



Friends World Committee  
for Consultation

EUROPE & MIDDLE EAST SECTION



*Friends at the EMES annual meeting in Budapest, May 2019*

# Annual Report 2019

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# FWCC/EMES Annual Report 2019

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For up to date information about EMES please visit our website:  
[www.fwccemes.org](http://www.fwccemes.org)

For dates of Yearly Meetings and other events please see the calendar  
page: [www.fwccemes.org/calendar](http://www.fwccemes.org/calendar)

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.

### 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://fwcc.world/peru-2016/what-is-the-fwcc-world-plenary-meeting-irm>. These plenary meetings will be less frequent in future for sustainability reasons. The next is expected to take place in 2023 in Southern Africa.

### 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 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) are well-established, cooperate within the Section but remain fully autonomous.

### Clerk's Report on the Work of the Trustees/Executive Committee in 2019

FWCC EMES is a charity registered in Scotland. Those serving as Trustees of the Registered Charity for 2019 and also as members of the Executive Committee were Sue Glover Frykman (Acting Clerk from 1 January to the rise of the Annual Meeting, after which Clerk), Penny Heymans (Treasurer), Dag Hovda Sture, Lee Taylor, Saskia Kuhlmann (representing EMEYF) and Berne Weiss. The Executive Secretary is a member of the Executive Committee, but not a Trustee (in line with the EMES Constitution that was amended at the Annual Meeting in 2018).

The Executive Committee met on five occasions during the year: 8-10 March in Birmingham UK, 17 April via Zoom, 2 May in Budapest Hungary, 22-22 September in Bad Pyrmont Germany and 6 November via Zoom. Michael Eccles (Assistant Secretary until 30 September and from 1 October Executive Secretary Designate) was invited by the Clerk to attend all the Executive Committee meetings in 2019. The incoming members of the Executive Committee, Paul Holdsworth and Annie Janssen, were invited to attend the Executive Committee meetings in September and November as part of their induction into the role. Members of the EMES Executive Committee also continued to meet on the fourth Monday of each month via Zoom for a half-hour Meeting for Worship as a way of deepening the committee's spiritual fellowship and building community.

The minutes from the Executive Committee meetings and the Annual Meeting are posted on the Representatives Forum so that they can be read and shared with the respective Yearly Meetings and Groups. The Executive Committee usually 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 EMES Secretaries.



EMES Annual Meeting in Budapest

In 2019 the Annual Meeting was held in Budapest (Hungary) from 2-5 May with the theme *Living in a Foreign Land*. Some 50 people from Yearly Meetings, Monthly Meetings and Worship Groups across Europe and also from the Americas met together to consider what it means to live in a foreign land, to welcome people into our own land and, sometimes, feel like foreigners in our own land. Evan Welkin (Olympia Monthly Meeting, North Pacific YM, living in Italy) spoke to us on *Vulnerability as Witness: To be of service in a foreign land*. We were pleased to welcome Yulieed Avila of General Meeting of Friends in Mexico and Ashley Weinacht of Northwest Yearly Meeting, USA, to our Annual Meeting, both of whom were travelling as part of the Young Adult Friends Intervisitation Project. They led us in rich programmed worship that gave us an insight into their own worshipping communities. Tony Frei from Evangelical Friends Churches International in Hungary shared with us his experience of building bridges with Friends in East Africa. More details about the events at the Annual Meeting are provided in the Epistle, which can be downloaded here:

<https://www.fwccemes.org/news/emes-annual-meeting-2019>

**Staff:** Our Secretaries, Marisa Johnson and Michael Eccles, have continued to work splendidly together as a team and Kim Bond has continued to provide part-time assistance from the FWCC World Office in London. Unfortunately, Julia Ryberg, our Ministry & Outreach Coordinator was unable to continue her consultancy work with us in 2019 due to ill-health. Her contract with EMES ended on 31 December 2019 and we thank her for her long and faithful service in this role and for everything that she has contributed to EMES. When requests for visits or workshops have come from Meetings or Groups, we have asked experienced Friends to do this work and have provided remuneration from our ministry and outreach funds.

2019 has been something of a transition year for EMES, with Marisa's forthcoming retirement (on 30 April 2020), Lee Taylor and Dag Hovda Sture coming to the end of their respective 6 years of service on the Executive Committee, and Paul Holdsworth and Annie Janssen preparing to come onto the committee from 1 January 2020.

Subject to the approval of the Annual Meeting in 2020, Michael will succeed Marisa as Executive Secretary on 1 May 2020. These forthcoming staff changes have led to the need to advertise for and appoint a new Assistant Secretary to take up their duties in mid-April 2020. In November we held interviews at Quaker House in Brussels for this post and are very happy to report that Jez Smith, who lives in Geneva with his partner and son, will be joining us in this capacity. Together with Marisa and Michael, Jez will be at the Annual Meeting in Paris in 2020 (30 April – 3 May). You can read more about Jez here: <https://www.fwccemes.org/news/emes-appoints-a-new-assistant-secretary>

**Finance:** In 2019 we submitted a new application for funding to the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust (JRCT) for *Integrated Ministry & Outreach, Spiritual Growth and contribution to Core funding*. We are both pleased and grateful to JRCT that the full amount we applied for was granted for the period January 2020 to December 2022. JRCT's Trustees were encouraged by the planning that had taken place within EMES and supported the move to integrate the various elements of its work. Trustees also offered thanks to the Executive Secretary and the Ministry & Outreach Coordinator for their vital work over the last decade and acknowledged the thought and care given to the transition process.

Financial support for core activities from Yearly, Monthly Meetings and individuals is also vital for ensuring that the work of FWCC EMES continues 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 Haines Watts Huntingdon. This firm examined the accounts for 2017 and 2018 and was appointed by the Annual Meeting to also examine those for

2019. The accounts for 2018 were presented at the Annual Meeting in 2019 by the outgoing Treasurer, Martin Touwen. On that occasion we were also able to thank Martin in person for his sterling work as EMES Treasurer.

In the early autumn we received notice from Bank für Sozialwirtschaft (BfS) in Germany that the EMES Euro account would be closed at the end of 2019, due to EMES not having sufficient business within Germany, the bank's focus on serving the German NGO-sector and stricter money laundering laws. We applied to open an ethical euro account with Triodos NL, with the help of Netherlands Yearly Meeting and were informed in February 2020 that this had been successful. EMES already has a sterling account with Triodos UK. We are also grateful to QCEA for standing in the wings, ready to help if needed.

**EMES website, Facebook and Twitter:** Our EMES website (<https://www.fwccemes.org/>) is full of useful information and worthy of regular scrutiny. We are also on Facebook and Twitter, so do follow us if you are not already doing so!

**Spiritual Growth Fund** (formerly Small Grants Fund): In 2019, the Spiritual Growth Fund, which is also financed by JRCT, supported the following projects: i) A three-year project from All-Poland Friends' Gathering to deepen the sense of community amongst Polish Friends and do more effective Quaker outreach in Poland, including the preparation and printing of leaflets and booklets on Quakerism, intervisitation between the various Quaker groups and isolated Friends in Poland and a smaller and less formal gathering of All-Polish Friends in spring, in addition to the autumn gathering, ii) Stop Fuelling War, Cessez d'alimenter la guerre, with the aim of bringing Quakers together and outreach. This part of the project relates to making contacts with various European groups and using conferencing to spread the message of peace and peace building, based on our Quaker approach of listening, yet speaking directly and honestly, and iii) the translation of Ingmar Hollsing's book, Tillkomme ditt rike – en kväkare ser på Jesus, into English, with the title Thy kingdom come – A Quaker view of Jesus.

Details about how to apply for a grant from the fund and the deadline dates can be found on the FWCC-EMES website: <https://www.fwccemes.org/emes/emes-small-grants-fund-sgf>

**Intervisitation** is an important activity in our Section and we receive regular reports of this. The EMES staff and members of the Executive Committee 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 in the other FWCC Sections. Two Young Adult Friends from FWCC's Section of the Americas took part in the Annual

Meeting in Budapest aided by the new FWCC Young Adult Friends Development Fund and it is hoped that these kinds of intervisitation exchanges will continue.

**Relationship building:** On the plus side we been able to strengthen our relationship with EMEYF (see their report later in this publication) and have had many useful conversations with them via Zoom and Skype. On the down side, differences in the perception of the roles of the Executive Committee and Nominations Committee have led to a conflict situation between the two committees. Two Elders were appointed at the Annual Meeting in Budapest to help to address this and are expected to report on the progress made at the Annual Meeting in 2020.

**Partnership with Woodbrooke:** There continues to be good cooperation between EMES and Woodbrooke. Woodbrooke still hosts and provides technical and administrative support for the EMES 'Quaker in Europe' online programme, hosts the EMES online information resource and sends a staff member to the EMES Annual Meeting, where they are 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. Michael Eccles continued to do some work for Woodbrooke at the beginning of 2019 and has an EMES desk there, which helps to strengthen our partnership opportunities. Together with other Associate Tutors, Michael and Sue have regularly hosted Woodbrooke's mid-week online Meetings for Worship.

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

**Amari Play Centre, Ramallah:** The Amari Play Centre in Ramallah was a project that was taken up by the then Service Committee of the Europe and Middle East Section of FWCC in the 1970s and over the years many Yearly Meetings and individuals in our Section have supported it. When difficulties with the Palestinian Authority began to emerge in 2018, and worsened, it became clear to Friends United Meeting and EMES that a new solution needed to be found in order for the project to remain viable. The possibility of a rescue plan through United Palestinian Appeal (UPA), a US and Middle East based charity with Quaker connections seemed hopeful. However, these hopes were dashed in September when we learned that another organisation had taken over the Play Centre. We also heard that the former Play Centre staff were setting up an alternative play group in the camp on premises made available by the local Popular Committee, so we gifted the furniture and educational resources to them to enable



them to continue to serve their community. We are very grateful to the many Friends and Meetings in Europe who have generously supported the Amari Play Centre over the decades.

