

Annual Report

2020



Friends World Committee
for Consultation
EUROPE & MIDDLE EAST SECTION

fwccemes.org

FWCC-Europe & Middle East Section

Woodbrooke
1046 Bristol Road
Selly Oak
Birmingham
B29 6LJ
UK

Scottish Charity number SC 036528

Executive Secretary Michael Eccles

michael@fwccemes.org
+44(0)7934310715

Assistant Secretary Jez Smith

jez@fwccemes.org

For up to date information about EMES please
visit our website: **fwccemes.org**

For dates of Yearly Meetings and other events please
see the calendar page: **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.



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What is FWCC?

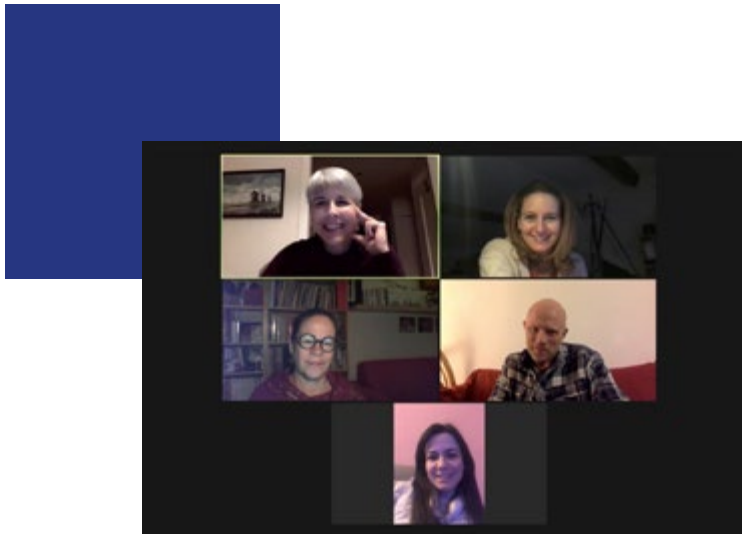
The Friends World Committee for Consultation was established at the Second World Conference of Friends held at Swarthmore, Pennsylvania, in 1937. The concept of a world organisation to express the sense of world fellowship of Friends arose as an important part of the evolution of the Religious Society 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 6th 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 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 2024 in Southern Africa.

Read more about the work of the FWCC World Office here: fwcc.world

FWCC-Europe & Middle East Section

The Europe & Middle East Section (EMES) of the Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) was established in 1938 and is the collective body for Quaker meetings in Europe and the Middle East. All the members, yearly meetings and groups affiliated to EMES, are members of FWCC. We publish a newsletter, *Among Friends*, three times a year and send out regular news emails to subscribers. A small Executive Committee, assisted by the Executive Secretary and the Assistant Secretary, ensures communication within the Section and with other Quaker bodies and individual Friends. Each year EMES organises an Annual Meeting and Peace & Service Consultation and during the Covid-19 pandemic has been holding additional events online for Representatives & Roleholders, the Peace & Service Consultation and for 14-18 year old Young Friends. EMES is a member of Church and Peace and in 2016 was accepted by the Conference of European Churches as an Organisation in Partnership.

EMES has a 10-year strategy which *envisages a thriving, vibrant, inclusive, all-age, spiritual community of Friends in Europe and the Middle East, woven together in transformative faith and love, working and connecting with others, listening to the Spirit, actively living out our Quaker testimonies of truth and integrity, equality and community, simplicity, peace, and care for the earth and the environment.*

You can read more about EMES including our 10 year strategy on our website: fwccemes.org/emes

EMES consists of 12 Yearly Meetings, 1 Monthly Meeting and a number of worship groups. There are approximately 25,000 Quakers in the affiliated meetings in the Section (this figure includes members, attenders and children, and is based on the information provided by meetings in January 2021). Evangelical Friends Church International are also active in the following countries: Croatia, Hungary, Ireland, Romania, Serbia; but do not have the numbers of people involved at the moment.

Europe & Middle East Young Friends (EMEYF) are well-established autonomous organisation operating within the Section: emeyf.org

EMES Activity in 2020

Even before Covid-19 arrived in Europe and the Middle East, 2020 was going to be a year of transition for EMES. The executive committee met around the time most of our region was going into lockdown in mid-March. At that meeting they made the decision to move the annual meeting online – at the time this felt quite radical. Of course we now know that yearly meetings and Quaker gatherings in the Section were either

held online, cancelled or postponed.

Despite Covid-19, the work of EMES has continued through the year, albeit in a different way to what had been planned and anticipated. EMES staff work from home and there have been extended periods when their children were at home due to school closures during lockdowns. We have adapted much of our work to the new situation we are in.

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee (EC) acts as the EMES trustees and met six times during 2020. In March 2020 they met in Cambridge in Britain; the other meetings were all held online, including immediately preceding the online Annual Meeting and over a weekend in September.

The EC is responsible for the work of EMES and monitors progress made on the 2020-22 workplan agreed at the Annual Meeting in 2019. They also approve grants to the Spiritual Growth Fund and Digital Equality Fund.

EMES had three Clerks during 2020, Sue Glover Frykman who stepped down in February to be replaced by Saskia Kuhlmann as Acting Clerk, until Ethel Livermore took on the role in September.

EC members in 2020

Sue Glover Frykman Sweden YM (Clerk)
until March

Penny Heymans Norway YM (Treasurer)

Paul Holdsworth Belgium & Luxembourg YM

Melanie Huopp EMEYF/German YM
from September

Annie Janssen German YM

Saskia Kuhlmann EMEYF/Netherlands
YM Acting Clerk *March-Sept until September*

Ethel Livermore Britain YM (Acting Clerk)
from September

Lee Taylor Britain YM *from March*

Berne Weiss Lisbon Worship Group

Minutes of EC meetings are made available to EMES Representatives and are available from the EMES office on request.

EMES also appoints a nominations committee.

Staffing

At the Annual Meeting, EMES appointed a new Executive Secretary, Michael Eccles, and noted the appointment of our new Assistant Secretary, Jez Smith. We also said farewell to Marisa Johnson, our outgoing Executive Secretary, and Julia Ryberg, our former Ministry & Outreach Co-ordinator. They both served EMES for over ten years and will be greatly missed.

Staff in 2020

Executive Secretary

Marisa Johnson Britain YM *to April*

Michael Eccles Britain YM *from May*

Assistant Secretary

Michael Eccles Britain YM *to April*

Jez Smith Switzerland YM *from May*

Finance

We have completed our first year of our 3-year funding from Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust (JRCT) and what an unusual year it has been! We soon realised that the Covid-19 pandemic was going to seriously affect our finances and in April we revised our budget. There was no travel or seminars after March 2020 as everything moved online, and by the end of the year our expenditure was considerably lower than even the revised budget.

Thanks to the financial support from Yearly, Monthly Meetings and individuals in addition to JRCT grant our income was mainly as budgeted. We had anticipated lower dividends on our investments with Rathbones Investments, but they recovered from the drop in the second quarter and by the end of the year showed a slight increase.

The accounts for 2019 were presented by the new Treasurer and approved by the Annual Meeting in May. The Annual Meeting agreed to the appointment of Fortus Business Advisors & Accountants (formerly Haines Watts Chartered Accountants), of Huntingdon, UK as the independent examiner of the EMES accounts for 2020.

We welcomed our newly appointed Assistant Treasurer, Peter Spreij from Netherlands Yearly Meeting as a guest to our executive committee meeting in June. With the help of Netherlands Yearly Meeting a new Euro account was opened in the Netherlands.

With so much of the section's work now moving online we realised that this could lead to making it difficult for individuals who lack the resources, whether they be hardware, software, connection capability or training to actively engage in this development. The Digital Equality Fund was set up with the aim of promoting digital equality within the section by making small grants to individuals.

The Spiritual Growth Fund continues to provide grants to meetings.

Representatives

All Yearly Meetings, Monthly Meetings and meetings in the Section appoint representatives to FWCC-EMES. Details of this are outlined in the EMES constitution. Representatives usually serve for three years and can be reappointed once. All representatives are invited to attend the EMES Annual Meeting and monthly online Representatives & Roleholders Gatherings.

