

Among Friends

No 149: Winter 2020

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

Dear Friends,

The other day I was playing chess with my son, who is eight. He has a basic understanding of the game and he enjoys playing, especially if he wins! Learning the moves was not too difficult - he and some classmates learned at school when they were five years old. But it is only recently after watching a TV drama about chess that it occurred to me that we could watch some videos on YouTube about chess.

Now my son enjoys the game more. He understands some principles that give him greater insights. He plays openings, he finds purpose in every move and he tries not to move a piece more than once in the first 10 moves.

After our game finished, I told my son that we would play on, but we would make up new rules. This was quite a surprise to him and it took him a couple of minutes to adjust.

Not long after, we had cleared the board and replaced all the pieces, taking it in turns to choose where to put our pieces.

As we got to playing again, I realized that this new version of chess was quite like starting up Quaker meeting online during a pandemic. Some of the “rules” and “principles” are the same, but others have fundamentally changed. And, largely, most of us have gone along with them as if they were normal, or perhaps because we see no alternative.

Facing a situation like many of us have this year means working out what we fundamentally must keep and discarding some things that are unimportant or impossible. Sometimes we do this without consciously



Quakers in Vienna held a socially distant meeting for worship in a meadow as their first lockdown eased
Photo: Marcel LaFlamme

thinking about it. I think that our spiritual lives are richer when we do take time to take stock and to understand.

I don't like staring into a screen during worship, so I have started attending meeting for worship in a tree in my local park. In Geneva Monthly Meeting, I am not a lone experimenter. One Friend regularly walks during meeting for worship and another was once spotted putting on a lifejacket during worship when her sailing trip became unexpectedly stormy!

This has also been a year of experimentation for us at EMES. At the beginning of 2020, EMES began a partnership with Woodbrooke - the International Quaker Learning and Research Centre - to offer regular meeting for worship online. This quickly rose to 11 regular meetings for worship, each with a pairing of volunteer elder-facilitators. Many people have taken on volunteer roles including several from places outside of Britain.

We held our annual meeting online and most recently our annual Peace and Service Consultation online. At the latter, we even experimented with interactive online tools and did a threshing exercise that included moving ideas around on a page, without speaking to each other, until a few of the ideas rose to the top.

In 2021, no doubt we will continue in this spirit of experiential learning and exploration. It will also be good for us to keep celebrating what remains essential.

In friendship,

Jez Smith, Assistant Secretary, FWCC EMES

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EMES News: executive committee changes and online meetings

We thank the following Friends who have finished service on the EMES executive committee during 2020: Sue Glover Frykman, Saskia Kuhlmann and Berne Weiss.

Ethel Livermore was appointed as the new EMES acting clerk in September 2020.

Melanie Huopp was appointed as the new Europe and Middle East Young Friends representative on the EMES executive committee, serving from September 2020. Will Haire was appointed as a new EMES executive committee member from January 2021. Welcome to Melanie, Ethel and Will.

EMES meetings online

Since meetings have moved online during 2020 EMES has run 3 new online meetings on Zoom. Monthly Peace and Service Consultations started online in July, Representatives and Roleholders meetings started online in September and an online event for young people aged 14-18 took place in December. All of these will continue in 2021.

Melanie Huopp

I am part of the Berlin Meeting (German YM) and found the Quakers a little over two years ago. Just two months after my first MfW I joined EMEYF at the AM in autumn 2018, also becoming a part of the Willy&Penn editorial team. In February 2020 I was admitted into the Religious Society of Friends. As a cultural scientist with a focus on project management I work at different companies for specific projects. Unfortunately my work has nothing to do with culture which is one reason why I value being active in Quaker organizations (and meetings) so much. My free time I spent cooking, reading, making excursions to museums or other cultural places and meeting with friends playing board games or watching a movie.

Ethel Livermore

I live in London and am a member of Britain Yearly Meeting. My local Meeting is Streatham & Brixton Meeting in South London.

