, Ireland, the Netherlands and Germany.

Again the Catchpool Fund can help with the costs of bringing Woodbrooke learning to your Quaker community.

If you want Woodbrooke to come your European Quaker Community get in touch! For more information see:

www.woodbrooke.org.uk/woodbrooke-on-the-road/

Diary Dates 2019 and 2020

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

Woodbrooke offers two weekly **Virtual Meetings for Worship** on Wednesdays at 9:30am GMT/10:30am CET and Fridays at 1pm GMT/CET at 2pm.

www.woodbrooke.org.uk/about/online-mfw

2019

27 December 2019 - 30 December 2019: Senior-Junior Gathering for (16-18 year olds), Quakerhaus, Bad Pyrmont, Germany emes@fwccemes.org

2020

22 February: FWCC Sustainability Online Conference: How does God call us to act? sustainability@fwcc.world

16 – 19 April: Ireland Yearly Meeting, Belfast office@quakers-in-ireland.ie

17 – 19 April: Border Meeting (German speaking), Black Forest grenztreffenCHD@quaeker.org

30 April – 3 May: EMES Annual Meeting, Paris emes@fwccemes.org

7 – 10 May: Central European Gathering, Litomysl, Czech Republic emes@fwccemes.org

15 – 17 May: Netherlands Yearly Meeting, Bennekom secretariaat@dequakers.nl

29 May – 1 June: Switzerland Yearly Meeting, Herzberg symclerk@swiss-quakers.ch

25 – 28 June: Nordic Yearly Meeting, Kungälv, Sweden au@kvakare.se

1 – 8 August: Britain Yearly Meeting Gathering, Bath ym@quaker.org.uk

22 – 25 October: German Yearly Meeting, Bonn clerks@quaeker.org

30 October – 2 November: France Yearly Meeting, Paris quakersenfrance@gmail.com

20 – 22 November: EMES Peace & Service Consultation, Bad Pyrmont, Germany emes@fwccemes.org



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

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