Annual Meeting

The EMES AM was held in May and about 60 Friends gathered around the theme of Heeding the prophecy of our sons and daughters, daring to dream dreams and see visions (Joel 2,28).

We were early among Quakers to hold such a complex online meeting but we planned in detail and included many of the elements of an in person meeting such as a workshop, speaker sessions, home groups and a social evening alongside our usual business sessions. We attracted a wider, more diverse audience than is usually possible in person. Afterwards, we shared guidance on our experiences, which has been used by meetings and groups around the world.

You can read more about the EMES 2020 Annual Meeting here:

fwccemes.org/news/emes-annual-meeting-2020

Communication

During the autumn we spent time reviewing some of the ways we work and trying new things. We started monthly online meetings for EMES Representatives and Roleholders, and set up a Facebook group to encourage Friends in the Section to stay in contact with each other. We carried out a survey of our Representatives in late 2020 and hope to use the results to adapt our work to meet identified needs in the future.

We send regular news emails to approximately 150 Friends 2-4 times each month and maintain an active presence on social media (Facebook, Instagram and Twitter), alongside using our website to keep Friends up to date.

In April we moved EMES email and file storage to Google Workplace, the corporate version of Gmail and Gdrive made available to charities free of charge. This has given us more opportunities for easier collaboration between the staff and executive committee and offered us simpler ways to share documents with Representatives and other Friends.

Sign up to our regular news emails here:

fwccemes.org/newsletter

Peace & Service Consultation

The Peace and Service Consultation brings people together who are actively involved in peace and/or service work as staff, volunteers, in governance roles or as supporters and activists.

This year, 35 people from 14 countries and representing 30 organisations attended the event. Originally set to be held in Bad Pyrmont in Germany, this event was held online in late November.

In plenary sessions and home groups participants told each other about the peace and service work that their various organisations and committees are engaged in. A wide range of threads, topics and common work emerged, such as rethinking security, Alternatives to Violence programmes, climate issues, changing to work with a more localised focus, more online communications and networking due to the pandemic and the challenges connected to this, funding difficulties and the long- and short-term consequences of such situations, and finding a Quaker voice. 'Living on the edge' and what that might mean for different people and groups was also an important issue.

Key note speakers were Judith Moran of Quaker Social Action who spoke on personal and organisational resilience and Swiss Quaker Nadja Schnetzler, of Generation Purpose, who led two interactive workshops on collaboration.

The annual event was supplemented by monthly sessions that began in July and helped deepen connections. Most sessions were in the worship-sharing format on subjects as diverse as fundraising and joy. One session, on international human rights day (10 December) on migration was led by Laurel Townhead and Najmah Ali from the Quaker UN Office.

More information is available here:

fwccemes.org/emes/peace-and-service-consultation

Work with children & young people

EMES is keen to create an all age community of Quakers in the Section. One way we are developing this is through our work with children and young people.

We had hoped to hold a gathering for 16-18 year olds at new year 2019-20 but unfortunately there was not enough interest to make it viable and Covid-19 prevented us from organising any in person events in 2020.

In December, we held our first online European Quaker youth group for 14-18 year olds – 12 people attended from 6 countries. After that event we decided to go forward holding monthly European Quaker youth group meetings for 14-18 year olds in 2021.

There is more information on our Quaker Youth Programmes webpage:
fwccemes.org/emes/quaker-youth-programmes

Spiritual Growth Fund

Our Spiritual Growth Fund continues to support meetings and their work. We gave four grants in 2020. Examples of the grants made in 2020 include the translation of some early Quaker texts into Estonian, a mediation project in Moscow and work translating Quaker material by Netherlands YM. The fund also provides longer term support for some of the Quaker work in the Section such as the work of Stop Fuelling War in Paris and supporting the Central European Gathering.

You can find more information here:
fwccemes.org/emes/emes-spiritual-growth-fund

Digital Equality Fund

In June EMES launched a Digital Equality Fund to help Friends get online, either by supporting them in buying a device, or internet connection or by offering training. We have given three grants from this fund so far; one to buy a device to allow a Friend to take part in online worship, another to a worship group to better allow them to hold online worship and to pay for Zoom training for a group of Friends so they could meet online more effectively.

You can find more information here:
fwccemes.org/emes/emes-digital-equality-fund

Worship around the Section

Most Friends around the Section are now meeting for worship online or in a blended form. We are learning from each other about how to do this better and EMES has supported Friends and meetings with their online worship when we have been asked.

We put together a page on our website listing meetings around the Section, open to receiving visitors from other countries, and many Friends have taken the opportunity to do some of this international intervisitation. We have also heard some positive stories about better connections being made in countries where Friends are very scattered and sometimes isolated and are now able to join together for online worship regularly.

See the list of meetings open to receiving visitors here: fwccemes.org/calendar/online-meetings-for-worship-around-europe-the-middle-east

Support for Friends & meetings

The Quaker in Europe online course, introducing Quakerism to newcomers in many different languages, ran in Czech and Polish. We started working with Quakers in France on how to update the course to meet their needs. At the same time, we began work on a redevelopment of the course to reflect the evolution of online learning in recent years.

We had a pastoral visit to Moscow planned to take place in March by two Friends but unfortunately that had to be cancelled at the last minute due to the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. We are sad that we have not been able to arrange visits to isolated Friends and smaller, newer, groups of Friends around the Section and look forward to this being possible again in the future. We have tried to stay in touch with isolated Friends and smaller groups of Friends and through our monthly online Representatives and Roleholders gatherings have managed to stay connected – in some cases better than before Covid-19 – with some of them. We supported some meetings to make their e-groups more secure.

FWCC Central Executive Committee

The Clerk and Executive Secretary of EMES serve as members of the FWCC Central Executive Committee (CEC) along with their counterparts from the other FWCC Sections and the FWCC World Office. The CEC was due to meet in Brussels in June but this meeting was held online over several days.

Because the committee membership is from around the world it was only possible to meet for two or three hours each day at a time which was possible for everyone. The CEC also met online for shorter meetings on five other occasions.

Some of the key issues considered by the CEC include, the recruitment of a new General Secretary to replace Gretchen Castle who retires in autumn 2021, the postponement of the next FWCC World Plenary Meeting due to be held in Southern Africa from 2023 to 2024. The CEC also considered how to support Friends meetings suffering particularly badly from the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Partnership work

We continue to work closely with other Quaker organisations in the Section and in February 2020 made a partnership with Woodbrooke about online worship, which we now jointly run. This was just before the Covid-19 lockdown when we were holding just three meetings for worship per week. Now online worship is held twelve times per week

There is more information here:
woodbrooke.org.uk/worship



International membership

The Executive Secretary serves on the FWCC World Office International Membership Applications Committee that oversees and supports international members of the Religious Society of Friends around the world.

These are people who want to become members but live in an area where there is not a Yearly Meeting or other Quaker body they can formally join. There are approximately 60 international members in our Section.

Some of these Friends are part of existing worship groups or other Quaker meetings while others are more isolated. EMES tries to stay in touch with these Friends and to ensure that they are aware of our activities and invited to our events.

During 2020 four new people became international members in Georgia, Poland, Portugal and Slovenia. At the end of 2020 there were a total of 60 international members in our Section.



■ Moscow, Russia



■ Florence, Italy



■ Georgia



■ Poland

Reports from Yearly Meetings, Monthly Meetings and Groups



■ Church & Peace

Belgium and Luxembourg Yearly Meeting

It has been a trying year for us, as for Friends all over the world. We have had to learn to enjoy online Meeting for Worship, something some have found easier than others. Although during the initial lockdown many of us found pleasure in the time that had been given to us, a time where there were no outside pressure and obligations pulling us in all sorts of different directions, as the months passed, this time became a burden to some, especially those living in isolated situations. Meeting online has also enabled geographically distant Friends to attend meeting more often.

We have tried to overcome the isolation by organizing mid-week Meetings for Worship, online social times, meetings for eating and other such activities as well as trying to ensure that we stay in contact with those isolated Friends who live alone and were finding the solitude difficult to bear.

Lockdown offered an opportunity to some to reflect on their lives and experiences, a reflection that was expressed in a series of 'Corona letters'. These profound and uplifting thoughts can be found on our website, quakers-belux.org.