I grew up as a Quaker and on leaving school got involved with British Young Friends. I was lucky enough to attend the World Gathering of Young Friends in 1985, which was my introduction to the wider family of Friends. I have served on various committees of BYM, most recently serving as Clerk of Meeting for Sufferings, and on their Central Nominations Committee.

I have just taken early retirement, having worked in IT for a charity for the last 23 years. Outside of Quakers, my other passion is classical music – I sing in a choir and play the Bassoon/Contrabassoon in local orchestras.

Will Haire

I am Will Haire, a Member of Ireland Yearly Meeting, attending South Belfast Meeting. Now retired, serving on a number of Quaker charities near home and in Lebanon as well as chairing the Joseph Rowntree Foundation in York, I used to work on equality, education and social policies in government. We also went to Brussels Meeting when we lived there, and have greatly enjoyed attending Quaker family gatherings in Sweden and Germany. My wife Bronwen is an IYM representative on EMES and I really look forward to work on the EMES Executive Committee.



Ethel Livermore



Will Haire

My Quaker life

Peter Spreij, Netherlands Yearly Meeting and EMES Assistant Treasurer writes:

In 1973 I received a letter from a member of Netherlands YM Nominations Committee. Yes, we did write letters in those days. Would I consider a nomination as Netherlands YM representative to FWCC-EMES? A few days later I talked to this Friend on the phone and I remember saying that as I had joined Friends only recently I might not have enough Quaker experience. Nonsense, was the answer. You've just come back from Kenya and had contacts with Friends there, you speak some English, you're a young friend, what more could we ask for? Not long after that I was present at my first Annual Meeting in Schmiedeberg, in the then German Democratic Republic, followed, if I remember well and got the dates right by AM's in France and Brummana High School, Lebanon, three Annual Meetings which each in their own way have made a deep impression on me.

In Schmiedeberg we got an opportunity to meet with Friends who had to deal with the challenges of living in a socialist/communist society, but we were also challenged to question our own way of life and the things we took for granted. In the France Annual Meeting there were, at times very emotional, sessions about whether we should follow up the concern to establish a Quaker presence at the European institutions. Working with QCEA, was what we were called to do.

In Lebanon the theme of the conference after the meeting involving participants of all denominations, Christian and Muslim, was 'Our God is One.'

From 1976 to 1981 I worked in Swaziland, Southern Africa. With some other Friends we started a worship group there, and as my work required extensive travel in the whole region, we had many opportunities enjoy the warm welcome of Friends and Meetings of Central & Southern Africa Yearly Meeting. Needless to say the seventies and early eighties were a time when a solution to the problem of Apartheid was nowhere in sight. We felt privileged to have the opportunity to share with Southern African Friends their sorrows, and their hopes for a better world.

Back in the Netherlands I worked in a Vocational Training school in various positions and served my monthly meeting and yearly meeting in various capacities. I had another opportunity to serve FWCC-EMES as a



Peter Spreij seeing the world with Quakers

representative for Netherlands Yearly meeting once more in the late eighties, early nineties. In 1997 I was one of the representatives of our Yearly Meeting to the Triennial Meeting in Birmingham. Netherlands Yearly Meeting had drawn up a minute calling on FWCC to consider care for the environment and sustainability a new Quaker Testimony. At the meeting I spoke to that minute but did not get very far, I'm afraid. Friends considered the proposal untimely and quite a few Friends expressed the opinion that we had more pressing concerns to deal with. After the meeting a Friend came and talked to me. 'You Dutch Friends are too impatient,' he said, 'You want to go too fast, but mark my words, this concern is not going to go away. We will speak more of this later.'

Of course nowadays Friends might, and do question all this travelling all over the world for Quaker business. 'Join the Quakers, see the world,' was a saying in those days. 'Quakers,' said my younger brother, 'Quakers, that's not a religion. It's a travel agency.'

When, some ten years ago, Nominations Committee called me once again, the answer was: No. I think there are Friends who are much better at this kind of thing. A couple of weeks later I got another call. They had tried all these other Friends of whom there were very few, to no avail. Wouldn't I reconsider? And so I was appointed assistant treasurer, and later treasurer of Netherlands Yearly Meeting, and to my own surprise liked it very much.