**FWCC Central Executive Committee:** We value our links with the FWCC World Office and the other FWCC Sections. These links are currently being strengthened through FWCC's commitment to working together as one organisation. The EMES Executive Secretary and Clerk are members/trustees of the FWCC Central Executive Committee (CEC), which meets face-to-face once a year and when appropriate throughout the year via Skype/Zoom or telephone conference. In 2019 the CEC met from 17-22 June 2019 at Camp NeeKauNees, a Quaker camp under the care of Canadian Yearly Meeting near Waubaushe, Ontario. These occasions for talking about our collective work, sharing our experiences and planning for the future are very valuable and help us to support each other in the work we undertake.

It is a privilege to serve as EMES Clerk. My hope is that we, both in our Section and 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 EMES Secretaries

2019 has been a year of preparations and transition, of looking back and looking forward, of reflecting, renewing and planning. We have achieved our task through teamwork, which has always been a very positive experience. Marisa Johnson and Michael Eccles, ably supported by Kim Bond in the World Office, have been the secretariat during the year.

Securing a further period of funding from the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust was crucial to being able to continue our work, and we are deeply grateful to Trustees for their continuing support, and for making this more flexible.

The recruitment of a new Assistant Secretary to complete the team after Marisa's retirement in April 2020 was another significant task in 2019.

The visit by two Young Adult Friends from Section of the Americas under the Young Friends Development Fund was a highlight, their ministry at our Annual Meeting in Budapest particularly appreciated. The project encountered some challenges, but with great flexibility and adaptability on all parts it was very successful and meaningful.

We held a conference for Friends who work with Children and Young People and strengthened ties with Europe & Middle East Young Friends (EMEYF). We had hoped to

run an event for teen-aged Friends towards the end of the year, but this had to be postponed for lack of participants, which was disappointing, but probably not surprising, given the challenges involved. We remain committed to pursuing this service and to looking at ways of making intervisitation between different countries easier for young people.



*Friends at the CYP conference in Brussels in July*

We took part in the Church and Peace conference in Birmingham on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2019. It was a very well attended event, with an interesting mix of topics and some inspirational input from people seeking the "uncommon ground" in their ministry.

We continued to support QCEA providing an ex-officio member of their General Assembly. We also participated in meetings of the Quaker World Relations Committee and Forum of Britain Yearly Meeting, and their Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations, which Michael joined in Limerick in June.

Michael attended Finland Yearly Meeting the Central European Gathering, and the Border Meeting in Sittard, Netherlands. Marisa participated in the gathering of Italian Quakers at Borgo Basino, on the theme of "Hospitality". She gave the introductory reflections on the meaning and practice of hospitality in the Quaker tradition, and its biblical basis. The gathering was joyful, with new participants from the recently established worship group in Florence. There was consideration of our feelings about

“personal space”, the fear of intrusion, and the narrative of “scarcity” which prevails. Friends were invited to challenge these assumptions: “there is space for everyone, and this must be shared so that basic life-supporting needs are met, and not desires that may be potentially never-ending”.

### Digital Tools

A great deal of work has been done in scoping the range of needs EMES has for digital tools, and what is available on the market, free and paid for. We have discovered that the “simplification” of working with on-line tools can be very complex! This work is ongoing!

### Ministry and Outreach

We were very sad indeed that Julia Ryberg was not able to return fully to her role as our Ministry and Outreach Coordinator in the final year of her contract. We kept in touch with Julia and asked her guidance on issues when necessary. A book of memories of Julia’s service to EMES was compiled and will be delivered to Julia during a visit in February 2020.

Both secretaries increased their working week to cover some of the work of the Ministry and Outreach programme, and enlisted the help of other Friends to carry out some of the pastoral visits. Kathryn Lum, member of the International Membership Application Committee, visited Barcelona. Jasmine Piercy worked with Pavel Marusinec (Prague meeting) updating the Czech and Polish versions of the Quaker in Europe course. The Czech version ran in the autumn and the Polish version is planned for 2020.

### Among Friends

Three issues – 144, 145 and 146 were published during the year, with the valued help of Alastair Reid.

### Amari Play Centre

The fate of this project featured very large indeed throughout 2019. Following many years of increasing problems with making payments to maintain the work of the Play Centre, it had been hoped that governance and responsibility for the management of it could be transferred to a local charity, United Palestinian Appeal (UPA), whose Director is the current clerk of Ramallah Monthly Meeting. At first the United Nations Works and Refugee Agency (UNRWA) seemed well-disposed to allow the transfer of responsibility to happen, and preparations for this were well advanced. However, at the last minute permission for this was not granted, and the Play Centre, which had already been closed, could not re-open under new leadership.

The Executive Secretary visited Ramallah together with the Director of Friends United Meeting (FUM) from the United States, to thank the staff for their work over many years, and arrange for the payment of their severance pay. It was a sad and poignant time, the end of an era, after faithful service dating back to 1974.

### International Membership Matters

The International Membership Application Committee – IMAC – met three times during the year. The membership of two Friends living in Crete was re-instated, after we succeeded in making contact with them. The membership of a former resident in Hungary was terminated as contact had ceased after their move to Canada. There is a new application for membership from Georgia, which is pending.

We have been asked to consider in each Section the status of “Monthly Meetings” and Recognised Meetings.

### Peace & Service Consultation



*Friends walk in the woods near the Old Abbey Kortenber*

This year’s peace & service consultation took place in November at the Old Abbey Kortenber, just outside Brussels. 22 Friends gathered to consider *public witness* and in

particular how we protest. We heard from three different Quaker organisations about their methods of protest against the arms trade. Alongside walking in the lovely autumnal woods we also carried out a mini-review of the consultations. Overall Friends were positive about the consultation and wanted to find ways of including more people in it and also improve communication through the year between face to face consultations.

*Marisa Johnson and Michael Eccles*

### Some Quaker Addresses in Europe

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### Reports from Yearly Meetings, Monthly Meetings and Groups

#### Belgium and Luxembourg Yearly Meeting

BLYM continued to expand and grow in 2019. We are now a three-Meeting Yearly Meeting with thriving groups in Gent and Luxembourg.

One of the highlights of our year was our annual Residential Yearly Meeting held in Drogenen, near Gent from 15-17 November 2019 at which representatives from all three Meetings were present – this was a first for very many years and was wonderfully uplifting and encouraging as we have felt somewhat discouraged in recent years by the fact that our Yearly Meeting was shrinking.

Our speaker, Paul Parker, spoke to the themes of “Living adventurously” and “Trusting the Light in our daily lives”, sharing his spiritual journey and reminding us that language can sometimes be a hurdle to our understanding of the process of seeking the Inner Light. He encouraged us to simply seek the language or metaphor that speaks to us wherever we are on our spiritual path, always remembering that the power of transformation and embracing of the Inner Light may well be a gradual process.

Paul also reminded us that we need to learn to be brave, to take our Quakerism out to the wider world trusting we can come back to the Quaker community for replenishment. Being led by the Light may not always feel comfortable but we must have faith in the discomfort and embrace the change that this may bring about.

We left the Yearly Meeting feeling refreshed and looking forward to walking “cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in everyone.”

One more highlight of our year was the outdoor Meeting for Worship and Community picnic organized by one of our Young Friends. We met in the park opposite Quaker House, Brussels, on a warm, sunny, June day, listening to the gentle sounds of life going on all around us, smiling at the interested passers-by. Our picnic was a delightful feast of whatever Friends chose to bring and share and we took some wonderful moments away from the stresses of daily lives to share our food, community and lives.

Outside of these activities, we have been preoccupied by Eldership and Oversight and how we achieve the fulfilment of these roles and responsibilities in a Meeting that is so relatively small. We are slowly beginning to see our way forward through a process of study and discernment, but are realising, yet again, that these things cannot be hurried. We must simply have Faith and trust in the process – it is sometimes a nerve-wracking process but how wonderful to see the outcome, unexpected as that may sometimes be.

We have continued to support the work of several of our Friends who are extremely active in the practical support of migrants in Brussels, arranging housing, hosting, feeding and aiding in so many other small ways that it is impossible to enumerate.

We were, of course, desperately worried by Brexit and the implications of this for those of our Members who would not be able to request Belgian nationality. This worry has not lessened, although many of us now have dual citizenship, a status that does not necessarily sit comfortable with some of us and we continue to support those who find themselves in worrying or precarious situations.

*Ruth Harland, Clerk*

#### Britain Yearly Meeting

At the start of 2019, the Society of Friends in Britain Yearly Meeting was a community of 21,575. There are 12,666 members, 7,433 attenders, and 1,476 children not in membership indicating that there has been a 14% decline in the total in the last ten years. Awareness of these changes has been one reason, among wider trends, behind the current focus on looking at what we can do to ensure that our meetings are vibrant and welcoming, whether large or small and that our church serves these meetings’



needs simply. One major step this year was discerning to decentralise BYM's work by aiming to have a local development worker within reach of every meeting in Britain, in the next five years. See for more:

<https://quaker.org.uk/news-and-events/news/moving-in-a-new-direction-1>

Britain Yearly Meeting, held at Friends House in London in May 2019, encouraged us to look through the lens of privilege at climate justice, and at diversity and inclusion. A Junior Yearly Meeting Minute reminds us that "the exclusion we may create is not intentional, but it doesn't mean we aren't responsible for it. There is a feeling Quakers are passively inclusive. Our testimony to equality makes us complacent." (JYM 2019, Minute 1)

Eden Grace, Global Ministries Director for Friends United Meeting (FUM) gave the Swarthmore Lecture entitled 'On Earth as it is in Heaven: The Kingdom of God and the Yearning of Creation' which reflected the theological, spiritual and biblical grounding of Friends' witness on climate breakdown. The lecture can be seen here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T9BDWIRKxYg> The YM epistle ends "Let us begin to understand what it means to be in unity with others and with the whole of creation, acting out of love rather than duty or fear. It's all about Love."