Last year we reported that we had been preoccupied with Eldership and Oversight. Since then we have been able to nominate Friends to both roles and now have active and engaged Overseers and Elders, a fact for which we are extremely grateful. The process was long but the Spirit was strong! As several other meetings are doing, we are discerning our maintenance of the word 'Overseer' it having a historical link with slavery, despite it being the traditional term used in our Society.

In October we held our Yearly Meeting online. The theme was 'Letting Our Lives Speak: Linking Quaker Theology, Spirituality and Social Action' and our speaker was Craig Barnett, member of Britain Yearly Meeting and author of *The Guided Life*. Craig reminded us to 'Take heed...to the promptings of love and truth in [our] hearts' (Advices and Queries 1). He used his own spiritual journey as an example of lived action from those promptings, reminding us that the teacher is within.

Our second speaker was Anya Nanning Ramamurthy, a British Friend and climate justice activist who is engaged in the UK Student Climate Network. Anya encourages Friends to recognise that we cannot work against climate breakdown without addressing inequalities and social injustices.

We were all extremely heartened by this rich and rewarding weekend spent in virtual community. »

A small number of Friends have maintained their activities supporting migrants in Brussels and our Meeting has financially supported the running of a house that is made available to small groups of migrants at a time. This facility gives them time off the streets and with warmth and food.

Many other Friends are involved in many other activities that are too numerous to cite, but it would be remiss to overlook the formation of a small group of Belgian and Dutch Friends into a

‘Quakers for Peace’ movement that regularly reminds us of our testimonies to peace and social justice through the provision of a calendar, and bookmarks, to mention just two.

Ruth Harland Clerk

Britain Yearly Meeting

At the start of 2020 we were looking forward to Yearly Meeting Gathering in Bath in July. Also, Friends representing BYM were expecting to meet Friends representing other YMs in EMES for the annual meeting to be held in Paris. But in March everything changed.

Overnight we learnt new terms such as Covid-19, shielding for vulnerable people, self-isolation, and lockdown, as the government imposed restrictions on our everyday life. Schools closed, shops closed, and our social life moved online and outside, but only during our daily walks. As the year ended, the UK, as did many other countries, returned to even more restricted living as the pandemic continues to dominate our lives. 2020 became a year like no other.

Friends House and Swarthmoor Hall closed, most staff working for the Quiet Company (the company looking after the buildings and in normal times generating income for BYM) were furloughed alongside nearly half of those working on the delivery of BYM’s charitable activities, and other staff began to work entirely from home. Despite this, staff worked flexibly to ensure that advice was available to meetings about worship in times of Covid-19 and safe premises management as well as longer term matters such as safeguarding. Suddenly the discussion about becoming a simple church and a simple charity became something we all needed to examine for our own Local and Area Meetings.

Yearly Meeting Gathering (due to take place in Bath in August) was postponed and the EMES annual meeting moved online. Local Meetings had to find innovative ways to meet for Worship. This included helping each other

to access Worship online, locally, across BYM and across the world. Some of this help was with the necessary gadgets and some was confidence building about how to be in touch online. At a Quaker Life Representative Council in November, we heard of other ways Friends were meeting face to face, outside in parks and in Quaker burial grounds for example. Some Meetings were able to offer blended Worship with some people meeting in the same place face-to-face and others joining them online. Using online resources, British Friends were able to be in direct contact with Friends in other Yearly Meetings, for Worship and fellowship of other sorts, and this has been an unexpected benefit. We have remained strong in the spirit even if we have not always been able to Worship in our usual ways.

Even before the Covid-19 pandemic arrived, BYM's spending was greater than its income. There was a five-year plan in place to move steadily from this situation to one where we had a balanced budget. The pandemic changed that. BYM continues to actively support Quaker faith and witness and to support staff. Consequently, there is now a need to move to a balanced budget more quickly – over three years rather than five, and to a budget that is smaller than we had planned. This is giving many of us pause for thought.

Quaker Peace & Social Witness (QPSW) held its Summer Series to maintain support for the Quaker community, hit hard by the pandemic. Amid the shock, confusion, and fear, it felt important to offer online spaces in which Friends could still gather and be together. Across ten well-attended weekly sessions, Quakers and the Quaker-curious came together to discuss where they felt led to act. Each session was also a chance to showcase the work of QPSW and of some of our key partners. Topics included spirituality, climate justice, peace activism, and building a new economy in the UK.

The Local Development Worker project continues to grow across BYM with additional staff to be employed in 2021. The LDWs work across areas bigger than Area Meetings but smaller than Yearly Meeting to offer extra support to individual Friends or Meetings as they work to strengthen Quaker life in their local community.

The Swarthmore Lecture went ahead online as planned with Tom Shakespeare offering us much to reflect upon. If you missed it, please see it at: youtu.be/N-OJoq0jNAk

All of this experience culminated in an online Yearly Meeting on Sunday 15th November. Almost 1000 people met to Worship and in the manner of Friends to consider such essential matters as finance and reports from Trustees and Meeting for Sufferings. Some of the usual business was delegated to Meeting for Sufferings to ensure everything would have due consideration, »

although perhaps not at YM as originally planned. We have remained strong in the spirit and in our witness despite the challenges.

Our ongoing urgent priorities remain the Climate Emergency and racism, spurred on by Black Lives Matter, within an ongoing concern about how we see the world through the lens of privilege. The Epistle from YM was circulated online and reminds us “We have hope”.

quaker.org.uk/documents/epistle-bym-2020

Our Young Friends and children continued to meet in different groups online. In August, an online programme was offered to further build our community of younger Friends with details shown via

quaker.org.uk/events/ypp-online

As we reach the end of 2020, a year like no other, we cherish the opportunities to strengthen our relationships online and face-to-face when and where possible and to build our community of faith whatever restrictions constrain our lives.

Quakers in Britain Yearly Meeting remain strong in the spirit and in our witness and we have hope for the future.

Quaker World Relations Committee



Central European Gathering

The CEG has Members and attenders from Meetings in the following countries: Austria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Ukraine.

We also have individual Friends from Slovenia, and our online Meetings this year, held because of the Covid-19 pandemic, have enabled visitors from Germany, Portugal, Russia and the UK to join us regularly, including our Elders, Jalka from Vienna and Cathy Butler from England.

Our in person CEG meetings were limited to one, in February 2020, and we had a short Meeting for Business online in May. Kasia Kaczmarkiewicz attended the EMES AM online as well as regular monthly EMES Representatives & Roleholders Gatherings.

The unity of the CEG and its importance to us and to people from outside the gathering has been made very clear by the fact that from April we have had 2 meetings a month online, one in the morning, with an average attendance of 12 and one in the evening, with 8 people. Prague Friends, when able to meet together in the city, sometimes joined us online, technology permitting.

The CEG virtual meetings continued through the summer, even though we were freer to do other activities, and many of us have expressed the hope that they will continue after lockdown, at least once a month.

Kasia Kaczmarkiewicz and **Liz Coling**,
CEG Clerks

Czech Republic, Prague Meeting

As everywhere, 2020 was a strange year in the Czech Republic, dominated by the Covid-19 pandemic. It showed people here at their disciplined and supportive best, following distancing and lockdown rules, helping less able neighbours, sewing hundreds of masks. Later, Covid-19 fatigue and scepticism was evident, faith in politicians decreased, the numbers of sick and dead increased and will not improve for several weeks yet. We put our trust in the vaccines and higher powers.

This year our activities were wholly centred in or organised from Prague, with an average meeting size, in person or via Zoom, of 4.5 Friends and attenders. The lower number compared with 2019 was mainly because

children rarely joined online. Despite the difficulties, we managed to welcome several visitors to worship and share a meal with us. Zoom Meetings meant that sometimes Friends from outside the Czech Republic participated or we joined MfW in e.g. Germany, the UK and Portugal.

7 members of the Religious Society of Friends now live in the Czech Republic and for the first time our Meeting has an Elder, Gerry Turner. We all take responsibility, but Gerry will help make Meetings more effective and ensure we follow good Quaker practice.

The Single Parent Project, started in 2017, has one volunteer counsellor and we »

provide food packages. We still maintain links with a local networking organisation (hearth.net), and our Meeting space is a centre for the exchange of goods.