I am happy to have the opportunity to serve the Section once more, this time in the role of Assistant Treasurer. I am convinced that in COVID-19 times FWCC and the European Section play an essential role in facilitating the contacts between Friends in their various countries. We are faced with new challenges and will have to work together towards healing a broken world.

Learning to translate, translating to learn

'I had to 'allow' gestures and tropes which were not my natural writing medium in order to let the poet through'
Jo Shapcott on translating the Tajik poet Farzaneh Khojandi

Tracey Martin, Woodbrooke and Britain Yearly Meeting, writes:

Our marriage was bilingual. Sometimes we had to consult a dictionary to communicate over breakfast. It turns out 5 years of speaking a language as a single person doesn't necessarily equip you for the language of marriage. Or perhaps the stakes of getting it wrong are just higher.

Even simple words can become slippery when they move from one language to another – is that uncle of yours really an uncle? When you say far, do you mean not so far or really far? Once you get into abstract concepts, it can get really tricky. There's a reason why the key concepts of German philosophers keep their German names when translated into English.

And we don't only need to be speaking another language for there to be a misunderstanding, or even offence taken. Organisations, communities and even families have their own language - words and expressions they use that might not be understandable to an outsider. Quakerism is no different.

I'm lucky in that most of the seminal works of Quakerism are in my first language, English. But I'm not sure that I am much better off when I speak to other Friends about their spiritual experience in any language. My husband and I used to joke that we had an advantage over other married couples – we expected that there would be times when we would misunderstand each other and we made allowances for it. Do we too often assume we understand each other because we are Quakers? Do we assume people are using words in the same way we do, that they are describing experiences that we are familiar with?

I was involved for some years in a group of people who translated poems from other languages. One of us, who knew the language, made a literal translation of the poem. Then we all worked together to make it into a poem in English. This involved remaining true to the original spirit and meaning of the poem (and sometimes the form and sound) and making it work as

a poem in English. The literal translation was correct but it rarely worked as a poem – and it often did not make sense at all to an English reader.

We could spend half an hour on a line, a phrase or even a single word, trying to understand the original intent and convey that in English. We would listen to the line in the original, ask questions about the words used, how they would have been understood by a reader of the original language. The discussion sometimes became quite heated. I would often leave the sessions feeling tired but exhilarated.

We cannot truly know what a reader of the original language takes from a poem. Or what a reader of the English translation will take from it. The best poems go beyond single interpretations and, if we spend time with them, open us up to new experiences and ways of seeing or help us see the familiar through new eyes.

Over the past six months I have been running poetry sessions for Quakers and others. We have tried different ways of finding our way into a poem and engaging with it. We have spent time with poems.

I wonder if there is something we can learn from this when listening to someone speak about their spiritual experiences. If we accept that the person is translating their experience into words that make sense to them and that we, on hearing the words, are also engaged in an act of translation.

Two Woodbrooke courses that might be of interest are:

The Climate Crisis faith and witness reading group
 from 4 January to 21 February 2021

www.woodbrooke.org.uk/product/climate-crisis-faith-and-witness-reading-group/

Thinking Nonviolently with John and Diana Lampen
 from 4 January to 3 February 2021

www.woodbrooke.org.uk/product/thinking-nonviolently/

What love requires of us: working for migration justice as a response to heart-breaking dehumanisation

American Friends Service Committee, Britain Yearly Meeting, Friends Committee for National Legislation, the Quaker Council for European Affairs and the Quaker United Nations Office have worked together in the last year to develop a statement on migration drawing on our Quaker foundations and work with migrants and on migration.

The Statement begins:

Statement

Rooted in our belief that there is that of the sacred in everyone, our spiritual leading to uphold the inherent value and agency of every human being, and our commitment to building a world without violence, we are heartbroken by migration policy that dehumanises some members of our human family on the basis of where they come from. We reject the notion that security for some can be achieved through means that use or result in violence and insecurity for others. We abhor the many forms of violence used in the management of migration and the effect current migration systems have in dividing our human family.

