

# Among Friends

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Exec Secretary: Michael Eccles, Woodbrooke, 1046 Bristol Road, Birmingham B29 6LJ, UK michael@fwccemes.org Tel: +44(0)7934 310715

## All change at EMES

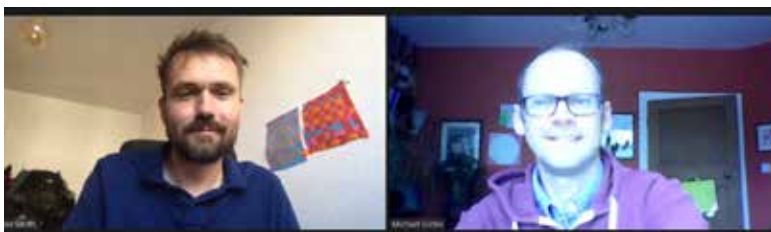
### Dear Friends,

It's been a busy few months at EMES! Since our last edition we have held our first ever online annual meeting and had a change of personnel. Marisa Johnson retired from her role as EMES executive secretary, which she has held since 2008, on the 30th April. Jez Smith (see page 2) joined EMES as the new assistant secretary on the 20th April and Michael Eccles was appointed as the new executive secretary during the annual meeting on the 1st May.

Additionally, we have a new acting clerk, Saskia Kuhlmann of Netherlands YM, who has been appointed in this role until later this year, taking over from Sue Glover Frykman who stepped back from this role in February after five years of service clerking EMES. We also welcome Peter Spreij as the new EMES assistant treasurer.

Of course the world beyond EMES has changed in ways that we had never expected due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the lockdown that most of us have been living under. Many of us are becoming far more accustomed to meeting online, whether for regular meetings for worship or to catch up with friends and family.

Meeting online can be a very inclusive experience, for example at the EMES annual meeting we had some Friends who only came because it was online, making it



*Jez Smith and Michael Eccles Photo: Michael Eccles*

a larger and more geographically diverse event than the one that would have happened in Paris. It was a much cheaper event and had a much lower carbon footprint than any in person event could have done.

However we need to remember Friends who are excluded by online meetings like these; Friends who don't have the right technology in their homes or good enough access to the internet, or who don't have the money to pay for these things. The EMES executive committee recently agreed to set up a digital equality fund to help support Friends who may be excluded from online meetings:

*[www.fwccemes.org/news/emes-launches-digital-equality-fund](http://www.fwccemes.org/news/emes-launches-digital-equality-fund)*

With so many meetings happening online during lockdown this has enabled intervisitation at a level that would have been unthinkable before. I have met with Friends in a number of different countries on Sundays, visiting Belgium & Luxembourg one week and Friends in Moscow on another occasion. We now have a page on our website where you can find details of meetings around the Section that are open to visitors - do take a look if you have time: [www.fwccemes.org/calendar/online-meetings-for-worship-around-europe-the-middle-east](http://www.fwccemes.org/calendar/online-meetings-for-worship-around-europe-the-middle-east)

Once again this edition of Among Friends will be electronic only as we are not able to post it out during lockdown. We apologise to any Friends who are missing the paper version!

Meanwhile I hope that you are keeping safe and well and I look forward to meeting some of you in person when we are once again able to.

Michael Eccles , Executive Secretary,  
FWCC-EMES

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## Meet Jez Smith, EMES' new Assistant Secretary: A birdwatching Quaker

I am sitting in the middle of a busy street in suburban Geneva, watching House Martin nests. Earlier this year I signed up to volunteer for a project with the Swiss Ornithological Institute to record House Martin nests. This bird is listed as "Near Threatened" in Switzerland. Each volunteer received a postcode zone and was required to check as many of the buildings as possible for nests and to record activity at nesting sites.

I was given a list of nests found in previous years, which made my job a little easier. But I decided to be thorough and in recent weeks I have walked 20 kilometres of streets looking for nests. I found just one that wasn't in the records.

There are several sites in Geneva that the House Martins come back to every year. One is a line of 19 artificial nests under a balcony. Another has eight nests. A third has two sets of 10 nests on different sides of one building. I spend a lot of time at these sites, sitting still, watching. Watching nature, even in a bustling city brings me closer to God. Practising solitude is an important part of my being a Quaker. Yes, I enjoy and need the practice of worship in a community but I also need time alone. Despite, or because of, enjoying being a busy person and doing a lot of different things I need to practise solitude. Going alone, making communion with God. For me, solitude is different to simply being alone or loneliness. It is an intentional act on my part.