Keeping all of this in our focus, the strategic priorities for BYM as shown in the Meeting for Sufferings minutes continue to see us encouraging thriving Quaker communities: supporting Quaker meetings and other groups to be diverse, to thrive and grow within a sustainable and peaceful world, working with and on behalf of Quakers. This requires simple structures and practices in our local and national organisation. All work needs to be distinctively Quaker; integrated locally, nationally and internationally; and well-governed. See <https://quaker-prod.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/store/5f87b07995ee9191fc8a692c583e18a56427c7b45ff032deff9056a108db> for more on trustees' work.

The climate emergency was also high in our concern in 2019 – as part of our Yearly Meeting theme, and a concern taken on by many Friends as part of their individual witness – the Meeting for Sufferings minutes for the year record the names of Friends who were arrested on Extinction Rebellion actions, marking their contribution to calling for urgent action. We were also glad to welcome Arne Springorum (in person) and Ludwig Bon Quirog (virtually) to our Yearly Meeting this year. We know that those who heard them speak movingly on climate justice and privilege were moved by their witness.

The value of intervisitation between Friends from different Yearly Meetings to both the visitors and the host communities was noted by Meeting for Sufferings this year. The members of Quaker World Relations Committee who were able to participate in the EMES Annual Meeting in Budapest and our Friend Arne's participation in Yearly Meeting and a programme of visits around Britain demonstrate the spiritual value of such exchange. We were also glad to welcome visitors from other parts of the world family, including Friends from Kenya, Mexico and the USA.

Meeting for Sufferings minutes show the range of concerns that are active in Britain Yearly Meeting; sustainability, assisted dying, diversity and inclusion and post-truth issues. See: <https://quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/meeting-for-sufferings/papers-and-minutes> for more.

2019 has been a busy and challenging year, and we hope to build on it in the coming year and beyond. We look forward to welcoming many of you to the University of Bath for our Yearly Meeting Gathering from the 1-7 August 2020. Inspired by our Junior Yearly Meeting, the gathering theme is "Listening, prophecy and reconciliation: allyship in a climate emergency." We are eager to see where the spirit will lead us, together.

*Ann Floyd, Clerk of BYM's Quaker World Relations Committee*

### Central European Gathering

The Central European Gathering has been evolving towards a regional meeting from a bridge-building started by Friends from Austria, Czech Republic and Hungary and EMES, gathering isolated Quakers and groups in central Europe and dating back to the late 1990s. Now our meetings are attended by Friends from Austria, Belarus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, the Ukraine and the United Kingdom.

Central European Gathering includes Friends and friends of Friends from places and countries with different Quaker experiences. So during our meetings we share and try to inspire each other – person to person, group to group – how to live our Quaker testimonies in our everyday lives, how to let our lives speak.

As has become our tradition in the last years we met three times in 2019, twice at the preparatory meetings in Brno and Bratislava and once at the main meeting in Radenci (for the first time in Slovenia). Starting this 23rd CEG we also started to have a fully planned programme for children.

During 2018/19 we asked Friends to look at several topics and queries related to the organization of our gatherings (main and preparatory meetings). Based on it we

prepared an on-line shared document, hoping that this collection of ideas might serve as a basis to prepare CEG organization and structure guidelines in a more formalized way.

We grow up as the gathering, becoming something more structured than an annual gathering of Friends in Central Europe, so Friends agreed to create new roles of records clerk and representatives to EMES and QCEA.

We try to outreach, and also stay close one to another and share our events via fb: [Quakers in Central Europe](#).

*Kasia Kaczmarkiewicz*

### Czech Republic, Prague Meeting

Our activities were centred in Prague, with an average meeting attendance of 5-6. Children are very important, as are visitors to Prague, who can now stay in our Meeting space – look out for adverts in *The Friend*.

### Funded projects

This rent is an important source of income, as in 2019 we used, or earmarked, the last of the Bader Philanthropies funding ([www.bader.org](http://www.bader.org)). The Single Parent Project, our first Bader project, now has one volunteer counsellor and the Meeting provides food packages. We maintain links with a local networking organisation ([www.hearth.net](http://www.hearth.net)), and our Meeting space is a centre for the exchange of goods. Dutch Friends provide welcome support in these 2 projects.

Our newest commitment is to the Czech Extinction Rebellion group in recognition of the huge threat climate emergency presents to our planet. *The Prague Peace Trail* ([www.praguepeacetrail.org](http://www.praguepeacetrail.org)) - available as a popular website, as published booklets in Czech and English, and as a leaflet - was followed by US students from Prague's Charles University, walked by other groups who contacted the authors directly, and by attendees at the Bertha von Suttner conference (<http://bertha.praguevision.org/en/>)

We published *On being a Quaker* in Czech, are still updating the Czech Wikipedia pages about Quakers and finalising a translation from the Dutch of Erik Dries's book, *Simply Quakers*.

A third project, the development of Quaker-friendly materials for children, (funded by Bader and an EMES small grant) is progressing well. The work to date was presented at Woodbrooke's Quaker studies conference in June. In Brno, 5 *Variety and understanding in the children's library* workshops were attended by a total of 50 children with carers.

The facilitators of *A Sudanese and a Czech in conversation about Islam, migration and life in Europe*. discussed racial and cultural diversity with students in two schools outside Prague.

With 2 local organisations, we commemorated the 1938/39 refugee crisis and the Kindertransport, where Lucinda Martin (German Yearly Meeting) described the significant Quaker involvement. We launched video clips on *Prague Shared and Divided* (<https://migrationonline.cz/en/about/project/prague-shared-and-divided>) and showed a movie about the 1989 trains taking East German refugees from the Prague embassy to freedom, drawing parallels with the current European and world situation.

### Beyond the Czech Republic

The Central European Group (CEG) had 2 preparatory meetings in the Czech Republic, and the April AGM in Slovenia. Friends attended German YM, the All-Poland Gathering, QCEA meetings and the EMES Annual Meeting in Budapest. Arne Springorum attended Britain YM as guest of its World Relations Committee and spoke at several UK meetings.

### Regular commitments

We participated in the Night of Churches, the fierce debates about what Quakers believe making up for the small number of visitors. December's carol singing under Charles Bridge was well received.

The end of our Bader funding brings to a close a vibrant and sometimes difficult time for the Prague Meeting. We look back in gratitude at our achievements and forward to new projects, and especially to a continual renewing of the spiritual and meditative force underlying relationships within our Meeting and beyond.

*Liz Coling, Clerk*

### Denmark Yearly Meeting

The YM website is: <https://www.quakercloud.org/cloud/kv-kerne-vennernes-religi-se-samfund> and the email address is [kvaekerne@gmail.com](mailto:kvaekerne@gmail.com)

### Europe & Middle East Young Friends (EMEYF)

2019 saw our spring gathering take place in Russia, the culmination of several years of being led, and hard work in planning the gathering. 25 adults and 10 children came together in the tiny village of Peski on the Baltic Sea to consider the theme of building bridges. We were lucky to experience Russian Orthodox Easter traditions, explained to us by the wife of a Friend from St Petersburg, who also told us about his experiences of being a Quaker in Russia. Meetings for worship and bonfires on the beach, not 500 metres from where we were staying, were further highlights. As we were very much a

multi-age, and multilingual community, the gathering epistle was composed of a puzzle, each piece decorated by a participant, and the more traditional text. Together in our final business session we completed the puzzle to form a river, crossed by a bridge which bore the text portion of the epistle in Russian and English.

Our Annual Meeting took place in Brussels, with Quaker House filled near to capacity with 25 participants, several attending for the first time. The meeting felt both gathered and relaxed, as we worked in various ways to reshape our community and structures to reflect our values. We agreed to test a flexible pricing scheme for our 2020 gathering, in order to increase the transparency of our financial planning and accessibility of our gathering, as well as looking at pricing for children, advice to planning committees, and safeguarding. In amongst our business, we had time for singing, worship and creative fusions in the Willy & Penn workshop.



*EMEYF Friends at Spring Gathering in Russia*

The Spring Gathering epistle and minutes from both events can be found here, for those interested: [http://www.emeyf.org/documents\\_new.html](http://www.emeyf.org/documents_new.html) In-between gatherings, Willy & Penn is our community forum for sharing our witness, reflections and experiences, as well as hearing from wider members of our Quaker community. Our editorial team work hard to make sure that <https://willyandpenn.com/> is updated every

fortnight or so, so make sure you're subscribed if not already. Recent contributions include a spiritual self-care A-Z (a product of the AM workshop), a sustainability testimony train on Earth Overshoot day and easy recipes for groups (a key part of any EMEYF gathering.)

EMEYF has also worked with EMES to build on our connections in 2019, a process that we hope will remain strong in the coming years. As a result, EMEYF appointed its first representative to EMES, at our Annual meeting in November. We're sure you will all make Liam (Brighton) welcome at the 2020 EMES Annual Meeting in Paris.

We're looking forward to what 2020 will bring; a special summer gathering in Finland, another intense autumn weekend and all that keeps us connected in between.