We are committed to working for a world where dignity and rights are upheld regardless of migration status and not on the basis of citizenship or perceived deservedness. Our faith calls us to work alone and with others for migration justice.

Context

Migration is a fundamental facet of human behaviour. People migrate for many different reasons. The line between chosen and forced migration is frequently blurred by factors including insecurity, desperation, the search for dignity, and the climate crisis. People's reasons for migrating are often exacerbated by inequalities and by power structures that are built on or have profited from the control of people's movement. We cannot consider why people move or what the response to human mobility should be without recognising the global power imbalances and injustices which entrench inequalities and which continue to be used in the management of migration.

Long-standing and pervasive structures of domination – including but not limited to colonialism, racism,

sexism, and classism – have led to and continue to uphold the conditions we see today. While recognising that migration injustice is perpetuated across the world by a diverse range of actors, we highlight the disproportionate role that countries of the global north play and have played in fuelling the displacement of people. When migration policies do not acknowledge and respond to these contexts and these inequalities, they perpetuate injustice. This understanding informs our vision of migration justice.

This is followed by our vision of migration justice and what we see as migration injustice.

Those drafting the statement work actively to protect the rights, dignity and safety of people regardless of the borders they cross or try to cross. This work takes different forms – supporting community organising, enabling Sanctuary Meetings, speaking to national legislators, encouraging people who make policy to feel and work from empathy, creating space for dialogue amongst diplomats! Despite its different forms this work is connected by a common Quaker foundation and a commitment to honour our common humanity.

We are publishing the full statement ahead of Human Rights Day (10 December) and International Migrants Day (18 December) and encourage Friends to use it as a starting point for discussion with their Meetings and hope Meetings will discern that they can support the statement.

The statement in full should be live from 10 December on: www.Quno.org/quaker-migration-statement

We encourage Meetings, Quaker organisations and Friends' groups or associations to consider supporting the statement and signing on to it.

If your organisation, group or Meeting would like to sign on to support the statement or if you have questions about the statement or comments on it please email the Quaker UN Office's Human Rights and Refugees team:

Laurel Townhead ltownhead@quno.ch
Najmah Ali nali@quno.ch

Looking back and looking forward

In October 2020 we asked Quakers across the Section to tell us what has nourished them from involvement in Quakers in 2020, what they have learned and what they are looking forward to in 2021. Here are their answers.

Charles Tauber, Croatia

Question 1: What has Nourished Me from My Involvement With Quakers This Year.

This year, Dutch Quakers have had online Meetings because of the corona situation. This has been the first time in 25 years that I have been able to attend Meeting on a regular basis. This has given me more of a sense of community with Quakers than I have had in a very long time. I hope that we can continue this. The same is true of other Quaker gatherings, including the Peace and Service Consultation.

Question 2: What I have learned in 2020.

Unfortunately, I have seen an increase in suffering in the world. It has been confirmed to me through my work that the psychological needs of people are being almost completely ignored. From what I can see, people need “simple” interventions – listening, concern, empathy, a safe space to ventilate and figure out how to go further. They need this on a long-term basis virtually everywhere. I am appalled at the atrocities committed toward people virtually everywhere. I must say that I knew these things, but they have been reinforced in me this year.

Question 3: What I am looking forward to in 2021

Unfortunately, I am not an optimist. I fear that, if anything, conditions will worsen in the world, especially due to the corona crisis. While that may improve slightly, I fear that people's attitudes toward one another will not. I thus look forward to more work for us. I enjoy the work in many senses. I like working with people. I hope that we can form a worldwide network to assist people to assist one another.

Issues that I feel Quakers should be embracing in the coming year, and longer

- The migrant/refugee situation, in Europe and the world, including the psychological situation of victims of war, mistreatment, and poverty. I feel that we need to be empowering people to assist one another.