Coupled with the solitude is the silence. I can identify with St John of the Cross who wrote in the 16th century that "silence is God's first language". With a regular practice of silence, with others or alone, I learn to recognise the divine voice and to hear it. Two different skills and a lifelong practice.

I am a busy person. I know that I commit to too many projects. I find it very hard to hear the advice from Britain Yearly Meeting: "Attend to what love requires



*Jez Smith*

*Photo: Jez Smith*

of you, which may not be great busyness." So I need to make myself stop with a conscious act and be still.

I am certain that without these inner practices I would not be able to live my best outward life (which could always do with some improvement). Life is a balance of inner and outer practice. They inform each other. They exist because of each other.

As a birdwatcher and as a Quaker I have to be prepared to sit still for a long time. I need to practise silence too. And, I have to be comfortable with solitude. When I am still, silent and in solitude I can be aware of the quiet things. A small movement or the call of a bird. A stirring within. Words from God. It is a way of life that I would not be without.

### **A reminder that EMES has changed contact details:**

FWCC-Europe & Middle East Section,  
Woodbrooke, 1046 Bristol Road, Selly Oak,  
Birmingham B29 6LJ, UK

Email: [michael@fwccemes.org](mailto:michael@fwccemes.org) & [jez@fwccemes.org](mailto:jez@fwccemes.org)  
Tel: +44(0)7934 310715



## Message from the FWCC Europe & Middle East Section Annual Meeting held online, 1-2 May 2020

### To Friends everywhere,

Meeting online for Annual Meeting 2020 has been a new and perhaps daunting experience. It required a lot of hard preparatory work. We have learned together as a community throughout the two days. The success of a meeting is not about the food, weather or working computers; it comes from the opening hearts of all who participate and supportive behaviour.

The theme, discerned last autumn: "Heeding the prophecy of our sons and daughters, daring to dream dreams and see visions" (Joel 2,28) has needed re-interpretation. Realising our privilege, giving ourselves space to connect in different ways with each other and to open ourselves to the spirit in the future is our task now. We have been given an opportunity through the wake up call of Covid-19 to create new ways of working towards a more just and equal world and a more resilient society. What is God calling us to do? How can we as a Quaker community in EMES grasp the gift that Covid 19 has offered us? Let us allow ourselves to be swept forward in God's grace.

Lindsey Fielder Cook of the Quaker United Nations Office Geneva told us a story at our Annual Meeting. In 2015, she was working with negotiators on the Paris Agreement on climate change. Conditions were tense. Lindsey went with her daughter to the river in Bonn and they collected some pebbles. They brought the pebbles home and painted on them the words "Courage and Compassion for all." They gave these pebbles to negotiators who they were working with. In Paris, different negotiators came up to Lindsey independently of each other to show her that they were still carrying their pebbles with them with a constant reminder of the message, courage and compassion for all. Even a year later she

still got shown the pebbles by negotiators when they saw her. Small acts can make a big difference.

We have a responsibility to work together for a better future. We must name injustice. We will pass a beacon of light to the next generation. What are the legacies to leave to our sons and our daughters?

We leave our Annual Meeting refreshed and ready to face new challenges. We are strengthened by our time together and we look forward to meeting again in Paris in 2021 while experimenting further with online ways of meeting in the future. Let us dare to dream with courage and compassion.



Group Photo from the Zoom meeting

Photo: Michael Eccles

## A Testimony to the Life of Brian Kendall

*Terry Wood*, Canterbury LM, Britain Yearly Meeting writes:

Brian was born in 1935 in Finchley, North London. He moved with his family to Leeds as a teenager then entered University College London to read German.

Whilst in London he met Anne, who was in training as a nurse. They were married when Brian was 22 years of age, initially living in London then moving to Buckinghamshire in the early sixties. They had three children, Mandy, Robin and Peter. Brian had a number of jobs, ultimately a very significant one was in the offices of a company handling asbestos. He also worked for Sainsbury's in the department looking at time and motion, workplace efficiency.

Having been born into a Methodist family, Brian discovered and espoused the Quaker faith during his early married years.

In 1970 he got a job with Honeywell and the family moved to Amsterdam for a year, then back to the UK for two years. By this time the UK had joined the European Economic Community (EEC) and Brian obtained a post in the European Commission Directorate of Overseas Development working on third world development projects and on European migration policies. The family moved to Brussels and this remained a family home until Brian's retirement in 1995.

Whilst in Brussels Brian was responsible, with a few others, for the establishment of a Brussels Local Meeting of the Society of Friends, initially meeting in the homes of the members. This grew and again Brian helped establish a Belgium and Luxembourg Monthly Meeting, which later became a Yearly Meeting.