*George Thurley, on behalf of EMEYF Communications Committee and the wider community*

### **Estonia – The Tallinn Meeting Group**

Estonia's Tallinn Friends Group meets once a month, if possible. Whenever we are preparing for an important event or campaign, we meet more often. Four to six members are regularly at the meeting. Foreign exchange students in Estonia are interested in our activities and attend meetings. We do not have a centre of our own and we meet at Friends' homes, cafes, and in open parks during summer. In 2019, we hosted Friends from the United States, Switzerland and Russia. A very memorable meeting was with Friends Nigel Kelly and Tanausu Herrera from the United Kingdom. Tanausu has walked 10 000 kilometres across 13 countries in Europe. At our meeting, we discussed the importance of peace, how to achieve peace across borders, and the significance of peace in a multicultural world. Our members Merle Veesalu-Rand and Tiina-Helje Veisserik participated at EMES Peace and Service Consultation in Kortenberg, Belgium, where they shared experiences and presented "We are in metamorphosis". Roland Rand was a peace delegate to the cultural festival Kumbh Mela at the invitation of India's government. On United Nations International Day of Peace, September 21, we participated in the world environmental clean-up activity Teeme ära (Let's do it). We are translating the collection of George Fox's epistles into Estonian. Seventeenth century English is a challenge for the translator and we hope that the Estonian edition will be good. We have received the first donation from our USA Friend Adolph Hoehling. Starting this year, Estonia is a member of the United Nations Security Council and can contribute to the discussions on important issues. Estonian Friends continue to emphasize that conflicts must be resolved by non-military means. We continue to plan meetings that address different nationality and human rights topics. In the past, we organized "A Peace Dialogue in Eastern Europe". We hope to continue with the Alla Soroka led Ukraine project that is based on a youth peace

camp idea. Among the goals next year is to introduce Friends to youth organisations and universities.

*Roland Rand*

### Finland Yearly Meeting

We send greetings from Finland to all F/friends throughout the Section and beyond. In 2019, Friends in Finland held weekly Meetings for Worship in Helsinki and in Tampere in the southern part of the country and the Northern Friends worship group met from time to time in the northern parts of the country. In 2020, we will also have an additional monthly meeting in Espoo.

During the year, the Yearly Meeting gathered twice for both business and spiritual enrichment. The Spring Gathering was held around the theme of *Building community* and the autumn theme was *Where is my spiritual home?* In these events we were fortunate to gather together Friends from local meetings, other Yearly Meetings as well as from EMES to share experiences and learn from one another. We look forward to continue these in the future.

In Helsinki, the local group gathered every Sunday. The main venue has been the Peace Station, a centrally located building which houses several peace movement organisations. In 2019, the first meeting each month was held in the neighbouring city of Espoo for an easier access to Friends from that direction. Meeting groups in both cities have grown active and starting from 2020, we will have meetings every week in Helsinki and monthly in Espoo. In October we organised an ecumenical walk together with the Anglican Church to promote peace and friendship while getting to know one another.

*Tampere Group* met in 2019 on 35 Saturdays, with breaks for holidays and in summer. The meetings had seven people on average. Usually after the silent worship, a rich discussion on spiritual and societal themes took place over coffee and tea. Sometimes the group had a set topic and a short introduction to Quaker history and perspectives. Several meetings had children's activities so that both parents and children could easily attend. Tampere Group has served actively in Quaker activities in the YM. Especially the biannual gatherings outside Tampere require the locals' activity. The group has continued to promote the Quaker message of light, peace and service through members' activities in local congregations and networks in the Tampere region and in daily meetings with people.

*Northern Friends* continue to care for each other mostly by prayer and email, but have had more frequent meetings for worship of late. Between Christmas and New Year,

they arranged now almost a traditional day of travel, worship and fellowship in Kokkola, when Roger Hill from Totnes meeting was also with them. There have been some additions as a few members and attenders from the Helsinki Group have moved in the region. We look forward to 2020 with positive hearts, grateful for the gathered silence. One of our members expressed it this way: *worshipping together with you, feels like coming back to my roots.*

TS Elliott captures something similar at the end of his Four Quartets:

*We shall not seek from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.*

*Ari Kurlin Niiniahio, Representative*

### France Yearly Meeting

**We are growing.** In addition to our regular meetings for worship in Paris, Toulouse and Congénies, the Nantes meeting is now a recognised and thriving group. A new team of clerks - (Michael O'Connor, clerk; Lesley Lawton, co-clerks, and Kim Chevalier, Correspondence clerk) were able to 'cut their teeth' this year, after practical training from Friend Judith Roads. The Centre Quaker de Congénies continues to play a vital and welcoming role, thanks to the loving attention of resident friends Marie Lebacq and Nick White and the local worship group; the Centre Quaker International (CQI) in Paris remains a centre of Quaker life in France.

**We continue our editorial and outreach work.** Our book *Expérience et Pratique*, released at our 2018 Yearly Meeting in Paris, now guides and inspires us in our daily work. Our newsletter, *La Lettre des Amis*, continues to be source of interest and pleasure for all. In addition, we are engaging more on social media as we reflect on the best ways to bring our message of the immanence of the Light to the world.

**We work towards peace.** Examples of concrete actions in 2019: Toulouse Quakers organised a training weekend on the Alternatives to Violence Project; the Nantes group hosted talks on supporting prisoners and peace-building in Africa; Paris friends give financial support to peace allies and offered public lectures on cyberwar and early Friends at the International Quaker Centre (Paris). FYM also publicly called into question the arms industry in France and arms sales to Saudi Arabia and we support the aims of Stop Fuelling War.

**Gatherings inspire us to action.** The theme of the 2019 YM in Paris was 'Enabling Action through the Quaker Way.' Speakers Helen Rowlands, Jude Kirton Darling and Carla Goffi helped us explore our commitment to social action. Part of our discussion touched on the role of the committees, the 'engines for getting to where we want to



go'. FYM discerned that it was time to revive our Peace and Service Committee, now moving ahead.

We also sent representatives to the EMES and QCEA and Great Britain yearly meetings and the EMES Peace & Service Consultation 2019. After participating in the cross-border gathering of Friends from France, Germany, Netherlands and Belgium, we are looking forward to the 2020 edition in Strasbourg.

**We want to include more children/families.** France Yearly Meeting is welcoming more and more families with children, especially in the Nantes and Paris groups. Therefore, some Friends have started a reflection on the spiritual accompaniment of children in local groups, in the hope of supporting and comforting parents. A working group has started to think about improving communication and outreach to support newcomers. Our hope is that the Society will become more and more inclusive.

The path of life invites us to live in the Light.

*Michael O'Connor, Clerk*

### Georgia Worship Group

In this difficult period for Georgia, we, as part of the global world, are experiencing together turbulent processes related to the domestic political aggravation of life in Georgia. At present, when our country is between the two fires of the opposition and the authorities, the concept of peace is more relevant than ever, in which, despite all the difficulties, we never stop believing. The concept of peace is the only true one in our understanding, especially considering the grinding of both demographic and social, in a peaceful consensus we see the salvation of our country and the preservation of its cultural environment. This year, in part due to the difficulties met by our country and the people, even more united our Group and strengthen our Faith to the challenges that have been and will be, and which touch every one of us.

Our small Group is concerned about the processes in Europe and the world, and it is very important for us to realise that we have Friends of similar views and beliefs. We, as before, are deeply convinced that our Quaker tradition, unity and support can strengthen our community and make a modest contribution to world peace.

*Friends in Georgia*

### German Yearly Meeting

The highlight of our Quaker year for many members in the German Yearly Meeting is the Annual Meeting in autumn – a chance to reconnect with F/friends, to re-energise and regain inspiration in workshops, discussion groups and in silent worship. Our theme in 2019 was "When words break through silence - words and deeds as Quaker faith". About 200 people were in attendance in Bad Pyrmont in early October, including over 40 participants under 18, as well as delegates and guests from Belgium/Luxembourg

YM, Norway YM, France YM, Britain YM, Ireland YM, Netherlands YM and Swiss YM. The Richard-Cary Lecture was given by our own Ursula Seibold-Bultmann, who, in her talk entitled "Daring words – language and Quaker faith" encouraged us to make an effort to understand the language of early Friends while simultaneously seeking our own creative and contemporary way of expressing ourselves.

Self-expression has not yet led to a shared understanding as the future of our "Quaekerhaus" in Bad Pyrmont, the only Quaker meeting house in Germany, continued to be discussed by GYM Friends in 2019. We seek our path forward and a clear leading as to how this historic and beloved building should be best utilized – or indeed whether it should be maintained at all. The issue is deeply complex and the search for consensus goes on. The membership is even considering the possibility of calling an extraordinary general meeting devoted entirely to this question.

Other concerns which were in evidence in 2019 related to the continued presence of atomic weapons in Buechel, where a group of GYM members participated in demonstrations calling for their withdrawal, and the plight of refugees attempting to reach Europe by sea, to which the Yearly Meeting responded with a letter to the leaders of the Protestant denomination in Germany, endorsing their decision to deploy a rescue boat in the Mediterranean Sea and thanking them for their commitment in this area at a time when the European willingness to accept more refugees is declining. Another form of ecumenical outreach was reflected in the Yearly Meeting's decision to become an official member of the Working Group of Churches and Religions after many years of holding a mere observer status.

Friends rejoiced this year in developments among our young people. The 12-18 age group participated in a pair of seminars focusing first on the roots of Quaker witness and then on ways of putting it into action in the modern world, such as through demos. The feedback has been very positive. Meanwhile, the older age group of 16-18 year olds planned, with the support of EMES, a gathering of European "Senior-Juniors", which unfortunately had to be cancelled due to not enough people registering.

Through their contributions at our annual meeting, our young people have illustrated how deeply rooted they are in the spirit of Quakerism. Their commitment to life and climate protection inspire and move us all.

*Annie Janssen and Karin Hönicke, Representatives*

### Hungary, Budapest Worship Group

We stopped our regular monthly meetings in February. As there were only two or three of us we decided to meet from time to time and to keep connection with the Central

European Gathering (CEG) and other larger Quaker groups and institutions. For example, Katona Eva took part in the Woodbrooke course: "Nurturing Authentic Spirituality". I was regularly involved with CEG preparatory meetings and the annual CEG meeting held in Radenci, Slovenia. We also keep connections with Quakers in Serbia (modest in number). We helped to organise the EMES Annual Meeting, which took place in Budapest in May 2019 and were very pleased to be able to contribute in this way.