- Ridding the world of so-called “defence”. Quakers need to be taking action on legislation to abolish ministries of defence and to transferring the funds used for it to other goals. We also need to be taking direct action, such as the re-direction of our taxes, and not paying taxes for war and armaments.

Magdalena Gadomska, All Poland Gathering

We are the children of the Enlightenment and its values. It was not Nature, but man to rule the world – independent and rational. It was not Nature laws, but human rights that would determine our future. It was when we believed that everything could be comprehended by mind, that we can rule the world. Proudly convinced that the years of pandemics are long over and we are controlling the situation, ‘we have filled the Earth and subdued it’, we have abused all the benefits of the modern world. Intemperate. We were not disturbed by the changing climate. We produced, consumed excessively and earned money. More and faster.

Does the SARS-CoV-2 herald a new world order? I am not into the conspiracy theory that the virus is a biological weapon. I am definitely closer to a thesis that God said ‘I call’ and we lost, we were showed man is not the master of everything. The pandemic has paralysed the world. Over a million of people lost their lives, even more their loved ones. Many have no job, means of living. Significant is thousands of people suffering from COVID-19 lose their breath, the lungs of the world is beginning to fill with it at the same time. The roles have turned around. In a way, Nature is free and people are quite enslaved or restricted.

My life has slowed down and finally I have space to be in Silence, to think and listen. I breathe when I am not surrounded by a crowd of people, when cars do not rush along the street, when I go and hear the beautiful singing of birds. I can clearly see the enormity of the good things happening in my life. And I feel grateful. Sometimes it is hard to understand the world I know has ceased to exist. That new one is coming and it will not be enough just to wait until everything is over. There is a board in my home office saying: *‘Life isn’t*

about waiting for the storm to pass. It's about learning how to dance in the rain'. It is about time for us to learn how to dance in a new reality.

Ina Vogelsang, Britain Yearly Meeting

1. In order of how nourishing and inspiring I found the events, starting with the most inspiring first:

1. FWCC first worldwide Online Sustainability Conference in February
 2. EMES annual meeting
 3. Sunday meeting in my local meeting in Manchester
 4. QCEA Connecting the dots
 5. Zoom 'house' group on Active Hope
 6. Some of the QSPW workshops
2. Finding others who share your concerns (in my case sustainability) helps and can give you the hope and energy to continue your work. There is a lot of activism that can happen on the internet.
3. Hopefully, returning to a life where I can see friends and family under more normal circumstances. Continuing with my work on sustainability.

Irene Visser, Netherlands Yearly Meeting

What has nourished me from my involvement with Quakers in 2020 is our continued connection despite the distancing necessitated by the corona crisis. Despite some disagreements among Friends in the Netherlands this year, the overriding feeling has been of harmony and understanding.

What I have learned this year is that life can take an unexpected and dramatic turn and that people's responses to the corona crisis can be warm and caring, but also hostile and violent. In the Netherlands, even paramedics and health carers have been under serious physical attack.

I have learned that whatever people's deeds and words, it is very important to keep in mind that the way to engage with all people is to answer that of God in

them. That this central core of goodness is in all of us is the deepest truth and the most valuable lesson I have learned this year. However hostile or criminal people's words and actions, their worth is independent of those words or actions. It is a difficult lesson to learn. However my hope is that my response to violence may be calm and controlled by the knowledge that I need answer only to that of God in people, and that even when confronted with aggressiveness and insults, I can still treat others with respect.

What I am looking forward to in 2021 is to make this consideration a response to all people irrespective of their outward behaviour. I hope to learn not to think in terms of blame and guilt, but in terms of forgiveness and acceptance. And of course, what I am looking forward to in 2021 is the time when social distancing between people will be at an end so that we can meet, embrace, hold hands, sing, and interact as before.

Ed Dommen, Geneva Monthly Meeting

2. *What have you learned this year that you would like to share with others?*

The virtues of Zoom. The Quaker form of worship lends itself to Zoom; business meetings also work well. Belgium & Luxembourg YM included half-hour breaks between the formal sessions, during which Zoom was left on for informal discussions. These were surprisingly fruitful and showed that online gatherings need not sacrifice the "corridor discussions" which bring so much spice to face-to-face meetings.