The same group of Friends also saw a need for a Quaker voice in Brussels advocating Quaker values to the European institutions based there and set up the Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA). Brian remained a member of its Bureau (executive body) for many years and with others managed the acquisition of an 1890s house, rich in art nouveau features but initially very dilapidated. This became and remains Quaker House, the home of QCEA and of the Brussels Local Meeting. Being a very enthusiastic woodworker and handyman, Brian undertook much of the renovation of the building in his spare time.

An enthusiastic and talented singer, he, with others from the European Commission, set up *The Commissionaires*, a male unaccompanied singing group. One of his Brussels

friends and associates, Richard Condon, who still attends Canterbury Meeting from time to time, recalls how, at a celebratory dinner for the 30th anniversary of QCEA, Brian climbed onto a table and sang *If I Were a Rich Man* to the astonishment of the assembled company.

During their stay in Brussels, Brian and Anne acquired Fairfield House, a mediaeval 'aisled hall' in Eastry in Kent and they spent holiday periods restoring the house and adjoining cottage. They also acquired property in the South of France and, on Brian's retirement, shared their time between Eastry and France. In both locations Brian had an extensive collection of woodworking and construction tools of considerable value.

In retirement he also continued his concern for migration and worked as a volunteer supporting adult asylum seekers in the Dover detention centre, visiting individuals regularly and, with others, establishing a generous fund to stand bail for migrants awaiting the outcome of their asylum applications. One successful applicant, a man from West Africa, Brian continued to support to the end, helping him find work, housing and furnishings.

Ever keen to be a mover and shaker in concerns over migration and other Quaker concerns Brian sought to enliven Friends House in its advocacy. He met the then parliamentary liaison officer and recording clerk suggesting that a research department staffed by young Friends as (paid) interns be set up to facilitate a more informed line of advocacy, but this was seen as impractical. He did, however, make a big input to a Quaker refugee support group, sharing information and advice to meetings through a social media account.

Sadly, whilst in France in 2017, Brian became ill, an illness which turned out to be mesothelioma, the result of repeated exposure to asbestos 60 years previously. This was to take his life. It did, however, bring a considerable financial windfall as an industrial injury and much of that money Brian gave for the support of asylum seekers stranded in Calais and Dunkirk, along with all his tools, which were dispersed to Calais and to a refugee support centre in Ashford, mainly to aid in skilling refugees to facilitate their gaining employment.

Brian's enthusiasms could be overwhelming at times, but we miss him. He was a good man.

## Extract from a letter from Stop Fuelling War about Eurosatory 2020

*Christopher Hatton* Steering Committee Member - Stop Fuelling War/ Conseil d'administration – Cesser D'alimenter la Guerre, writes:

*Paris, 11th May 2020*

On 26th March 2020, the organisers of Eurosatory 2020 (COGES), which is responsible for the French international land and airland Defence and Security exhibition, rightly cancelled this year's event in Paris. Eurosatory 2020 had been scheduled for 8-12th June and would have been the world's largest land and land/air weapon trade fairs PROMOTING MILITARY RESPONSES to all perceived threats and real conflicts. The organisers, supporters and participants of Eurosatory display and sell military equipment ranging from tanks, armoured trucks, guns, pistols to missile systems, logistics, communications and other emergency responses services.

In his Easter 2020 message, Pope Francis highlighted the urgent need for global solidarity in fighting the coronavirus pandemic and its economic fallout, calling for the relaxation of international sanctions, debt relief for poor nations and ceasefires in all conflicts. "May Christ our peace enlighten all who have responsibility in conflicts, that they may have the courage to support the appeal for an immediate global ceasefire in all corners of the world." He condemned arms manufacturing and said the pandemic should spur leaders to finally end long-running wars such as that in Syria. He also appealed for help for migrants and others suffering from existing humanitarian conflicts.

It is stating the obvious when we say sophisticated weaponry stockpiles did not protect those suffering COVID-19. Instead, we saw the impact of limited investment in national health systems compared to generous spending on the military industrial complex. In many conflict ravaged areas of the world, the health systems have collapsed, and no amount of weapon systems can prop them back up.



This crisis is teaching many of us in this world about the values of compassion and fairness, and the ability of societies to care for their citizens that real security embodies. All our current efforts are rightly focused on preserving life; we have been heartened by the huge efforts made to this end, and by the strengthening of communal bonds across many nations. The past and future weeks have been and will be painful for our societies. We must not allow a return to the old 'business of usual, the one that sells death and destruction as so-called security'.