*Vera Varady*

### Hungary, Evangelical Friends Church in Tolna

Every month, we visited our churches and house groups. Our local pastors are responsible for the church meetings every week. We are 5 pastors (*Frei Antal, Tóth Attila, Fehér József, Mihálovics József, Mezei Géza*) and 4 evangelists (*Freiné Ági, Horváthné Szilvi, Tóth Mánuel, Nagyné Frei Bettina*). (In Serbia, we have some good young translators from English to Serbian.)



*Children's day in Tolna*

In EFC Budapest, we started Children Church Meetings one Sunday a month and Youth Church Meetings also one Sunday a month. We invite new unbeliever families and youth. God's blessings on the African mission also continued in Hungary and we have shared reports about it in several different kinds of churches, schools, community centres and also on television too. In 2020 we are planning to go to Africa again, so please pray for us!

We had some conferences/evangelistic/baptism church meetings and our General Assembly/ Yearly Meeting in Tolna, in April and November. Our pastors and co-workers gave reports about their missionary work. We encouraged and prayed for each other.

We lead RE lessons/Bible studies at local primary schools and have 7 classes. We would like to have local pastors, leadership, worship (music) groups in every church and make them grow! Last summer, we had Children Days again in every church. These were very blessed.

We started to rebuild/renovate our Church House/EFC Mission Centre in Tolna. Last year we had a big problem when the water pipe broke next to our church house causing the wall of the house to sink. We continued to renovate our EFC Gypsy Mission Centre in Kölked and worked together with the pastors and co-workers there. We held Christmas Church Meetings in every church and gave away more than 1,000 calendars and about 300 Christmas packs and 200 Christian booklets.

We also have good cooperation with the Trinity Bible Society in London. They gave us many calendars for use in our churches. Also, we can give them to our new contacts and in our new mission stations.

Thank you for your prayers and for your partnership in the Mission. We are very grateful to God for You!

*Pastor Antal Frei*

### Ireland Yearly Meeting

One highlight of 2019 for Ireland Yearly Meeting was two trips to "1652 country" – the region of northwest England where the Quaker movement began. The trips took place in June and August 2019, and a total of 35 Irish Friends went on these "pilgrimages". Everyone felt the trips very enjoyable and worthwhile, and we are planning another one for August 9-13, 2020, just after Britain Yearly Meeting. We hope that some other EMES Friends may join us!

The EcoQuakers Ireland Committee hosted a one-day gathering in Belfast in October, entitled "Love and Despair: Actions and Responses to Climate Breakdown". This was attended by over 60 people, including both Quakers and a significant minority of non-Quakers. Following on the success of this event, the EcoQuakers Ireland Committee is planning on holding similar gatherings in Cork on May 23, 2020 and in the Dublin area later in the year.

We were also pleased to host a meeting of the Quaker Committee for Interfaith Relations (QCCIR) of Britain Yearly Meeting in Limerick in June 2019. This has led us to consider how we might contribute more widely to inter-church and inter-faith activities.

Our Yearly Meeting in 2019 was held in Dublin. We are looking forward to holding Ireland Yearly Meeting at Stranmillis University College in Belfast for the first time during April 16–19, 2020. You are very welcome to join us!

Overall, our membership is roughly constant or very gradually falling – however, the number of attenders is slowly rising, and we are also encouraged by the fact that the numbers of members in some regions of the Yearly Meeting are significantly increasing.

Ireland Yearly Meeting encompasses the entire island of Ireland – both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. This puts us in the unique situation that part of our Yearly Meeting will be within the European Union and part out of the EU after Brexit. We are committed to ensuring that such political differences don't interfere with the unity and harmony of our Yearly Meeting.

*Ireland YM Representatives*

### Italy: Bologna Worship Group

We meet regularly twice a month (the 2nd and the 4th Sunday of every month) in via Lombardia, 36 – Bologna [in the “School for Peace” Library of Quartiere Savena] from 11:00 a.m. We are happy to say the new informal worship group in Florence has been meeting regularly for one year now and we had joint meetings for worship in Bologna and Florence (last September and November). The contact person is Kirsten Hill at [koohills@hotmail.com](mailto:koohills@hotmail.com)

Every two weeks we promoted a convivial, public meeting with readings of inspirational texts from classical sources and different spiritual traditions. The work in Dozza prison (Bologna), started by Pier Cesare Bori (more than 15 years ago), with the inmates (initially from the Middle East, most with long detention sentences) is still carried on by Fabian Lang, once a week, regularly, and from 2018 a similar work and training of volunteers was undertaken by Fabian Lang in Ferrara, for the local prison.

Members of our meeting are involved in supporting migrants, assisting and hosting them, teaching Italian and helping with legal papers and procedures. One member Mauro Bonaiuti ([mauro.bonaiuti@unito.it](mailto:mauro.bonaiuti@unito.it)) still works for the Degrowth Movement, and Evan Welkin is involved in developing the theme “Helping the Helpers” which concluded its year-long programme organised from Quaker House in Brussels in September 2019 (another member, Cecilia Clementel, was a staff member in the programme). Unfortunately the realisation of a Medical Charity Centre in Weh, in North-West Cameroon, has been halted due to the civil war in Cameroon, but our concern for the community has been re-directed towards the internal refugees from Weh in Yaoundé (the capital) and in Tiko and we support the campaign “Io sto con il LUPO che... vuole

andare a scuola” / “I am with the WOLF that... wants to go to school” fund raising through the bank account: BIC ICRAITRRST0 IBAN IT18L0707202403021000097168 re-registered to Associazione Universo based in Bologna (managed by our member Fabian Lang) For more information “ambulatorio medico per Weh” on Facebook Last Christmas (2019) Fabian Lang continued the initiative of the Christmas dinner with the refugees in Bologna (with the financial help of the writer Stefano Benni, too), involving more than 350 people, this year too the event had a local media coverage (RAI TRE). We are planning for and we invite you to our Annual Meeting of the Quakers in Italy next Friday 28th, Saturday 29th to Sunday 30th August 2020 at the “Fattorie Faggioli” (near Forlì, Italy) - see their website or contact Evan Welkin at [e.welkin@gmail.com](mailto:e.welkin@gmail.com)

*Lucia Biondelli*

### Latvia: Liepaja Worship Group

The core of this group is five people, which has come together regularly once a month for several years. Although only one of us is a Quaker and others have their own affiliations, we have found silent meeting to be a unifying stage for our meeting once a month, after which talk and share our thoughts and insights.

*Inese Ansule, International Member*

### Malta Worship Group

Things are much the same with us here in Malta. As always, it is great when visiting Friends make contact and join us in Meeting. This year we have had visits from Canada, the States and of course the UK. It is harder to be joined by the Maltese who prefer their Catholic faith.

*Piers Headley*

### Middle East Yearly Meeting, Ramallah Monthly Meeting

Ramallah Friends “Quakers” Meeting (RFM), built-in 1910, and its Peace Garden, will always be a symbol of peace and a ministry of hospitality in Palestine. We welcome many people from all walks of life, backgrounds, religious beliefs and political influences, who joined us for hours of silence, tranquillity, and breaking bread together. It is our way of growing and strengthening our focus on peace and justice. In 2019, Ramallah Friends Meeting hosted many groups, whether by attending the meeting for Worship or meeting privately with Jean Zaru, who is a peace activist and known for her non-violence and interfaith dialogue. These topics are of great interest to undergraduate students and academic study groups. Among these groups were the Swarthmore College student-faculty study group, the Max Carter Group that usually volunteers for the spring-cleaning of the Meeting House and garden. The Quakers Voluntary Action group, during their annual olive season trip, visited the meeting and assisted in the olive picking at the RFM.

In 2019, RFM hosted both local and Quaker organisations from different parts of the world through Meetings for Worship, academic sessions with Jean and other speakers, and by taking part in work activities. In order to strengthen current ministries and develop new ones, a new position of Outreach and Programme Coordinator was established in August. This position, filled by Mai Zaru, a member of the meeting and a special education teacher will address the following areas:

**Community Service:** Targets students with disabilities both individually (one-on-one) and in nearby local organizations. **Intervention:** Aims to prepare students with severe physical and intellectual disabilities to gradually transition into society with minimal turbulence. This suggests working on a wide spectrum of social and functional skills through literacy.

**Empowerment:** Encourage young youth to participate in an enrichment program where scheduled (after-school) sessions are held to support middle school students.

**Outreach:** In strengthening the Friends Centre presence in the community, scheduled visits will be made to some organisations in the community. In lending a hand to these designated NGOs, the Outreach and Programme Coordinator will represent the meeting by offering services that include participating in major events, organising and contributing a block of time for professional development, and holding activities at both the organisation and the annexe of the meeting, several times throughout the year.

**Ministry:** Targets individuals attending Friends Quaker meeting. **Sunday School:** hold Sunday school at RFM for the children that attend. It will consist of reading children's books and participating in an activity that will introduce them to Quakerism. Meeting Activities include holding mid-week meetings, Christmas pot luck and other activities that rejuvenate the social life of the Quaker meeting.

**Young Friends:** Targets the youth in providing volunteer opportunities and activities to enhance their social life. Volunteer opportunities for instance, olive picking in nearby villages. Social activities may include, movie night, book club or games night were young students have the opportunity to come together, relax and brainstorm ways to become assets in society.

So far, the early stages of the programme look very promising. Special needs students are served individually at the annexe of the meeting house in addition to weekly visits to other partners in the community. This service is provided free of charge as a new ministry of the meeting. We hope that this programme will continue to develop and expand its reach targeting different sectors of Palestinian Youth.