In recognition of the huge threat of the climate emergency, several of us joined in activities organised by the Czech Extinction Rebellion group. See fwccemes.org/news/among-friends-issue-149-autumn-2020 for a description of one Friend's ongoing journey.

During a pandemic The Prague Peace Trail (praguepeacetrail.org) or sections of it, could be everyone's perfect daily exercise route and we continued to encourage visitors to follow it!

We are still updating the Czech Quakers' Wikipedia pages and finalising a translation from the Dutch of Erik Dries's book, Simply Quakers. This publication will use the last of our Bader Philanthropies (bader.org) earmarked funds.

The development of Quaker-friendly materials for children (started in 2018), is

progressing well, with a planned presentation cancelled due to Covid-19.

Online, several people attended Woodbrooke's Radical Spirituality course and Pavel Marusinec ran the Being a Quaker course in Czech.

The Central European Group's (CEG) planned May AGM in Litomysl, CR, was cancelled, although we did have a virtual MfB. Since April there have been twice monthly CEG MfW, offering spiritual and social support to Czech Friends.

So, no Night of Churches, no carol singing under Charles Bridge, few meals together or afternoon sessions to discuss topics of interest. Yet the Covid-19 pandemic has had silver linings – a slower pace of life for many, more awareness of the importance of loved ones however distant, more frequent connection with Friends in CEG, and, for many of us, a crash course in online communication!

Liz Coling Clerk

Denmark Yearly Meeting

The YM website is: quakercloud.org/cloud/kv-kerne-vennernes-religi-se-samfund and the email address is kvaekerne@gmail.com.

Europe & Middle East Young Friends (EMEYF)

2020 did not develop the way we anticipated but was marked by the global pandemic hindering travel, which has been essential to our annual gatherings. This forced upon us a switch to virtual gatherings and community building.

Our joyfully anticipated Summer Gathering in which we hoped to test a few new ideas, turned into a Special Gathering held online using the platform veertly – and we ended up developing and testing a whole new set of new ideas. About 20 Friends from around Europe joined the ad hoc special version of our social gathering and limited our business to only essential concerns. Our focus was on sustaining community and through writing postcards and sharing photos of offline activities we tried to link our online experience to the “real” world. Through the online format our gathering experience shifted, and we explored new ways to connect with each other. We invite you to visit our epistle of this special gathering experience:

emeyf.org/sites/emeyf.org/files/epistle_sg2020p.pdf

With no end of Covid-19 in sight we picked up with the online gathering where we left off and also held our first virtual Annual Meeting in November. We moved from veertly to a wordpress based page we designed as a hub for Annual Meeting, linking the events in the agenda to different jitsi “rooms” with names inspired by the names of the rooms in Quaker House Bad Pyrmont where our gathering would have been if we had met in person. We considered the different ways in which we joined the online meeting, and different events happening in our daily lives, just as there would be if we were travelling from our different countries by different means of transport to meet in person. We explored ways of connecting online and tried new approaches for the nomination process online. We were tasked with finding many new role holders and found many fresh Friends to join in in upholding our community. As one of the outcomes we have been meeting weekly for semi-formal workshop or worship evenings together, using the platform jitsi.

Between gatherings our Willy & Penn Editorial team continues to collect and post thoughts and reflections from the wider community with the world: willyandpenn.com.

Make sure you’re subscribed if not already, for staying in touch with EMEYF and joining in on topics that move our community. Our Living Archive Project also continues, although the pandemic has posed some challenges for engagement with the archived correspondence which is mostly stored at Quaker House, Brussels. Our Living Archive Project workshop at Annual Meeting focussed on new forms of gathering, using one of the digitised archives in which past young Friends had explored new ideas for creating community.

Leyna Garrettson and Marcie Winstanley,
on behalf of EMEYF Communications Committee and the wider community



Estonia – Tallinn Worship Group

Due to the Covid-19, most Tallinn Friends' meetings were virtual. The first gathering physically occurred in June when Friends from Lithuania visited us. Stricter rules nationally did not allow any such gatherings any more, and communications thereafter were via the Internet.

A number of youth from different backgrounds interested in Quakerism have joined us. Some of our members have expressed a wish for International Membership status.

The support by EMES Spiritual Growth Fund and the Digital Equality Fund for the purchase of an iPad has facilitated our members to participate in virtual meetings.

We participated in the Black Lives Matter demonstration in Tallinn where representatives from numerous human rights organisations gathered on June 10. Speeches and chanting took place, complemented with the sounding of automobile horns and the carrying of signs.

The translation of the epistles of George Fox continues. Finding a translator for the challenging text took some time and we hope that the Estonian language text will be ready soon. We want to express a special thanks to Michael Eccles who was of great help in getting support for this project.

In July, we helped a family farm in Estonia to pick strawberries. Some of the berries were given to needy families and some to children's homes.

We observed the UN International Day of Peace on September 21 virtually, calling on people to use water sparingly. We had a panel discussion and recommendations as well as proposals were made on the use of water, especially on storage of potable water.

Roland Rand Clerk

Finland Yearly Meeting

Friends in Finland meet in three local groups: in Helsinki, in Tampere, and thirdly the Northern Friends group in the Northern parts of the country. The Yearly Meeting holds biannual gatherings in Spring and in Autumn for business and spiritual nourishment. The YM also coordinates our networks and communication channels and publishes our Quaker News newsletter twice a year. Furthermore, in 2020 we began monthly online meetings for worship as a way for Friends to come together.

In Helsinki, we held weekly meetings in early 2020 and again in September until the end of November. Before the pandemic began, in February we organised sort of an open doors day (as they always are), which at the same time celebrated the 80th birthday of a Friend. The event gathered together 80 people: family, friends and Friends for silent worship, celebration and a short introduction to Quakers. Our latest joint effort in early 2021 is with the Salvation Army in providing food support for the homeless and the addicted, whose assistance services have now declined due to the pandemic.

2020 was exceptional in Tampere as well. The pandemic heavily affected thoughts, moods, and actions. Our meetings ceased in the spring for nearly three months, but we were able to continue a few times during the summer and weekly in the autumn up until the end of November. The decrease in the number of our meetings highlighted the Quaker belief that faith manifests itself as a service in everyday life. Friends have spread the Quaker message of light and peace throughout their networks in the region, local parishes, clubs and nonprofits.

Northern Friends in Finland remain a widely spread group, but even so in warm and regular contact with each other by email and phone. We had two face to face day meetings in Muhos in 2020 (in July and in October), which were really appreciated by all who participated. One of us has been grateful for being a regular participant in the on-line meetings for worship, organised from April onwards, as every mfw is a bonus when living at a distance. We had two loose enquiries which raised our hopes for a while, but possibly because of the Covid-19 situation the contacts did not continue. We were unfortunately not able to meet between Christmas and New Year as we often do but look forward to more fellowship in 2021.

During the year we learnt new ways to meet and work together. Online meetings helped many to participate over long distances and strict regulations. In April we held our Spring meeting online for the first time and in September we were able to have the Autumn meeting as a face mask to face mask meeting in Ilkko near Tampere. Ten friends were able to come and one also joined online. The meeting gave us a hopeful feeling about the direction our community is heading towards. Slowly but surely, it feels we are building a good foundation for the future.

Ari Kurlin

France Yearly Meeting

France Yearly Meeting adapted quickly to Covid-19 restrictions and continued to explore ways to live adventurously as Friends in difficult times.

Business meetings moved online and a Zoom worship group, giving a lovely opportunity to reconnect with isolated friends. Paris, Toulouse, Nantes and Congenies meetings continued to meet online and in person when possible, and worship groups in Lille and Nouvelle Aquitaine region have grown.

Our Resident Friends, Marie Lebacq and Nick White, are finishing their stay at the Congenies Quaker Center. So many visitors have benefited from their affable and efficient welcome! We look forward to welcoming new Resident Friends in June 2021.

FYM supports Friends at the International Quaker Center in Paris as they change premises. Although no longer at the rue Vaugirard address, Paris meeting continues to worship at a temporary venue and hopes to welcome international visitors again when travel resumes.

Our 2020 Yearly Meeting in Paris was cancelled. Instead, before our online business meeting in November 2020, French friends held worship for sharing on the theme of a post-Covid-19 world. We plan on coming together in the Light at our 2021 Yearly Meeting (October 29 to November 1, 2021) in Martillac near Bordeaux. Information soon at quakersenfrance.org

The year ahead promises new challenges ; we remain serene in Friendship.