Therefore, Stop Fuelling War invites you to help transform the next Eurosatory (13 - 17th June 2022) from an exhibition of blatant and shameful military responses to peace building for true human security where compassion, solidarity and non-violent responses to conflict are present. We encourage you to act using all available means, knowing that excessive exaggerated military spending is not the Christian path to ensure safety, welfare, justice and healthcare today.

<https://stopfuellingwar.org/en/>



## Walking in the wilderness

*Tim Gee*, Britain Yearly Meeting, writes:

When the Coronavirus lockdown began, I prepared to change my life significantly. I signed up for several courses online, scheduled time to stop for Meeting once a day, and started eyeing up my bookshelves. I also found myself calling family members more and talking for longer. My mum - also needing to stay in her home - reflected that although people thought of her as quite outgoing, she like me had an 'inner hermit' that didn't mind spending time being quiet.

I had planned a London to Canterbury walk in the April bank holiday. That of course was cancelled. Aware that I was insulated from the worst extremes of the crisis, I found myself doing the distance anyway, but from my flat on a manual treadmill, as a fundraiser for a local domestic abuse refuge. I oriented it in the directions of the appropriate compass points, and joined Quaker groups online at the relevant distances. At first, I saw this principally as a fundraiser. As I walked though, I experienced it as something more, with the growing sense that this was an unusual kind of prayer.

When I finished, I sat down on my balcony, trying to make sense of what had just happened. Quakers don't have much of a pilgrimage or hermit tradition. Perhaps the closest we have is the example of Benjamin and Sarah Lay, the abolitionist couple who chose to live in a cave full of books surrounded by homegrown produce. I had some tiny vegetable seedlings in pots and was certainly reading more. Was that what I was doing now?

I looked up the origins of monasticism in Christianity. The Greek/Latin root means 'single' or 'solitary', although soon monks began to live with others. The Greek word for wilderness comes from the word hermit and one Syrian word for monk is abila – mourner. In their quiet way the hermit-monks were rebels – people of faith who escaped church hierarchies. Rather than taking the eucharist they sought their own direct relationship with the divine through simple living and silent contemplation.

I also read an account of a man's walk to Jerusalem, staying in churches and monasteries along the way. One passage in particular rang out loudly to me, describing pilgrimage and monastic life being similar - expressions of the same impulse - as even though the body might



*Tim Gee Photo: Tim Gee*

remain in a single place, the monk can travel inwardly with the heart. And so, I continued, joining online Meetings for Worship in Brussels, Geneva, Spain, Pennsylvania, Indiana, Peru and beyond.

I thought of John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. That was a work written in prison. The early Quakers of the same period also spent a great deal of time in prison, interspersed by long journeys on foot. It was while incarcerated that George Fox wrote his immortal words about walking cheerfully over the world, that Margaret Fell wrote 'Women's Speaking Justified' and James Nayler scribed 'The Lambs War'.

Before travelling too far down this path though I pulled myself short. Firstly, I couldn't, and shouldn't compare my small-but-comfortable flat under lockdown with the sufferings and injustices of prison. Secondly, Quakers don't generally believe in consecrated places, except in the sense that everywhere is sacred. I looked down over the nondescript carpark below my balcony, and tried to understand it as holy ground.

Through this time I was working from home three days a week, for a campaigning charity, my laptop balanced on the Bible and Quaker Faith and Practice. Around it I still had the other four days. I thought of the Liberation theologians describing religion as a process of action and reflection. Action is meaningless without reflection.

We Skyped with my wife's parents who were also needing to stay inside. My mother-in-law was meditating for two hours a day, my father in law was reading the Bible. I shared what I'd been reflecting, which prompted my father-in-law to cite John the Baptist who lived like a hermit and Jesus who spent time in the wilderness.

During Meeting for Worship in Belgium and Luxembourg I found my mouth open. Moses encountered God in the wilderness. Jesus found his purpose in the wilderness. George Fox realised his role to gather the Quaker movement while walking in the wilds. Were many of us now in the wilderness from our daily routines? Might our Zoom Quaker meetings and online courses be our generation's version of the tabernacles and tents of Moses' time? If so, what might we discover?

My mouth closed again. It was a question for the Meeting but also for me, and one that we'll only be able to answer as a community. But I didn't feel alone in asking it. A Friend, Carrie Comfort, posted to a Quaker forum the sense of starting to feel more like a member of a dispersed order, whose members are not in one place most of the time but out in the world, adding "how I see those I'm in worship with has shifted. These Friends are in this with me, whether I've met them before or not. And their day will involve or has involved their

own work from God. And it challenges me again to ask what is my work?"