*Saleem F. Zaru, Clerk*

## Netherlands Yearly Meeting

2019 was a year with many activities in our small Quaker community. As always, we held a Quaker retreat in the beginning of the year. Our Annual Meeting was held in May in De Bosbeek, in the wonderful environment of Bennekom in the middle of the Netherlands. The theme was: *Quaker zijn nu* (Being a Quaker Now). We heard about the 13 year long process of updating our *Quaker Geloven en Werken*, our equivalent of Quaker Faith and Practise. At the end of 2019 the book was printed and at our next Annual Meeting it will be presented.

In September we organised the Border Meeting in Sittard, in the south of the country. The theme was: Quakers and Art. We heard about the different ways in which Quakers were and are active in art and creative expressions and participants were invited to join in artistic activities.

We are still developing stronger ties with the Dutch Mennonites. In November we held a meeting with Mennonite World Work (*Doopsgezind Wereldwerk*) at which we heard about the modernisation of nuclear weapons. We signed a paper with four statements against this modernisation which we sent to the Dutch Council of Churches. We also decided to renew our support to the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) together with other churches and Pax, the coordinator of the programme in The Netherlands.

In November we held our Autumn Meeting at which we discussed the vitalisation of our spiritual development. How can we stimulate each other to grow in the spirit? We also looked at the organisation of our Yearly Meeting. It is becoming harder to maintain our level of activity with our ageing membership. Filling our vacancies is becoming more and more difficult. We will have to set priorities and be more flexible and practical in our organisation to avoid too much stress on our members. On the other hand we want to give more space and support to new initiatives. We need to develop more coherence in our activities and our communication with the outside world through our renewed website, our monthly journal and our use of social media. We also discovered that we still need to improve our way to deal with conflicts in a more Quakerly way.

*Wils't Hart and Hans Weening, Representatives*

## Norway Yearly Meeting

Here in Norway we are looking back on a "normal" year, after our anniversary in 2018. There has been quite a lot of activities in the various groups throughout the country; in Oslo we had a weekend this spring, gathering Friends from the whole country, both in Bergen and in Agder the group has been active in an inter-faith group and many Friends



have participated on various demonstrations throughout the year. We have also celebrated two Quaker weddings.

A new group of Junior Young Friends has started to meet. At the moment they are just two, so hardly a group, but we hope to make this group larger by cooperating with Swedish Friends.

We have been working with how our Yearly Meeting is structured and whether it is time to do some changes. This is something we have not finished with yet, and are still in the middle of a working process concerning this theme. We are also concerned about the climate, and challenge Friends to think about what each of us can do and how we can live our lives. This is an important concern and was also connected to the theme at our Yearly Meeting. This was held in Seljord, Telemark with approximately 70 participants from the age of 6 months to more than 90. The theme for the meeting was "With hearts and minds prepared".

We had a gathering in the mountains of Telemark for the 20<sup>th</sup> year this autumn. This gathering is an important weekend for many of us, as there is time to be together, time to talk, to play games and to go for walks in the mountain. At the same time this weekend gives time for Worship and for talking about how to live our Quaker lives in this world today.

*Hanne Hognestad, Clerk*

### Poland – Poznan Worship Group

Affiliations: The Group is an independent indigenous Quaker foundation in the Liberal Quaker tradition. It collaborates most closely with the Central European Gathering (CEG), the All-Poland Friends Gathering (APFG), and EMES/FWCC. The Group also has links to the Animal Kinship Committee of the Orange Grove Friends Meeting (California), and the Quaker Esperanto Society (Kvakera Esperanto-Societo – KES).

Special Activities in 2019: The Group participated on 21 September in the annual Night of Temples programme, which seeks to permit minority religions to present themselves to the general public.

*Bradius V. Maurus III*

### Portugal, Lisbon Area Informal Worship Group

We have a Facebook and a Meetup (49 members) page. We are struggling to gain more regular members. We have several who come maybe once a month and others who come very occasionally. We tried to accommodate those in Lisboa by splitting our Meetings between Lisboa and Estoril. We picked up one regular attendee and two

occasional attenders that way, but usually it is the three regular attenders of Estoril who attend both. We often have visiting Quakers attend Meeting.

The plan for 2020 might be to find a worthy cause to support in our community that would bring more sense of meaning to our Meeting and also to come into contact with more people of the community, who may become curious about us. We are not evangelical, so proselytising is not what we do. So in sum, increasing regular attenders is our current challenge.

*Thomas Murray*

### Russia, Moscow Monthly Meeting

Our small monthly meeting had over 2019 an active life. More young people started to come to our meeting. Our Young Friend, Alex Lipatov, contributed a lot of his energy organising the Europe & Middle East Young Friends Spring Gathering 2019 which was held near St Petersburg. A central theme of this gathering was *Building Bridges of Friendship in Europe*. Alex Lipatov and I worked helping LGBT people in Russia and in particular collaborated with Claude Bruillot, Radio France correspondent in Moscow, on preparing a radio programme about sexual minorities in Russia. For this reason we visited Nizhni Novgorod where we established good contacts with young activists from a local LGBT community centre. Speaking about myself, I continued my friendship and cooperation with peacemaking activists from Donetsk. I monitor with them how things going on in Donbass (South-Eastern Ukraine).

Starting from July we had a few visitors with whom we had a fruitful worship sharing: Alexander Vassiliev from Lvov (in Western Ukraine), Andrei Leonenko from Kiev (Ukraine), Nicky Penty from Australia, and Edwin Tham from Singapore.

In the autumn we established good friendship with the muscovite congregation of Apostolic Orthodox Church (a minority dissident branch of Russian Orthodoxy) <https://xn--80a4ab0a.xn--p1acf/> and from time to time have had worship sharing together.

*Misha Roshchin, Clerk*

### Spain, Madrid Worship Group

2019 wasn't a very good year for our Meeting mainly due to unending illnesses: of one of our attenders, my brother, myself... Also, another attendee left the Group. However, we had different visitors who care and keep in touch with us and we appreciate it enormously.

As I am writing this in January 2020, it seems that this new year starts more

optimistically and with a strong faith we keep Meeting for Worship attended by newcomers interested in Quakerism.

*Carmen Alcalde*

### Sweden Yearly Meeting

This year has been a year of many retreats, information afternoons and Days of Learning, not only in Stockholm and Svartbäcken, but also around the country in smaller Meetings. However, also small Meetings can grow and in e.g. Gothenburg, Meeting regularly gathers 25 or so Friends or friends of Friends. Our YM has this year welcomed 7 new Friends into membership, in the south, west and in Stockholm.

This summer, Sweden Yearly Meeting held its 85th Yearly Meeting at Svartbäcken. The theme was Worship and we explored various ways in which to have worship and aspects of our way of worship.

After a number of years of being dormant, our Peace Committee was restarted. A letter to our government was sent urging them to rethink and reconsider and then to sign and ratify the UN convention on the abolition of nuclear arms.

Many individual Friends are quite active in the work with refugees and asylum seekers and Swedish Friends also officially co-signed a letter from the Swedish (Lutheran) bishops to the Migration Office to defend the right for asylum and stop the expulsion to Afghanistan.

Quaker Service Sweden has been a committee within the Society since the start but has now, due to administrative reasons, started the process of becoming a juridically independent organization, although still with close links to our Society.

One member has received a grant from the Spiritual Growth Fund to publish his Swedish book on a Quaker view of Jesus in English. The translation is finished and the work to find an appropriate publisher is in progress.

We all look forward to the Nordic Yearly Meetings Gathering in June 2020 and hope Friends will join us.

*Annika Hollsing and Solveig-Karin Erdal, Representatives*

### Switzerland Yearly Meeting

The 2019 annual gathering of Switzerland Yearly Meeting was held 7 – 10 June again at the Haus für Bildung und Begegnung, in Herzberg near Aarau. The theme was

“Peacebuilding today and QCEA” and included talks, workshops, role-playing, music, and as a special activity for the children a visit to the “Umwelt Arena” an environment centre which is a mixture of exhibition and Hands-on experiences. The weekend was enriched by guests from QCEA, Britain, Germany, France, and FWCC-EMES.

Another significant gathering was our retreat, held from 8 – 10 February at Montmirail near Neuchâtel on the theme “About Meeting for Worship, Silence and Vocal Ministry.” which was conducted in both English and German. A very special occasion was the “Night of the Religions” held in Berne on 9 November. Berne Quakers backed up by Friends from other meetings took part in this interreligious event with a presentation about silence, some shared silence with the visitors and by answering lots of questions from the visitors. The autumn meeting of German speaking Friends was held on 10 November on the theme “The message of George Fox by his epistles” The spiritual life of the 3 German-speaking groups was again enriched by regular visits of an Elder who lead talks on spiritual themes.

We are almost 90 Friends and almost 100 friends of Friends included on our mailing list. The average age remains high (over 70). There are four regional groups (Bern, Basel, Geneva, and Zürich) and small worship groups in Lausanne, Ligerz and Romanshorn. Organising the SYM Annual Meeting is rotated between the German-speaking groups and Geneva Monthly Meeting and in 2019 was carried out by the German speaking groups. There are three Business Meetings a year, the principle one taking place during the Yearly Meeting, which is attended by about 40-45 members and representatives of other Yearly Meetings and Quaker organisations. The two other Business meetings are held in the spring and autumn and are attended by about 10-15 members. The spring meeting focuses on planning the Yearly Meeting and acceptance of the accounts from the year before. The autumn meeting deals mainly with the budget and nominations for the next year.

Two publications continue to be produced several times a year, Entre Amis and News and Views of Geneva Friends, which contain much information about the activities of Swiss Friends. Similar to the multiple languages used at SYM Annual Meeting, these publications contain articles in German, French and English, reflecting the multilingualism that is both a strength and a challenge for the Quaker community in Switzerland.