QCEA says "tomorrow's Europe will need Quaker voices". In September it organised a lively online discussion which brought people together from an encouraging spread of places in Europe.

And think of all the CO2, hassle and time saved in getting to meetings!

NEWS FROM QCEA



**Quaker
Council for
European
Affairs**

On November 10th, the QCEA peace programme launched a report with three accompanying short videos on gender equality and inclusivity in peace and security. The recorded livestream of the event and the videos are still available to watch on YouTube on the channel of QCEA.

The event was co-hosted by the Embassy of Ireland to Belgium and featured many interesting speakers such as Helena Nolan (Ambassador of Ireland to Belgium) and Marc Fiedrich (Head of Unit, European Commission Foreign Policy Instrument, Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace).

The discussion addressed a number of important issues such as the backlash to gender and inclusivity work, masculinities, militarism, intersectionality, hierarchies and power relationships, binary language, the need to work on peace rather than security, as well as the need for authenticity, listening, solidarity, and making space available for diverse and unusual voices. It was an opportunity to remind ourselves that gender equality is at the heart of Quaker since more than 400 years.

The overarching aim of this project is to fill an existing gap by producing content of use for those involved in peace and security field operations and institutions.

**Learn more about what QCEA is
doing on our two new blogs in
Dutch and French!**

Dutch



www.qceadeltalicht.wordpress.com

French



www.qceapasserelles.wordpress.com



Find our best practices guide and the accompanying videos on their dedicated webpage:
www.qcea.org/gender.

Vacancy

Director

QCEA is seeking a Director who will bring our vision of peace, justice and equality to Europe and its institutions. This is an exciting role based in Brussels, and the lead staff position within the organisation.

Could this be you? Find out more: www.qcea.org/vacancies.

Closing date: 15 January 2021.

What can I do, a single human soul against a global economic system and civilization hell-bound for self-destruction?

Arne Springorum, a Quaker and XR rebel in Prague, Czech Republic writes:

In autumn of 2018 I read Elizabeth Hering's book about early Friends. Their determination and suffering during a decades-long struggle that led to the achievement of the Act of Toleration in 1689 was an inspiration. Those same weeks I was deeply moved from reading the obituary of an American Friend and Quaker who went to prison as a conscientious objector during the second world war. I remember saying to myself: 'you are a Quaker, what will you go to prison for, what truth to power will you speak?' Two weeks later a Quaker friend from Italy sent me a link to the Extinction Rebellion (XR). I ignored it. The next day he sent me a Guardian article about XR. I ignored it. On day three he sent me another link about XR asking me if I had checked this out. Arne! I clicked on the link and spent the next three hours reading on the Internet everything I could find about XR (at that time still possible in three hours). I knew then that I had to join. I became a Rebel for Life. It was November 17, 2018: the day XR simultaneously occupied five London Bridges and experienced their first mass arrests, as mean to help humanity understand the severity of the climate and ecological catastrophe we are in.

Two weeks later the Czech XR movement began in the Prague Quaker Center. Our Declaration of Rebellion to The Czech Government followed on 14 December. Greta Thunberg, speaking a couple days earlier from the COP in Katowice, Poland, had asked the world to do something as they were 'just talking' again in Katowice. We were fined for not having announced our 6-people protest 5 days in advance. The case is currently still in the courts as I refuse to admit guilt in holding an unlawful protest assembly. Many civic offenses have followed in the 20 months since – usually for not obeying police orders to leave a scene. Twice I have chalk sprayed a ministry building. Twice the potential criminal offense was dropped as the ministry chose not to create additional publicity by pressing charges.

We have grown to several hundred rebels. Our activities are diverse. We held a picnic at Prague castle demanding that the president speak about the climate with us - we were arrested for overstaying the official visiting hours. We blocked the city highway last October with 150 rebels arrested.