Each of us will have experienced this time differently. All of us will be grieving in one way or another, and asking where if anywhere there is hope. Many of us will feel profoundly challenged to find any good in such a tragic situation. This was how I felt as I picked up my copy of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's prison letters, which spoke to my condition.

Even there, awaiting death, surrounded by the twentieth century's extremes of injustice and destruction, he found himself writing to his parents, gazing at the flowers and quoting a poem which still speaks to us now:

"Und geht es draussen noch so toll

Unchristlich oder christlich

ist doch die welt, die schone welt

so ganzlich unverwustlich"\*

\*And though the world, outside be bad

Christian or unchristian

Yet the world, the beautiful world

Is utterly indestructible

*Tim Gee's third book 'Why I am a Pacifist' is published by Christian Alternative.*

## Making economic systems more Sustainable and Just

*some principles for boosting the momentum (amid outfall from the pandemic)*

### Introduction

It is clear that currently dominant economic systems are not bringing well-being to many people in the world. This pandemic has highlighted the existing deficiencies in our economic systems. The question at the heart of this piece is: what principles could guide QUNO's work towards more sustainable and just economic systems that are rooted in peace, human rights, and shared security for all? Here, three of those principles are set out that could enable more sustainable and just economic systems: solidarity, inclusive global governance, and a just transition. As always, our work is led by Quaker principles of peace, truth, justice,

equality, stewardship and simplicity. And the three principles discussed below are by no means meant to be exhaustive.

### 1. Solidarity

Solidarity can be seen as an expression of unity and the recognition of the value of every individual. Solidarity calls for the urgent strengthening of and increased support for the mechanisms of international cooperation. Solidarity means that global challenges require global, multilateral responses that engage all countries with the support of updated global institutions.

Such mechanisms should safeguard the most vulnerable in all our communities. In the face of global challenges, it is imperative to recognise our interdependence and find more ways to come together to work on global solutions to challenges such as poverty and inequality.

Solidarity is both a moral imperative and a means towards shared prosperity. Economic systems that have solidarity as a purpose should focus on human needs in a healthy environment, collaboration, and compassion. Essential sectors such as healthcare and education require more investment to safeguard the well-being of the many over profits for the few. This requires a re-estimation of value that the public sector can create for the common good.

## 2. Inclusive global governance

‘Good governance’ has become a widely used term in international development circles. Making governance inclusive requires engaging all sectors of society, including government, the private sector, and civil society.

More inclusive forms of global governance would allow for the generation of knowledge and foster the capacity for discernment by a variety of stakeholders. ‘Systems thinking’ is often mentioned in discussions on ways forward for global objectives such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Such awareness is necessary in global governance for acknowledging that humanity is facing number of interconnected global challenges in which there are both trade-offs and synergies between economic activity, human development, and environmental protection.

An inclusive approach to global economic governance would invite participation and deliberation based on transparency. Inclusiveness and diversity are not just moral imperatives but they also offer benefits for economic systems, including :

- capturing different observations and reflexive approaches;
- enabling the adaptation and innovation that economic systems require to be resilient;
- facilitating the diffusion of ideas, norms, strategies and practices for sustainable development.



**QUNO**

Quaker United Nations Office

## 3. Just transition: respect for every person on a healthy planet

As Quakers, we respect the wonders of Mother Earth and the ways in which it helps to maintain and perpetuate the conditions for life on this planet. To demonstrate stewardship and protect our environment, there should be a strong drive for a sustainable recovery and not economic support for polluting industries once the pandemic subsides. ‘Business as usual’ economic models and crisis management risk would exacerbate societal tensions, grievances and human rights violations around access to health, livelihoods, food and further underlying fragility factors. Instead, governments must ensure that equitable and sustainable visions of societal transformation are actioned, such as through the creation of millions of decent jobs that will help power a just recovery and transition for workers and communities to a low-carbon, circular economy.

## Conclusion

At QUNO, we consider these principles of solidarity, inclusive global governance, and just transition in conjunction. Above all, developing and applying these principles will require both love and reason. Head and heart combined that deliver sustainability and justice. To realise the vision of a peaceful, loving, and prosperous society, it is essential to foster solidarity, integrity and health; to protect nature, culture, human rights, and the vulnerable; and to raise awareness of the destructive influence of racism, xenophobia, and other forms of closed-mindedness.