Kim Chevalier

Georgia Worship Group

2020 was extremely difficult for the whole world. The Covid-19 pandemic affected every country on planet Earth. Many states went into isolation. Hundreds of millions lost their jobs worldwide, many businesses have gone bankrupt.

The Covid-19 pandemic took the lives of 2 million people. We, Friends in Georgia, hope and pray that all of these difficulties were left in 2020 and 2021 will bring us happiness and light.

Georgian Friends

German Yearly Meeting

The impact of the pandemic on our Yearly Meeting has of course slowed some of our initiatives and led to the cancellation of many plans. Most regional gatherings over the past year have been held online and our annual meeting was also in digital form. Friends in most parts of Germany are permitted to meet for worship in person, but must follow a strict hygiene protocol and have to wear masks in the meeting.

Despite these circumstances, Friends have grown in the spirit in new ways. Our Yearly Meeting now holds a monthly meeting for worship online, and several of the area meetings are doing the same at an even higher frequency. Some Friends who live far from other Friends have been able to participate again in the life of the Yearly Meeting after years of isolation. Attendees continue to find us and people have appeared in online gatherings who have never been to a “real” Quaker meeting. We are both challenged and inspired by these changes.

Important work has proceeded even in the face of the restrictions imposed by Covid-19:

- We are making steady progress with the development of a policy for safeguarding our children.
- Many Friends continue to be engaged in forms of protest against the housing of atomic weapons in Büchel.
- Work is continuing on the translation of George Fox's diaries into German.
- We have consolidated our various bank accounts within the YM, at the same time ensuring that we can continue to allocate our resources with ethical institutions.
- After years of struggling with the question of the future of Quaker House in Bad Pyrmont, we have made the decision

to preserve our only meeting house and develop sustainable design ideas for it in the coming year.

- Our Children's Committee continues to support our young people with their own online gatherings and also with surprising and delightful communications by post.

The theme of our annual Richard Cary Lecture, heard via Zoom during our annual meeting, was "Connected in the Light". At that gathering we also heard that for the third year in a row we've seen a net increase in the number of members.

We hope to continue to grow in numbers and grow in our connections, both online and in person, whatever unexpected trials the coming years may bring.

Annie Janssen



■ German YM Quakerhaus

Kate McNally

Online Meetings for the Middle East

1 Jan – 31 Dec 2021

Updated January 2021

Below is a list of some meetings
happy to welcome visitors
considerate when visiting

If your meeting is holding
this page or your meeting

or Worship around Europe &



etings that are currently meeting online and are
from other meetings. Please remember to be
another meeting.

online worship and you would like to be included
ting's entry needs updating, please get in touch
of this page.

Hungary, Evangelical Friends Church in Tolna

My wife and I were in quarantine. I had Covid-19. The police control us every day, we were at home. Before we renovated our church house in Tolna the last week in October. After I was cold... and I started antibiotics cure for 7 days. After 7 days I was not better. I had a high fever and bad cough. After some days my doctor sent me for a Covid-19 test. This test was positive. Also some of our church members got Covid-19... After 2 months I have a headache and little fever... but at this time I am better.

We have hope about our mission in the future. But at this time we can't use the community houses in Pécs, Budapest and Ozora, they closed because of Covid-19. But everybody is looking forward to meeting in person! At this time we use Zoom for all our church meetings of EFC Hungary. (Sunday morning 10:00-12:00 we have youth Zoom church meetings and in the afternoon 17:00-19:00 we have Zoom church meetings for everybody in EFC Hungary.) During the last week of January 2021 we started our EFC Hungary leaders (prayers and discussion) meeting in person every Thursday evening and last Sunday we started meeting in person at our church meeting in our Mission Center Tolna.

During normal times we have church meetings in Budapest every Sunday morning. We have children's church meetings every 4th Sunday in Budapest. So, we can invite unbeliever youth and we can invite unbeliever families with their children to our church meetings. This is a good vision in the mission at this time! We also visit Ozora Gipsy church every Friday afternoon. We can use a cultural house. They love us very much!

We have some new co-workers / youth, families in Pécs, Ozora, Budapest, Tolna and Kölked. (Józsi bácsi – our Gipsy pastor – was very sick and he went to an old people's care home, this nursing home is 2 km from Kölked, in the forest, very nice. I think he is better!

We can't visit our mission in Croatia and Serbia because of Covid-19. (This is very sad for everybody!) :(

I have very good news! After 8 years we got our EFC Hungary Church registration! So, we are not Religious Association, we are an Evangelical Friends Church again! This is a very big miracle! Praise the Lord!

From January 2021 my daughter Betti (she is an English teacher) and Kinga, my church leader Silvia's daughter (she has intermediate English) will help me in the EFC Hungary Office! We wish you good health, Happy and Blessed New Year! Greetings for everybody!

Tony & Ági

Ireland Yearly Meeting

Friends in Ireland have appreciated the weekly email circulated by the office in Dublin, which lists all our online Meetings and highlights any online activities organised by Meetings. It is remarkable how quickly many Meetings adapted to the sudden lockdown due to the pandemic.

We built up our IT skills quickly in order to meet online. Probably Larger Meetings have coped with this change more readily than smaller Meetings. Some Friends have engaged fully with online Meeting for Worship and others do not find virtual Meetings helpful to them or some do not have online facilities. Undoubtedly Friends miss meeting face to face.

Irish Friends were shocked and deeply saddened by the death of Waterford Friend Nigel Pim from Covid-19 in January 2021. Nigel was just 51 years old and a very much loved and respected member of the Waterford community.

On a brighter note the exciting new building project at Cork Meeting was completed in Summer, 2020 although with the restrictions imposed by Covid-19, it has hardly been used by Cork Friends since it was “opened”. It thankfully has been possible for the building to be used by a kindergarten and a number of self-help groups throughout all but the most severe periods of lockdown.

In November Friends in Leinster Quarterly Meeting hosted Bradley Laird, from Illinois Yearly Meeting, who spoke on the theme “A Prayer, a Stick and an Ocean”. Bradley spoke about a concern for social action, particularly around racism and white privilege. He

spoke movingly about how the middle-class (Quaker) focus on process and procedures can sideline on-the-ground activism. He encouraged us to ‘run to conflict’ if we are to engage others and (perhaps) attract members with more pragmatic and immediate reactions to social injustice.

Friends in Ulster Quarterly Meeting have engaged in a variety of activities both online and socially distanced as required. Friends have maintained contact with prisoners online, facilitated by the Prison Service, and continued to fundraise in aid of Quaker Service by organising an online craft fair and take away afternoon tea and holding an online quiz. Whilst the Quaker Service shop has been closed for much of the year, online sales have continued, and Quaker Cottage has been able to offer some services to families.

Friends in South Belfast were introduced online to the Loving earth project, a climate change initiative by Quakers. Several Friends have completed textile panels for the travelling exhibition, to be displayed during the UN Conference on Climate Change in Glasgow in November 2021. The South Belfast Eco group has grown and expanded and held regular online presentations and discussions on a variety of issues. During the lockdown of spring 2020, Friends took part in a gratefulness video project which is on the website southbelfastquakers.org

The beautifully renovated and rejuvenated Hillsborough Meeting House now hosts online worship and virtual lunch meetings twice monthly. Frederick St Friends were delighted to host a very small wedding for Johnny Poole and Irene Chong in December. »

Irish Friends were very disappointed that Ireland Yearly Meeting, scheduled for April 2020, had to be cancelled due to the pandemic.

This was particularly true for Ulster Friends, who had looked forward to welcoming Friends to Belfast for the first time in some years. It is planned to hold Ireland Yearly Meeting 2021 online during April 8-11, 2021.

One great benefit of online Meetings for Worship is that it has enabled some Irish Friends who live far from established Meetings or Worship Groups to attend Meeting for Worship regularly, in some cases for the first time in years. Online

Meetings have also made it easy for Friends to attend a great variety of geographically spread-out Meetings, and link around the world family of Friends and with former Members, now living elsewhere.