It has been a tough year for Czech XR rebels with the pandemic. We have moved online where we can. But the climate situation is getting only worse by the day. They now say that our oceans warm at a rate of 5 nuclear bombs every second. July had the record lowest sea ice extent in the Arctic. Greenland has moved beyond its melting tipping point. Czech forests are dying in front of our eyes. As a geologist I know that the drought will have no end.

I believe in science. I believe in physics. I believe in our power to achieve change and lessen the lethal impacts the climate catastrophe will have on our lives and those of our children and future generations. Our global failure to engage in a meaningful and effective way with this crisis is unprecedented. And I do understand the psychology of it.

It is one thing to know the science in our heads and another to know it in our hearts too. It means admitting that truth to your inner vulnerable self. I find myself crying out in pain for the injustice I have been part of. That is why XR says hope dies and action begins. We are radical, we are in love with this planet and its life. We are acting in this fierce love for our future and fully aware that we stand very little to lose now as we are guaranteed to lose so incredibly much more if we remain silent with the majority.

It is not easy to be in the minority. Life is full of doubt, full of misery and exhaustion. I have a gnawing feeling of not spending enough time with my wife and children and of not being able to focus on my work as an energy efficiency consultant. What if I achieve nothing? What if I am ineffective?

Sometimes I am exhausted. I sit in our Quaker meetings and my mind goes blank. No thoughts; no ministry comes to me. Just silence. I have to let go XR, not think about the next act of civil disobedience, not criticize myself for not being radical enough to trigger societal change. Or, am I too radical, which might put off other people from joining the movement? Where is the truth? The truth is I am scared. I am afraid of being alone. I am terrified of heeding the call for being a prophet and acting based on that call and free of what other people think and might do.

One day, I admitted my poor state to a colleague and let go and cried. I went to the Prague psychiatric emergency ward and was told that I had all the signs of acute emotional exhaustion. The next day I was arrested during an action. A police officer warned me if I overstepped that line he would arrest me. In an instant knew what I wanted to do ...

We are at the beginning, our actions are cute and creative and to a large degree harmless; we hardly make the news today. What did I expect? Get arrested a few times and – bingo – system change is here? We know the science: this time I mean the social science. Mass civil disobedience means radical but respectful breaking of the law, for days on end with a large number of ordinary people of all ages.

Friends, we need you. The world needs you. I beg you, to stand up, to not stand by. We need Friends for their peacefulness, for their non-violence, for their wisdom, for their ability of acting like prophets and listening to God, for their integrity and their commitment and most of all for their love for this world. Some of those Friends who came before us were part of the abolishment of slavery, some supported the Underground Railway, some helped finance the Kindertransport and some provided host families for hundreds of Jewish children to be saved from the Holocaust. If you have ever proudly said that Quakers have been involved in the founding of great organizations such as Greenpeace or Amnesty International, be aware that you well might say this about Extinction Rebellion in the future.

Don't just say so, as I did in the past, but please get involved. Get organizing. We have done it before. Quakers started planning in 1942 for their involvement in post-War relief work in Germany. They poured enormous amounts of their own funds and organizing skills into this effort. Can we mobilize again? Can we get to work again and live our testimonies fully in a time where the world needs them out there, visibly for others to follow?

If we work together we can create a future for your children and for you. For our children and for us.



Arne Springorum letting his life speak

Photo: Petr Zewlakk

Dear Friends across Europe and the Middle East

Jon Martin, Woodbrooke, writes:

In what has been a very unprecedented and disconcerting year we wanted to share with you some of the things that have made us smile as we look back at how Woodbrooke has sailed on the choppy waters of 2020. We have been glad that some of you have shared the journey with us and your presence as fellow travellers has deeply enriched our work.