*Karen Taylor, Representative*

## Reports of work around Europe

### Church and Peace

In February 2019 Church and Peace (CaP) together with the Fellowship of Reconciliation UK organised a meeting in Birmingham, UK, where we spent the day discussing societal divides in the UK and how we can overcome them under the theme *‘Let us do what leads to peace and builds up our common life’ (Romans 14:19) - ‘Peace is not a fairy tale – we need to make it happen’*.

Under the theme, *‘I will give you future and hope’ (Jeremiah 29:11) - 70 years of living nonviolence and resisting militarisation*, CaP celebrated its 70th anniversary with 150 members, friends and guests at the conference and celebration in Berlin. Many warm greetings reached us and encouraging addresses and input challenged us to develop concrete ideas for the future.

In the run-up to the EU election, CaP developed a ‘position checklist’ as a resource to help approach candidates on the parties’ electoral lists and to critically enquire as to what they will stand up for when they are elected to the European Parliament with regards to strengthening non-military, non-violent crisis prevention; European arms exports; Migration and asylum. Also, CaP co-initiated the broad civil society campaign ‘Save the European Peace Project’ – in November, 23,191 signatures supporting this appeal were handed to the new MEPs. We keep following the developments of the EU, which continues to make plans to invest more money in military options instead of strengthening civil conflict management mechanisms.

CaP was involved in discussing peace and the peace witness of the churches on national, European and international level, such as at the Peace Conference of the Conference of European Churches (CEC) in Paris in September 2019 or at the World Assembly of Religions for Peace in Lindau in August. There is a need for a clear witness of nonviolence as a spiritual and political alternative to legitimising violence as a last resort.

On behalf of CaP, David Forbes will be part of CEC thematic reference group on ‘Social justice and labour’ and Kees Nieuwerth of the group on ‘Economic and ecological justice and a sustainable future’ until 2023.

A focus of CaP’s participation in the German Protestant Kirchentag in June was the International Peace Centre (IPC), which emphasised that nonviolence works. The IPC featured peace church voices from Europe and around the world, including members of CaP. One panel discussion showcased successful nonviolent action for peace, justice and reconciliation. In other events, Stop Fuelling War lifted up the link between global

conflict and (European) arms exports, while Christian Peacemaker Teams presented their work on Lesbos, Greece, and their strategies to undo oppression and overcome structural violence. Network members joined 2,500 people who, in a long human peace chain, took to the streets to call for disarmament and the implementation of the UN Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty. In August, CaP called on Churches and communities in Europe to support this historic treaty *‘For a world without nuclear weapons’*.

*Lydia Funck, General Secretary*

### Coalition for Work with Psychotrauma and Peace

Our emphasis during 2019 has been on the migrant situation, on the specific long-term situation in Vukovar and surroundings, and on our Pragmatic Empowerment Training (PET) program to increase capacity for people in communities for giving psychological assistance. We are one of the few groups providing long-term psychological assistance and education without charge to beneficiary communities. We see work on psychological trauma as key to peacebuilding. Unfortunately, donors, governments, and non-governmental organisations don’t share our views. We struggle for funding. We have sufficient funds to get us through 2020, but we don’t know what will happen in the future.

This year, there has been little progress in reconciliation. If anything, ethnic tension has increased in the Western Balkans, encouraged by politicians. As we wrote this report, there were elections in Croatia that were expected to negate reconciliation. The politicians concentrate on the period 1991-1995 and not on the future.

The economic situation in the region, aside from at the Croatian coast, is deteriorating. Virtually nothing is being done about the psychological situation. High doses of drugs are being given. These reduce the symptoms to a small degree. There is almost no talk therapy. The new generation is being affected by the trans-generational transmission of trauma and negative narratives from parents, teachers, and politicians. There is a great deal of nationalism everywhere in the region.

The situation with regard to migrants everywhere in southern Europe is deplorable. Living conditions inside and outside the official camps are inhuman. There is virtually no access to the official camps for NGOs. Psychological assistance is particularly frowned upon, and there is little if any available. There are violent pushbacks that have been condemned by human rights organisations. Volunteers are untrained and psychologically unsupervised, and are present for very short periods. We are trying to work with various groups, notably No Name Kitchen and Advocates Abroad.

We feel strongly that Quakers urgently need to begin a programme to work with migrants themselves and those assisting them, including in integration in Western Europe.

We are continuing to translate our PET programme into self-paced online courses. The results can be seen on our website as they appear. We write a monthly report on all activities, available on our website and Facebook page. We are starting to work with Friends and others in the DRC and South Africa. We also have an online group with people working with the children of sex workers in India. Our clients here mostly are those who have been abused as children, compounded by the effects of the war. We continue the supervision of several other therapists.

This year, we have given seminars for the Universities of Osijek, Belgrade, and Olomouc (Czech Republic). We have had several articles in *de Vriendenkring* (the Dutch Quaker monthly), have given a paper for the InPACT conference, and have had a chapter on trauma and peacebuilding published. We have had associations with Hans van Nieuwkerk of Refival, working on refugee solutions, with the Global Psychosocial Network of Psychologists for Social Responsibility, and with Dimitar Anakiev, a Slovenian physician working with refugees. We wrote a report for the Peace and Service Consultation of EMES. Personally, we were visited by Sytse and Marlies Tjallingii. Charles has started to attend the Northeast Netherlands Monthly Meeting online monthly. We have mourned the death of two good F(f)riends this year, notably Erik Hummels from The Netherlands, with whom Charles cooperated as a medical advisor, and Bobbi Kendig, from California, who, with another Friend, started Cedar House, the first programme in California for abused children and their carers.

Internally, we have been concerned with funding, and with survival. While we have sufficient funds for 2020, we do not know what will happen beyond that. Our personnel consists of Charles Tauber, Sandra Marić, and a new administrator/designer, Aleksandra Terzić. We need more personnel.

In 2020, we will be concentrating on working with migrants and those assisting them, on the situation in the Western Balkans, and on continuing to create the PET program to increase capacity on psychological issues for vulnerable groups, especially for people without previous education. Unfortunately, we will have to spend time on funding issues.

Also, in 2020, we will be commemorating 25 years of the existence of the CWWPP. We will try to find the time to write a document about our work.

Charles David Tauber

### Friends House Moscow (Dom Druzei)

This year saw the growing and strengthening of social organisations and initiatives in Russia. On the other hand, the authorities did not allow these organisations to implement their programmes and did not want them to be active in the political sphere. Thus, the interests of the government and those of society were in conflict and in August and September we could see many protests in Russian regions: ecological demonstrations in the north of Russia, anti-church rallies in Kazan, and political protests in Moscow.

**Outreach** was an important part of our work this year. We were active online spreading the information about Quakers using our usual ways of online communication and exploring new ones. We can see that the number of participants of Quaker groups in Facebook and V Kontakte increases, as does the number of mailing list subscribers on [quakers.ru](http://quakers.ru) website. Now we have a new section for audio materials there.

We printed several new titles of Quaker books including *Friends for 300 Years* by Howard Brinton and *Minority of One* by Harvey Gillman. Now that we have a three-year publication plan we work according to it and this makes our work more predictable. The books were distributed in Moscow and sent to other places on request.

We regularly used our office for two **projects**: AVP Moscow and Meditation of Friends: *AVP Moscow*: It was very active this year, much more so than in previous years. We helped them in advertising their workshops which were held in our office. We want to continue this support in the future.

*Meditation of Friends*: These meetings were held regularly one to two times a month. They would usually draw about 10 participants who were happy to express their spiritual ideas in the friendly atmosphere. These meetings became the place where people feel safe speaking about spiritual ideas openly; this is not possible in their ordinary life.

*AVP Ukraine*: We supported several programmes held by AVP Ukraine. However, this organisation is now very effective and spread out and its support comes from many sources. We are in regular connection with its facilitators and can see how they work from the stories and photos on their [Facebook page](https://www.facebook.com/avpukraine).

We actively supported *Integrational Centre for Refugee and Migrant Children* in Moscow. They have applied for official registration which would give them more possibilities of support. At this time, FHM and Quäker-Hilfe are their only funding



sources. We technically supported a new Russian [Альтернативщик.рф](#) for COs. We financially supported *English Club* educational programme in *Big Change*, Charity Foundation for former residents of orphanages.

We tried to be active in **raising money** for our projects inside Russia which is comparatively new for us. It was difficult but we got positive and encouraging results.

*Sergei Grushko & Natasha Zhurenkhova*

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

The Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA) works to bring a vision based on the Quaker commitment to peace, justice and equality to Europe and its institutions. 2019 proved to be a fruitful and exciting year for our advocacy work, through which we continued to make the case for humane, sustainable peace and human rights policies at the European level.

At the beginning of the year we developed and launched a pilot project aimed at responding constructively to anti-migrant hate speech on the internet. Conscious of the consequences of hateful misinformation being spread by social media, #ChooseRespect targeted voters on Twitter with positive, fact-based messages about migrants and refugees and encouraged politicians to Tweet more responsibly about the issue. The initiative was timed to coincide with the European election campaign, in which populist parties relied heavily on hostile narratives about people on the move. #ChooseRespect ultimately reached over 1.1 million European voters, and was selected as a “showcase project” at the Council of Europe’s World Forum for Democracy in November.

One of the priorities of our Human Rights Programme has been to address challenges to the fundamental rights of people on the move in Europe, particularly in the context of violent treatment by police and security forces. This led to the publication of *Framing Human Policing*, a publication which explores the issue and calls upon Europe’s police services to uphold the rights of all people they interact with. *Framing Human Policing* has already been translated into multiple languages – including Croatian, responding directly to the particular problem of violent policing in the Balkans. This version of the publication was recently featured on the most followed nonprofit portal in South-East Europe, *Mreža za izgradnju mira* (Network for Building Peace). The site is visited by 100,000 unique visitors each month.