## “If I’m in my living room and you’re the other side of a screen, where is God?”

Woodbrooke recently organised an online discussion about our use of online technologies for Worship. *Paul Holdsworth*, EMES Executive Committee, writes:

The ‘*Theology of Meeting Remotely*’ workshop was facilitated by Rhiannon Grant, Woodbrooke’s Tutor for Quaker Roles. Around twenty Friends from Europe and the Americas shared their experiences.

### **What is it like to take part in Meeting for Worship via the internet?**

Participants in the workshop have mixed experiences of attending online Meetings for Worship. Some find it ‘exciting’ and ‘liberating’. Many feel relieved to be connected to Friends whom they cannot meet otherwise, whilst others have taken the opportunity to worship with other Quaker groups in their Yearly Meeting, or even abroad, and find it a joy to be connected to Quakers around the world. For others, online Worship is simply ‘better than not meeting at all.’

Meeting for Worship online can have its drawbacks. Some miss preparing themselves ‘in heart and mind’ whilst walking or driving to the Meeting House or find it difficult to ‘settle’. Others feel somehow less connected to other worshippers, or even to God, compared to a normal Meeting for Worship. For many, worship in an online Meeting has a different quality - for good or ill.

Technical problems can be a distraction; by now everyone should have learned about muting microphones and turning off mobile phones. Although lack of the necessary equipment is a barrier for some, online Worship can be a boon for Friends with limited mobility who are finally able to attend Meeting, and for hard-of-hearing Friends who may find it easier to hear spoken ministry online than in a Meeting room.

### **What issues do Quaker Meetings need to address when going online?**

Holding Meetings for Worship and other events online can be a major opportunity to help a Quaker Meeting



grow and deepen its spiritual life. The question is: ‘how to seize this opportunity?’ For example, how will Meetings continue remote worshipping after the pandemic confinement ends? How will the online experience change future physical Meetings for Worship? Some Meetings are considering introducing hybrid Meetings for Worship, with some people physically present and some online.

Meetings need to be aware that online worship may exclude some people. Some Friends lack the necessary technology or connection. People in large families or small apartments may not be able to set aside a quiet space for Worship. Carers or people in abusive relationships may find it impossible to get away to attend Meeting. What can Meetings do to make online worship accessible to as many as possible?

We should also recall that Meetings for Worship are public Acts of Worship: open to all. How can potential attenders be made aware of them? One possibility is to use social media to advertise the Meeting, with a contact point for further information about how to log on. For added security, attenders can be held in the ‘waiting room’ facility until their identity has been verified. Just as in a traditional Meeting, anyone behaving inappropriately can be speedily removed by the host.

A fascinating thought-experiment was proposed by one participant: how would it be if we were all accustomed to meeting online, but were suddenly confronted with having to meet face to face? How are our ‘normal’, physical Meetings for Worship constrained by the ‘old technology’ (e.g. poor transport links, access, people speaking too quietly, people unable to sit still for an hour, latecomers etc...)? What lessons might Meetings learn from our online experience?

### **What effect does online worship have on the Quaker community?**

Overall, workshop participants found that the possibility to meet online has had positive effects on their local Quaker community. Attendance has

increased in many Meetings, and additional kinds of Worship have proliferated: several Meetings now hold additional midweek Meetings for Worship, others have started evening Epilogues, meetings for learning, meetings for music, and meetings just for chatting. This, alongside the possibility to attend more distant Meetings, greatly increases the choice of Worship available to many Friends.

Some participants noted that worshipping online had changed the way they perceive worship itself: no longer something that only happens at the Meeting House, but something that can happen anywhere, at any time; the home becomes a place of worship.

Clearly, the ways in which we worship, discern, and feel the movement of the Spirit are changing. In some ways, Zoom and similar software is the ideal medium for non-hierarchical faith groups like Quakers. But perhaps we should consider what long-term effects remote worshipping might have on Quakerism. For example, Meetings for Worship are no longer fixed to a geographic location; could this lead to an atomisation of Meetings, as we choose to meet only with Quakers with whom we feel comfortable or who share the same spiritual / social / political outlook? Is there a risk that the relative ease of remote Worship could discourage us from making the effort required to build living, active Quaker communities?