Enquirers continue to find us, through our online presence and we are pleased to welcome new attenders to our online Meetings. Friends old and young have enjoyed and benefited from meeting online with Friends around Europe on a regular basis throughout the year through the FWCC-EMES section Meetings.

Bronwen Haire

Italy: Bologna Worship Group

We meet regularly twice a month (the 2nd and the 4th Sunday of every month) we used to meet in person in via Lombardia, 36 – Bologna [in the “School for Peace” Library of Quartiere Savena] from 11:00 a.m. but from March to June 2020 and from November till now, due to the pandemic, we meet online (we use Google Meet, to get the link, please email luciabiondelli@gmail.com).

We have extended the online meetings to friends in the South of Italy (Salerno and Ragusa in Sicily) and in other parts, also abroad, but, at the same time, we see Friends who attended the Meetings in presence who resent/don't like this “distant” way of meeting...

Some Friends of our Bologna Meeting take part in the online meetings organised by the Florence group on the 1st, 3rd and the 5th Sunday of every month and they really like the opportunity to have Meeting for Worship every Sunday, but it is limited to those who understand and speak English, as this is the language used by the Florence group.

Lucia Biondelli

Middle East Yearly Meeting, Ramallah Monthly Meeting

This year, our world began and ended as no one had ever imagined. There have been many highs and lows in dealing with these difficult challenges as humans. Sadly, it has been marked by instability, fear, and most importantly a major lifestyle change.

Early in 2020, when Covid-19 started making news around the world, at the time it was not creating an issue in the tourism industry, and people were able to travel throughout without any restrictions or consequences. In January and February 2020 Ramallah Friends Meeting had the privilege to host a few of the following organisations through meeting for Worship, academic sessions with Jean and other speakers, and by taking part in work activities:

- Local Organisation: SIRAJ Bethlehem, SABEEL, Holy Land Trust.
- Educational Organisations from the USA: Swarthmore College.
Phillips Theological Seminary.

During the Ramallah lockdown which began in March 2020 and lasted for two months, Ramallah Friends Meeting had to close due to the severe restrictions regulations that were imposed throughout the country, thus making it hard for Sunday worshippers to meet in person, however, we stayed connected to the worshipping community through our social media platforms (Facebook and email communication).

Not only has Covid-19 affected our worshipping and group programs, but it has also affected our outreach and special education program, led by Mai Zaru, a special education teacher. This program had to change from a physical location to a virtual teaching online which was challenging to the students as most of them have disabilities and are used to one-on-one teaching in a classroom. Despite that Mai has managed to complete the program with determination and perseverance. Sadly, our outreach and special education program came to end in June 2020 as Mai has moved back to the United States to pursue a PhD degree for the next four years.

We start the new year with renewed hope and optimism and trust we will be able to broaden our ministry of hospitality and community engagement. In the meantime, we continue to explore opportunities of service through meaningful partnerships within the local community.

Saleem F. Zaru Clerk

Netherlands Yearly Meeting

The past year has been a difficult one for the life of our Yearly Meeting as well as our four Monthly Meetings. Due to the pandemic most Meetings for Worship and/or business could not be held in the way Friends are accustomed to. Meeting one another in person became difficult due to the Covid-19 rules for the sake of our health and safety. However, Friends regularly organised digital meetings for worship which were rather well attended – so we ‘met on screen’. Sometimes Friends from other Yearly Meetings – who master Dutch – even joined in.

Friends also organised digital meetings to ‘nurture the spirit’ in the form of a worship sharing group on the life and work of particular Friends throughout the history of the Religious Society of Friends. Even when the pandemic will be over we feel such digital meetings may well continue to serve the spiritual life of our Yearly Meeting and complement our traditional meetings for worship.

Monthly Meetings at times also resorted to digital meetings for business – particularly those who do not own, but rent a property where meetings are held. We also held a Yearly Meeting session digitally. This proved rather difficult though. It remains challenging to seek the ‘sense of the meeting’ and feel guided by the Spirit in such digital deliberations. Moreover it is fairly difficult to let non-verbal communication play its proper part in these meetings – as we ‘normally’ would in our meetings.

We look forward in the hope that we will overcome this crisis situation and say: ‘we’ll meet again’...

Kees Nieuwerth

Norway Yearly Meeting

2020 started normally with a meeting in February in Stavanger, coordinating ongoing work for the Religious Society of Friends here in Norway. In March we had our normal gathering in the mountains, going skiing and enjoying time together. Then, lockdown started and so we have had most of our meetings online. One of our monthly meetings has been closed the whole period, others have had ‘normal’ meetings for worship in part of the year, and others have had their meetings outdoors. Online meetings have made us more available for people living far away from “normal” meetings, and given more opportunity for people to participate. We have got new members because of this, which we are very thankful for.

But 2020 has also been a hard year concerning membership, as four of our group has died, all of them quite young. We are deeply sorry for this loss and miss all of them a lot.

Yearly Meeting in 2020 should have been a Nordic Yearly Meeting in Sweden, but we had it online instead. We have, during this year, also participated in several interfaith religious services, one Friend in Oslo has become a member of UNE (the board treating complaints about applications for asylum) and participated in several demonstrations.

We are looking forward to more normal times, although we plan for some of our meetings to be held online also in the coming year. But hopefully we will be able to meet at Yearly Meeting in June.

Hanne Hognestad Clerk

Poland: All Poland Gathering

The past year was special and tough for most of us, we had to change our habits, the way we live and work and also our spiritual lives.

In February 2020 we launched a 7-week online Quaker in Europe course on Woodbrooke's moodle platform. The course content was refreshed and gathered about 25 participants. We have also opened the course again this year, this time with 13 participants. Also in February four Polish Friends had an opportunity to take part in preparing a gathering of CEG-Central European Gathering that took place 14-16 February in Vienna. The CEG was planned for May 2020 in Litomyšl, Czechia but, like many other meetings, never happened.

As OZP – Ogólnopolskie Zromadzenie Przyjaciół – All-Poland Gathering we planned two meetings: one preparation meeting in June, and an annual meeting in November, but none of this happened due to the epidemic situation. Instead, we met online on 14th November and more than 20 friends took part. After worship, we listened to a presentation about the micro-practising of peace, read greetings from Michael Eccles and made some decisions that couldn't wait for a regular meeting. We decided to meet once a month for online worship as APG.

Thanks to the support of the Spiritual Growth Fund We have released another publication – God in Silence of Pierre Lacout – translated to Polish by our Friend Martyna Trzcińska.

Because of the impossibility of meeting in person, some Polish regional groups hold meetings for worship on-line: Friends from Białystok, Warsaw and the community of Friends from the South meet usually every week or twice a week (Białystok). At each of these meetings, people from other regions are welcome and we send invitations to each other every time. We stay in contact during these times and we wait to meet face-to-face as soon as it will be possible.

Paweł Milka & Anna Koskowska co-clerks of All-Poland Gathering

Poland: Poznan Worship Group

During the pandemic emergency we have increased the frequency of our meetings for worship and have expanded the content of our notification sheet before each meeting to include educational and inspiring quotations.

Bradius V. Maurus III

Russia, Moscow Monthly Meeting

2020 was unusual for Moscow Monthly Meeting. We were searching for a new place for our silent worship and thankfully we were invited by a community of Father Alexander Men to meet in its premises. One member of this community, Artur Dubrovsky, became a member of our meeting during 2020.

In the spring of 2020 I continued to monitor the situation in Donbass (Eastern Ukraine) where internal armed conflict is still going on. I visited the area twice, Donetsk and Gorlovka in particular.

Our usual activity was stopped due to the pandemic. Over the summer we restarted our silent worship and our meetings of worship sharing.

Alexander (Sasha) Lipatov and me continued to monitor and help LGBT people in particular in Chechnya. I enclose a link with an article where I am one of contributors telling a story of two young Chechen gays who were accused as terrorists in Grozny: kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/361181

In October I had a sad opportunity to visit

Karabakh during the war with Azerbaijan. I have seen the suffering and misery that this war has brought. I had the opportunity to meet and talk with the refugees from Baku and Sumgait, who were forced to leave these Azerbaijani cities as a result of the Armenian pogroms that took place there in 1990. I met refugees from Baku in the basements of Karabakh. It was hard to watch them suffer. I think it is very important that our European Friends know about this.