Our Peace Programme has begun a research partnership with Newcastle University on the importance of inclusive peacebuilding, with an emphasis on the need for gender-sensitive conflict resolution approaches. We have spent several months interviewing

numerous key stakeholders – from policymakers to academics – with a view to creating a series of videos and an accompanying report on the topic, which will form a base for our advocacy as we seek to shift prevailing narratives about peace and security. We expect these outputs to be launched in Brussels in April 2020.

We continue to organise events which bring together Europe’s Quaker community and equip them with a greater understanding of how European policymaking influences the issues which matter to them. We held a very successful Study Tour in March 2019 which responded to the questions raised by Brexit, and our next Tour will explore how Europe can address polarisation and division more broadly. Further, in September 2020 we will be co-hosting a conference with Quaker Peace and Social Witness (QPSW) on the theme of Peace Education, another key element of our Peace Programme’s current work plan. More information about this will be circulated to our supporters in the near future.

*Martin Leng, Communications and Fundraising Coordinator*

### Quaker United Nations Office and Committee (Geneva)

In 2019, QUNO’s Human Rights & Refugees programme was focused on improving implementation of rights. To close the gap between standards and treatment of children of parents sentenced to death or executed, we clarified the existing international law in a legal standards paper and converted this into a series of briefing tools for those whose work impacts children. For conscientious objectors to military service, our focus has been to close the gap between the existence of the right on paper in countries where it is recognised and the possibility to exercise it in practice. This June, we welcomed a report delivered to the UN Human Rights Council, that included a checklist for States to ensure human rights-based procedures for implementing the right to conscientious objection. Finally, our work to support the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, freshly agreed in December 2018, focused on how to best ensure effective follow up and review.

Our Peace & Disarmament programme continued work to encourage a more holistic approach to preventing destructive conflict and sustaining peace at the international and local level. In 2019, our primary initiative has involved supporting peacebuilding actors to engage in the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process. In January 2020, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan and Sweden came up for review and we worked with civil society organizations, UN agencies and other States throughout the past year to get peacebuilding language embedded in human rights recommendations. Our hope is that, by including peacebuilding analysis throughout the process, the UPR can be a source of early warning and conflict prevention.

QUNO's Human Impacts of Climate Change programme continued to offer quiet diplomacy at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) negotiations. In June, in Bonn, we provided an off-the-record dinner for a diverse group of negotiators from 19 countries to more openly and personally discuss sensitive issues. At the major conference in Madrid in December, we engaged one-on-one with negotiators to promote fair and ambitious action and distributed *A Government Official's Toolkit for Urgent Climate Action (2020 edition)* to help negotiators communicate the latest climate findings back in their capitals. We also published *Human Rights Based Climate Action*, a leaflet to show how rights-based approaches to forming climate policy can create more effective, sustainable and fair climate action. We also continue to maintain [quakersandclimatechange.com](http://quakersandclimatechange.com), which showcases what Quaker communities around the world are already doing on climate change and sustainable livelihoods.

In April, QUNO launched the Sustainable and Just Economic Systems programme, which seeks to expand upon our past work on trade and sustainability to build trust and understanding between countries and in the multilateral trading system. In 2019, we undertook a scoping exercise that included consultations with more than 100 experts in economic systems and trade to surface potential areas of focus where QUNO could add value. Among the topics that emerged as possible areas of further exploration, included: World Trade Organization (WTO) reform and in supporting negotiations on the elimination of subsidies that lead to overfishing, and specifically on reflecting in those negotiations the interests of the approximately 90 million people whose livelihoods depend on small-scale fisheries. During Geneva Peace Week in November, we also organized a side event on the topic of "trade for peace" and the role of the private sector in peacebuilding.

*The QUNO team in Geneva*

### Quaker United Nations Office and Committee in New York

QUNO's and QUNC's work in New York is the subject of this report. It primarily focuses on peace building and the prevention of violent conflict. QUNO has its long built up knowledge about the workings of the UN, its relationships with key allies and its quiet diplomatic approach. QUNO can rely on deep Quaker knowledge and on long-term connections and cooperation with Quaker organisations such as AFSC, FWCC and others.

In 2019 QUNO prepared a new 2020 – 25 five-year strategic plan: *Quiet Diplomacy at the Frontiers of Peace*. The staff and committee are now developing a phased implementation plan, working out the details. The QUNC played an active role in this development process. It was again an important opportunity to confirm, that peace is

one of the testimonies of Quakerism - and as such is the unique contribution of QUNO's activities with the UN.

The Strategic Plan envisions three priority areas for engagement: 1) *Building Ecosystems for Peace*, 2) *From Crisis to Strategy*, and 3) *Peace in Practice*. The Plan reviews the structural, organizational, and financial requirements for achieving impact over the next five years. Key among these requirements are strong links with Quaker communities and Quaker organisations (with particular emphasis on AFSC and FWCC), committed multi-year core funding, and connections with peace building practitioners and partners who directly accompany communities affected by violence, injustice, and exclusion.

In 2019 the QUNC was engaged in discussing and reflecting the process of developing this strategic plan as well as all other peace building activities of QUNO New York. In November the committee agreed to revise the QUNC guidelines to provide for the establishment of an Executive Committee. This responds to the fact that timely deliberations and decision-making have become more challenging in the light of only one single face-to-face meeting each year, coupled with periodic teleconference meetings. An Executive Committee will help QUNO operations proceed more smoothly during a period of accelerated and expanded activities and deliberations around strategic planning, programme planning, budgeting, finances and fundraising, and key partner relationships.

In 2020 QUNO will closely monitor and engage with the UN process of the review of the UN peace building architecture, which the UN Secretary General will present in a report. QUNO will also continue its ongoing work with the Joint UN-Civil Society Working Group on peace building and sustainable peace and the Civil Society-UN Prevention Platform. It will continue to develop a scope of work focusing on human rights and prevention, along with a general scoping of issues for programme priorities in the context of implementation of the Strategic Plan.

*Jalka (with gratitude quoting from the QUNC report by Cheryl Morden and Hezron Masitsa)*

### Quaker Voluntary Action

It seems a cliché to start by saying that 2019 seemed like a busy year for Quaker Voluntary Action, but it's also true! Our theme for the year was 'God in the movement of peoples', and this was a thread running through all of our working retreats, regardless of where in the world they were, or what kind of work the volunteers were involved in. Our reflection sessions focused on ideas of home, displacement and belonging, and where the Spirit sits in all of this.

Some of our working retreats were explicitly about supporting those who have been forced to flee. We worked with Help Refugees in Calais in July, and went again to Calais in November to volunteer with Refugee Community Kitchen, when the July working retreat was oversubscribed by double! These were enriching experiences, and ones which brought us into contact with other volunteers who were living in northern France for sometimes months and years, dedicating their time to this cause. We had judged that a lot of Friends wanted to volunteer but did not want to go on their own for the first time, and that turned out to be right we think.

Displacement and belonging are of course always themes that come up during our (usually) annual working retreat in Israel-Palestine. We went in October to help pick olives and to meet peace activists, enriched by a particularly international group this year of Friends originally from Ireland, Germany, Greece, the USA, Scotland, Wales and England.

A QVA group spent a day with volunteers working in a soup kitchen in Bologna at the end of a week on an eco-farm in Italy, run by Quaker Evan Welkin and family. Closer to home, volunteers spent five days working on the meeting house garden in Leighton Buzzard, with what sounds like remarkable results. And we also took our regular trip to Swarthmoor Hall in the autumn, 'digging deep into Quaker history and the earth'.

Through it all, I have been constantly amazed by the power that working together has on relationships. Getting your hands dirty is, it turns out, an amazing catalyst for connection with others. Tiredness engenders openness and vulnerability (as well as sometimes stress!), and we are trying to offer opportunities that give us a chance to live out our testimonies.

In 2020 we will repeat some of these events, whilst adding new opportunities, including a working retreat decorating a house for use by asylum seekers in Sheffield in February, an eco-study tour in Freiburg in September, and a long weekend in the garden of a recovery community in Scotland. Check our website for info on all of these.

(We continue to update our blog with reflections from our various events. Check it out here: <http://qva.org.uk/blog/>)

*Hannah Brock Womack, QVA Coordinator*

### Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre

Woodbrooke is looking to the future and how we can bring our learning nearer to Friends. We are really happy that so many Friends from beyond Britain Yearly Meeting have been able to participate in our online courses over the last year. We are especially

pleased to be working in partnership with EMES to offer a third online Meeting for Worship.



*Woodbrooke*

Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre continues to host a variety of learning events. However, we are aware that many Friends find it difficult to justify the cost, both in money and the environmental impact, to travel to Birmingham. Some of you may have participated in our learning survey last year and we are always keen to learn from you all about ways in which we can make our learning more accessible.

We have a thriving postgraduate programme through our partnerships with the University of Birmingham and Lancaster University.

We have also welcomed over the last year, Friends from EMES offering service as Friends in Residence at Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre.

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.

*Sandra Berry, Director*

**Bank accounts & how to contribute 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.

**Sterling:**

**Bank name:** CAF Bank

**Bank address:** 25 Kings Hill Avenue, Kings Hill, West Malling, Kent. ME19 4JQ UK

**Account Name:** FWCC EMES

**IBAN:** GB73CAFB40524000025578

**SWIFT/BIC:** CAFBGB21XXX

**Account Number:** 00025578

**Sort Code:** 40-52-40

**Euro:**

**Bank name:** Triodos Netherlands

**Account Name:** Quakers (may be changed later to include FWCC-EMES – to be notified)

**Bank address:** Postbus 55, 3700 AB Zeist, Netherlands

**IBAN:** NL90TRIO0788863819

**SWIFT/BIC:** TRIONL2U

**Please note that EMES' account with the Sozialbank in Germany is now closed!**

Please contact the FWCC EMES Office or the Treasurer, Penny Heymans, for further information or to inform us of bank transfers you are making via [emes@fwccemes.org](mailto:emes@fwccemes.org).