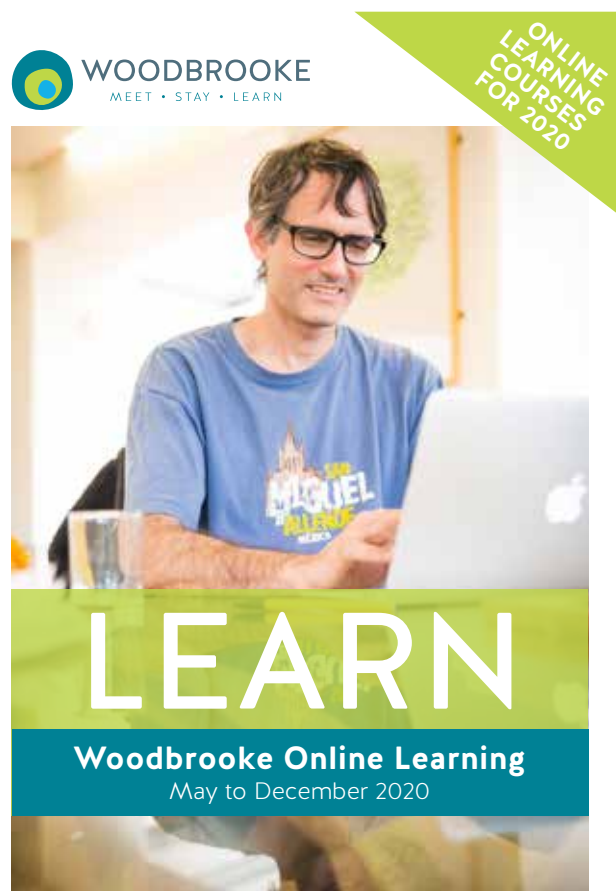
There was a feeling amongst workshop participants that online Worship is here to stay: 'it already feels very normal!' said one Friend, and another noted that, although it is an experiment, 'it is deepening each time we do it'.

Rhiannon left us with some questions for reflection:

- What does my experience of online Meeting for Worship tell me about myself, about my relationship with the Divine, and about how I've been worshipping until now?
- Next time I attend Meeting for Worship in person, what can I bring from my experience of online worship?

The Woodbrooke online learning catalogue can be found here:

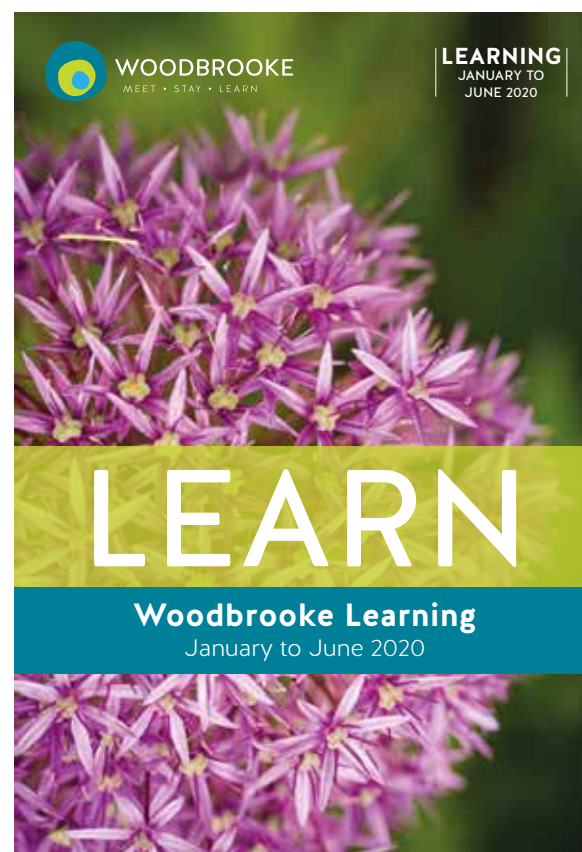
*[www.woodbrooke.org.uk/learn/online-learning/](http://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/learn/online-learning/)*



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**LEARN**

**Woodbrooke Online Learning**  
May to December 2020



**WOODBROOKE**  
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**LEARNING**  
JANUARY TO JUNE 2020

**LEARN**

**Woodbrooke Learning**  
January to June 2020

# This not a time for division, but one of extreme cooperation

The first months of 2020 will go down in the history books. Coronavirus continues to ravage many corners of the world, with peacetime death tolls unheard of in the UK and many other places for a century. Economic devastation lies just around the corner, with Angela Merkel said to be quietly concerned that many of her peers have not grasped the scale of the challenge ahead.



economies and our planet to the public's attention in an unprecedented way. This is a moment to reflect on what we truly cherish – and how we protect it.



arbitrary detention, limits to freedom of assembly and curtailed information dissemination. Some of these powers may be justifiable in this unusual context;



But like the *danse macabre* of plagues past, the invisible menace of COVID has also reminded us of the beauty of small things – being in restaurants, with friends, living for today. It has also brought the fragility of our communities, our