In Yerevan I have met with the Archbishop of Armenian Catholics Raphael Minassian who was born in Bethlehem. His parents miraculously escaped the 1915 Armenian genocide carried out by the Ottoman authorities. Raphael Minassian met with me to convey his message of peace and his prayerful wish to end the war. *The fighting in Karabakh has stopped since November 10, 2020.*

Despite all the difficulties of 2020, Moscow Friends welcomed the arrival of the new year with joy and hope!

Misha Roshchin Clerk



Spain

Certainly, Covid-19 has affected and changed people's lives around the world with devastating consequences in terms of loss or life and the destruction of the economy, which also affects, in the end, human lives (poverty, isolation, suffering, inequality and worsening of climate change...)

However and surprisingly, we, in Spain, recognise that Covid-19 has had some positive aspects in relation to new opportunities of worshipping together via Zoom or any other app despite social distance and lockdown.

Of course it is not the same as being together in the same room, but it is quite a good substitute in this time of pandemic. Besides, in the case of Spain, where people interested in Quakerism are scattered all over the country, it offered us the opportunity of connecting every Sunday, let's say, at a "national level". Most of us didn't know each other before but we are creating a new and enthusiastic community that looks forward to the time in which we can meet physically.

And what a blessing it is to have from time to time Friends from very distant parts of the world joining us for Meeting for Worship and sharing experiences after silence! The feeling of isolation in small groups disappears and enrichment grows. Thank you Friends.

We, all, are very thankful to the English language Quaker Group in Örgiva (Granada) in the southeast of Spain, that took the initiative of starting meeting for worship via Zoom and invited us in Madrid to join and from there I invited other people interested in Quaker silence and Friends who had no Meeting in their own places.

Carmen Alcalde

Sweden Yearly Meeting

This year was full of ideas and planning for the Nordic YM gathering. It is always with lots of expectations and joy in our hearts we prepare ourselves for this gathering, when we can meet our Friends from Norway, Denmark and Finland. And it was with great sorrow we had to realize that this highlight of the year would have to be cancelled.

Instead, a mid-year meeting was held digitally in June and the annual meeting postponed until November, also digitally as a business meeting only.

In March, right around the weekend of our mid-year meeting, much closed down due to the recommendations to prevent the spread of Covid-19. Friends quickly came up with solutions for hosting online Meetings for Worship.

To our surprise it worked very well, after all the technical problems had been solved. Suddenly, it was also possible for distant Friends to join. Somehow even new attenders found out and joined, making it an important meeting point. Smaller meetings did have physical Meetings for Worship outside during late spring, summer and early autumn.

This year we have welcomed five new Friends into membership and we now have 130 members. Ingmar Hollsing's book 'Tillkomme ditt rike' was finally translated and published in English – 'Thy Kingdom come'. Next project is to send it to those interested to read it. Pierre Lacourt's book 'God is silence' was translated into Swedish and the theme for some retreats and gatherings.

Our well-known author of poems, hymns, songs, children's and adult books, Jeanna Oterdahl also appeared with a new-print of a children's story. The ambitious get-together gatherings at the Quaker Center in Stockholm sadly had to be cancelled but soon appeared on Zoom, again making it possible for distant Friends to participate. The Worship Sharing used regularly in many Meetings will have to wait for the time to meet again in person.

Quaker Service Sweden is now an independent organisation, for juridical and economic reasons, but continues to be seen as a very important part of our Society. There is a separate report from QSS.

Annika Hollsing and Solveig-Karin Erdal

Switzerland Yearly Meeting

The 2020 annual gathering of Switzerland Yearly Meeting was held online on 31 May because of the Covid-19 restrictions. We only held the meeting for business, the theme “Bringing our Leadings into Being”, as well as the keynote presentation by QUNO on their work and its spiritual background, will be postponed to 2021, we hope that we then will be able to meet on the Herzberg near Aarau again.

Another significant gathering was our retreat, held from 7-9 February at Montmirail near Neuchâtel on the theme “Failure” and the sub themes “Resilience and the role of spirituality”.

Geneva Monthly Meeting has been hosting weekly spiritual deepening sessions that have attracted the participation of Friends from several European countries and the US.

We are almost 80 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 and Romanshorn. Organising the SYM Annual Meeting is rotated between the German-speaking groups and Geneva Monthly Meeting and in 2020 would have been carried out by the Geneva Monthly Meeting.

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. The autumn meeting for business was held online in 2020, as will the spring business meeting in 2021.

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

Reports of work around Europe

Church and Peace

Save the Date: 2021 Conference

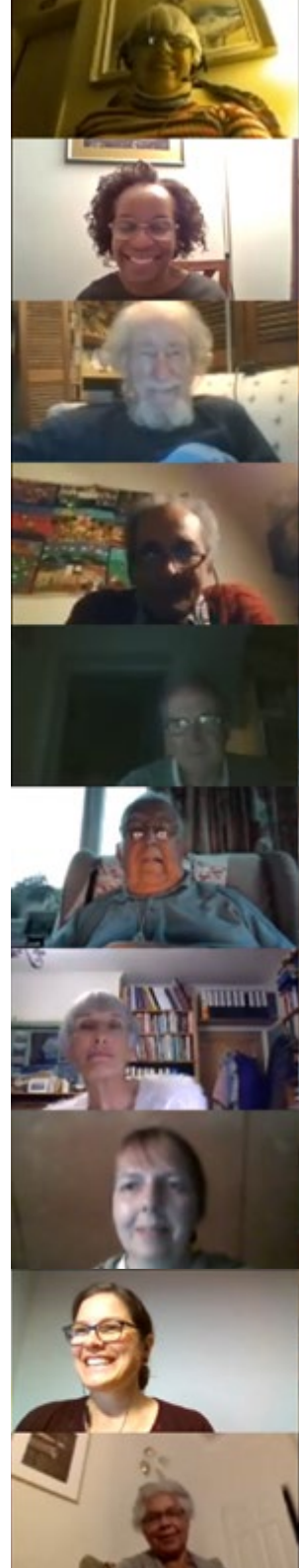
Probably for the first time in the history of Church and Peace as an association, no face-to-face meetings were possible during this year's conference. Our AGM was held online on 20 June 2020. We are pleased that almost 80 members and friends came together, including some who are no longer able to participate in our conferences otherwise.

We are looking forward to meeting in person once again after such a long time. So we are already issuing a warm invitation to the International Conference from 2 to 5 September 2021 in Strasbourg, France!

Regional meetings in the language regions

We have used opportunities for virtual meetings and consultations not only for the work of the international office and the Board, but above all for networking. After the regional day in February on "The Real Cost of War", the Britain and Ireland region hosted two Zoom discussions in the autumn and also invited members from other regions to join in the conversations on "Racism as a Priority for Peace Churches" (church-and-peace.org/en/2020/09/racism-concern-for-peace-churches) and "Dismantling White Privilege" (church-and-peace.org/en/2020/10/online-conversation-dismantling-white-privilege).

Francophone members also met online in the autumn to reflect on the questions in the discussion paper "Signs of the Times" (church-and-peace.org/en/2020/09/signs-of-the-times). The German-language regional meeting took



place online in November and was attended by more than 80 participants, who engaged in talks and workshops on the theme “When they say ‘Peace & Security’ – The inner logic of peace”.

The talks and other resources are available on our website.

Human rights

Many members are engaged in working for human rights, including the rights of people seeking refuge in Europe. Church and Peace continues to critically observe and comment on developments at EU level in relation to the Peace Facility and urges greater investment in nonviolent, civilian conflict transformation instead of further militarisation.

We became a member of United4Rescue, a coalition of organisations supporting civil search and rescue operations to save refugees from drowning in the Mediterranean. At the end of October, we organised an international online discussion on the state of human rights in Europe (church-and-peace.org/en/2020/11/conversation-human-rights-in-europe).

Nuclear weapons ban

As a member of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), we are very pleased that the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons will enter into force in January 2021, having obtained the 50 ratifications needed. There is still a long way to go before the more than 13,000 nuclear bombs which exist worldwide are scrapped.