We started the year by deepening our partnership with EMES to provide more online worship together. We didn't know how important that decision would become but as the year went on it became an essential part of our activity when Europe and much of the world went into lockdown. It was moving to see how Friends from all over the world could still experience worship together online, in solidarity and fellowship. Many people reconnected with Quakers through this period as well as those who found joy in worship among other Friends, sometimes for the first time. We have had 10,821 worshippers between 16 March and 31 October. Because we collect our data for worship anonymously it is likely many of those worshippers are the same people, but it is still an uplifting number. It would not have been possible without the EMES Friends who help Elder and support our online worship.

As well as more worshippers than ever the decision to move all our learning online has made it accessible to many more people. Remarkably, considering the suspension of residential courses at the Woodbrooke Centre in Birmingham for most of the year, we've had more course participants than ever. 2,825 enrollments on all Woodbrooke courses so far this year, up 30% on 2,168 in 2019.

We launched our new website in October to make it easier to find courses and know what to expect from our courses. It was a huge overhaul of all of our website content which included our new Woodbrooke **Where You Are (WWYA) section**. WWYA takes our learning from Woodbrooke on the Road to offer a whole new way of experiencing Woodbrooke as a community. The package includes resources, workshops and tutor led



sessions which are taught on Zoom – or in person in Europe once safe. Do contact us if this interests you, we've already delivered learning to Quaker groups in various Yearly Meetings in this way and would love to work with your Quaker community to support and nurture your spirit.

Not just our courses which are more accessible, with the suspension of Britain Yearly Meeting the Swarthmore Lecture was entirely online. With a live audience in the hundreds **Tom Shakespeare gave his Friendly offering of hope for troubled times**, which now has just shy of 5,000 views. We've also been supporting other Quaker events such as EMES annual meeting in May and the Salter Seminar in October, which you can also watch on our Youtube Channel. It was given by Stuart Masters on the topic of **Creating Heaven on Earth: The Radical Vision of Early Quakers**.

Our Climate Crisis project also started this year, funded by Britain Yearly Meeting it focuses on helping Quakers to understand the spiritual roots of our response to the climate crisis. So far we've run online retreats for living courageously amongst the climate crisis, supported the Loving Earth Project and delved into the eco-theology of early Friends. *Again we would be happy to work with your meeting on this if you would like.*

Like many of you we yearn for a return to in person Quaker gatherings and all the joy that brings, but 2020 has allowed Woodbrooke to thrive as an international organisation more so than ever before and reach a whole new range of people. This is something we will be holding onto, and seeking to develop in the years to come as we continue to navigate a challenging world. We are your Woodbrooke and we will continue to reach out to Friends across Europe and the Middle East, and beyond, hopefully reaching more of you, better meeting your needs and reflecting your Quaker communities as we go forward together.



Woodbrooke Where You Are

Diary Dates 2020-2021

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

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

30 December - 3 January 2021: Ireland Junior Yearly Meeting, Moyallon Centre s.ni.artaigh@gmail.com

2021

1 - 3 January: Ireland Junior Yearly Meeting, online s.ni.artaigh@gmail.com

8 - 11 April: Ireland Yearly Meeting, Belfast office@quakers.ie

16 - 18 April: Border Meeting (German speaking) grenztreffenCHD@quaeker.org

6 - 9 May: EMES Annual Meeting, Paris michael@fwccemes.org

13 - 16 May: Sweden Yearly Meeting, location to be confirmed au@kvakare.se

21 - 24 May: Switzerland Yearly Meeting, Aarau symclerk@swiss-quakers.ch

28 - 30 May: Netherlands Yearly Meeting, secretariaat@dequakers.nl

3 - 6 June: Central European Gathering, milkapawel@gmail.com

24 - 27 June: Norway Yearly Meeting, kveker@kveker.org

17 - 24 July: EMEYF Summer Gathering, Finland emeyf@qcea.org

31 July - 6 August: Britain Yearly Meeting Gathering ym@quaker.org.uk

14 - 17 October: German Yearly Meeting, Bonn clerks@quaeker.org

29 Oct - 1 November: France Yearly Meeting secretaire.communications@quakersenfrance.org

21 - 23 November: EMES Peace & Service Consultation, Bad Pyrmont, Germany jez@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 150: 1 March 2021