Our first priority must be to defend our fundamental rights during an unprecedented period. European governments have seized many draconian powers in an attempt to curb the spread of the virus –

others not. But in any case, the message from Europeans must be absolutely clear: today, we willingly cede our freedoms in a crisis – but tomorrow, we want them back. QCEA has risen to the moment, launching a

volunteer-led collection of data about new powers across Europe, as well as how those powers are being used, or abused. You can find out more about this work at:

[www.QCEA.org/DuringCOVID](http://www.QCEA.org/DuringCOVID)

But we are also thinking deeply about the new Europe which must follow the pandemic. The economic storm ahead will mean fundamental change for the EU – or irrelevance, if leaders fail to show solidarity in a moment of existential crisis. But we must also insist that they show ambition too, seizing the moment to make Europe a greener, fairer place. George Floyd's death was a stark reminder of the structural racism

which continues to pervade our societies, and may yet provoke a social earthquake to rival COVID. With people of colour disproportionately dying from the virus, we are also reminded that addressing discrimination is a matter of life and death. See more about QCEA's recent work on race, privilege and social justice on the QCEA Blog:

[qceablog.wordpress.com](http://qceablog.wordpress.com)

Our work on structural racism and a post-COVID world is complemented by our peace programme, which continues to advocate for human-centred security policies and nonviolent conflict resolution. Find out more about all our work at:

[www.QCEA.org](http://www.QCEA.org)



# Diary Dates 2020

More dates are available on the website: [www.fwccemes.org/calendar](http://www.fwccemes.org/calendar). Please send items for inclusion in the diary to [emes@fwccemes.org](mailto:emes@fwccemes.org)

Woodbrooke & EMES offer several weekly virtual Meetings for Worship. Extra meetings have been added due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Please check the Woodbrooke website for the latest information: [www.woodbrooke.org.uk/worship](http://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/worship)

**At the time of printing, these events were still scheduled to go ahead in the format listed below however please check the EMES website for up to date information.**

## 2020

**18 - 25 July: EMEYF Summer Gathering, ONLINE**  
[emeyf@qcea.org](mailto:emeyf@qcea.org)

**19 - 25 July: Swedish all-age summer camp, Svartbäcken**  
[lightmovements@hotmail.com](mailto:lightmovements@hotmail.com)

**1 August at 13.00 CEST: Quaker Conversations Session 3,** Tim Gee shares his reflections on the first World Conference of Friends in 1920, [fwcc.world/events/remembering-the-first-world-conference-of-friends](http://fwcc.world/events/remembering-the-first-world-conference-of-friends)

**28 - 30 August: Italian Friends Gathering, Fattorie Faggioli** [e.welkin@gmail.com](mailto:e.welkin@gmail.com)

**4 October: World Quaker Day:** What does it mean to be a Quaker today? Living into a faithful life in a changing world [www.worldquakerday.org](http://www.worldquakerday.org)

**9 - 11 October: Belgium & Luxembourg Yearly Meeting, Brussels** [quakerclerk@gmail.com](mailto:quakerclerk@gmail.com)

**15 - 18 October: Central European Gathering, Litomysl, Czech Republic** [pavel.marusinec@email.cz](mailto:pavel.marusinec@email.cz)

**22 - 25 October: German Yearly Meeting, Bonn** [clerks@quaaker.org](mailto:clerks@quaaker.org)

**30 October - 2 November: France Yearly Meeting, Paris**  
[quakersenfrance@gmail.com](mailto:quakersenfrance@gmail.com)

**7 November: Sweden Yearly Meeting,** location to be confirmed [au@kvakare.se](mailto:au@kvakare.se)

**15 November: Britain Yearly Meeting, Online,** [ym@quaker.org.uk](mailto:ym@quaker.org.uk)

**20 - 22 November: EMES Peace & Service Consultation, Bad Pyrmont, Germany** [jez@fwccemes.org](mailto:jez@fwccemes.org)

**5 December: EMES online event for 14-18 year olds,** more details to follow [michael@fwccemes.org](mailto:michael@fwccemes.org)

**30 December - 3 January 2021: Ireland Junior Yearly Meeting, Moyallon Centre** [s.ni.artaigh@gmail.com](mailto:s.ni.artaigh@gmail.com)

## 2021

**6 - 9 May 2021: EMES Annual Meeting, Paris** [michael@fwccemes.org](mailto:michael@fwccemes.org)

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

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**Deadline for Among Friends 149: 1 November 2020**