To this end, Church and Peace, together with six peace organisations, has launched the appeal “For a Nuclear Weapons Free Europe” (church-and-peace.org/en/2020/10/treaty-on-the-prohibition-of-nuclear-weapons-a-political-sensation) to call on the governments of Europe to stop the modernisation of nuclear weapons, to end nuclear sharing, and to sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW).

Staying informed!

We have been able to report on activities and concerns in the network and engage in public discussion in two newsletters (church-and-peace.org/en/documents/newsletters), several press releases (church-and-peace.org/en/documents/declarations-press-releases), and social media ([instagram.com/church_and_peace](https://www.instagram.com/church_and_peace)) this year. Find those at church-and-peace.org/en/documents.

Lydia Funck General Secretary

Coalition for Work with Psychotrauma and Peace

This has been a busy and difficult year for us. As so much has happened, I am writing most of this report as bullet points. For more detail, please see our website www.wpp.org, my and our Facebook pages. We welcome your comments and involvement.

- 2020 marked 25 years that we have been in the Western Balkans.
- 2020 also marked 25 years since the wars in the region ended officially.
 - We are not closer to “positive peace” than we were then.
 - Tensions under the surface still are high.
 - There has been little done on psychological healing.
 - Psychopharmaceuticals are being used to treat symptoms, not underlying causes.
 - Politicians continue to manipulate people on the basis of ethnicity.
 - There still is segregation in schools and other institutions and in the informal sector.
 - We remain virtually the only organisation in the region doing long-term deeper psychological work.
- Although we continue to work with individual clients, we continue our efforts to increase capacity to work with psychological issues in the community.
 - We are doing this online through our highly participatory Pragmatic Empowerment Training (PET) methodology which is adapted to the specific group’s needs.
 - PET is given for an hour or two per week for as long as the group wants to meet.
 - There is a maximum of 10 people.
 - PET deals directly with the issues of the specific group.
 - It also includes psychological supervision and therapy by other names, this to avoid stigma.
 - It overcomes some cultural barriers.
- We have had groups and clients this year in Croatia, Germany, in Greece working with migrants, in DR Congo, in South Sudan, in Georgia, in Turkey.
- Our emphasis is on migrants, victims of violence, and other vulnerable groups.

- We see a great deal of trans-generational transmission of trauma.
- We expect a great deal of work with the Covid-19 pandemic. We expect the psychological consequences to last for many years.
- We continue to work on self-paced online courses. One on the caregiver-client relationship is on our website. We continue to work on the series, the next of which is communication.
- We have begun to make podcasts.
- Almost ironically, our contacts with Friends have increased during the past year because of the necessity to go online.
 - There has been a weekly online Meeting for Worship of Dutch Yearly Meeting since the spring. We have offered our Zoom connection since the summer.
 - We have participated in the Peace and Service Consultations.
- Our internal issues have been the same as they always have been.
 - Funds are an issue. There is virtually no funding available for mental health.
 - We are unsure of what will happen after the end of 2021.
 - It is difficult to find adequate personnel, particularly volunteers, who are committed to what we are doing.
- Our great dilemma is that we see an enormous need for our work in many places in the world. We are attempting to do what we can.

Charles David Tauber

Mission to Croatia

M. Držića 12
32000 Vukovar
Croatia

Tel and Fax: +385-32-441975

Website: cwwpp.org

E-Mail: cwwppsummer@gmail.com

Office in The Netherlands c/o Kupers

Ds. S. Tjadenstraat C81
9663 RD Nieuwe Pekela
The Netherlands

Tel: +31-597-645790

Fax: +31-597-647029

E-mail: pabbv@telfort.nl

Friends House Moscow (Dom Druzei)

Despite the disadvantages of the pandemic situation, the new model of communication actually helped us to strengthen our outreach work and make our network wider. We started to run regular online Meetings for Worship, where non-Muscovites can join in. There were people both from Russia and other countries.

We saw stable growth in the number of people who want to get information about Quakers, and communicate in our social network groups.

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. The quakers.ru website is the main online resource center for Russian-speaking people who are interested in Quakerism – a collection of articles and books about Quakers. The number of its visitors increased almost twice!

Though the majority of the Quaker materials are available online, we continued to distribute printed Quaker books in Moscow and send them to other places on request.

Unfortunately, several projects we were going to support couldn't work in the customary way due to Covid-19 restrictions. The biggest projects we supported were AVP Moscow, Meditation of Friends, meditative sessions for spiritual seekers, AVP Ukraine (facebook.com/avpinukraine), Integrational Center for Refugee and Migrant Children in Moscow, English Club educational program in Big Change, Charity Foundation for former residents of orphanages, Green Patrol in Orenburg oblast, the local grassroots ecological initiative.

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.

Natasha Zhuravenkova and Sergei Grushko

■ Integrational Centre for Refugee and Migrant Children in Moscow. younger group. In the summer the group had lessons online and in person (in small groups).





Northern Friends Peace Board

Our first meeting of 2020 – at the end of February – was a very positive one; our members gathered at the Quaker Meeting House in Derby, with a warm welcome and good attendance from local Friends as well as our members travelling from far afield.

We had stimulating discussions, heard about planned performances by Quaker actor Michael Mears to mark the 75th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and shared news and ideas for our future priorities and strategy. Just a short while later, all that seemed like a very different world, with pandemic restrictions completely transforming how we worked through the rest of the year.

With representatives from Area Meetings across the North of Britain, Northern Friends Peace Board (NFPB) aims to support Quakers and others in taking action for peace. With several meetings a year, our members become a community and network of support, linking us with Friends through the Northern part of Britain.

We organise events, produce resources, facilitate the sharing of information and ideas and work with and alongside Quakers and other parts of the peace movement. »

In spite of largely being confined to our homes, we managed to continue to do most of these things during 2020. We held formal meetings of our members, contributed to a number of Quaker workshops and courses, hosted informal online gatherings on different themes and sent out information, news and resources throughout the year. We have been very pleased to also be able to continue and extend our connection with Friends across the section, through the EMES peace and service consultation.

The ways in which we have worked with the wider peace movement have changed. Since we have not had to travel, many groups and networks have met more frequently and taken work forward in new ways. For instance, the UK group promoting the Global Campaign on Military Spending developed a new focus that has led to the engagement of a paid worker to strengthen this project in the UK.

The Rethinking Security initiative, of which NFPB and Quaker Peace and Social Witness are both part, launched a blog shortly before the pandemic, and this has proved to be a rich source of material that has highlighted many aspects of security in the current context. Contributions have highlighted, for instance, that whilst resources were barely adequate in responding to the pandemic, military spending and support for arms exports have not reduced – and indeed in the UK are set to increase.

The gap between human and planetary need and government spending priorities seems to be more visible; we are reminded of the fragility of our societal structures. Importantly, this time is an opportunity to reframe the discussion and to assert well-being, fairness and planetary care as being at the heart of genuine security.

As the year ended, Friends and others were preparing to mark the entry into force of the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, a treaty that has its roots in humanitarian concern and that has been enabled by countries that are not tied into security strategies with weapons of mass destruction at their core.

This has been a time of grief and anxiety, but during this time focus and purpose, vision and connection, readiness and care for one another are all ingredients that help us. This has been a time for action, but also reflection and finding new ways of being a loving and dispersed community.

Some related links:

nfpb.org.uk | rethinkingsecurity.org.uk/blog | demilitarize.org.uk

Philip Austin Co-ordinator



Based in Quaker house in Brussels QCEA brings a vision of peace, justice and equality to Europe and its institutions. QCEA has two programmes working on human rights and peace respectively. Thanks also to its supporters, QCEA looks back to a successful year of 2020 with the several new publications and successful online events.

The peace programme launched two reports in 2020: In April, the programme published its report called "Gender & Inclusivity in Peace & Security." The occasion to work on this issue was the Anniversary of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. The overarching aim of this project was to fill an existing gap by producing content of use for people tasked with working on gender issues at a national, regional and international level.

The report was launched with an online event and several videos were produced which are on the QCEA YouTube channel.

In December, the peace programme published a new report called "Peace Mediation: from Concept to successful implementation, learning from Quaker experience." It focuses on the implementation of the recently published EU Concept on Peace Mediation and uses Quaker experience in mediation and conciliation for practical guidance on mediation and makes the case for a multi-layered approach to mediation.

The human rights programme started a workshop series about radical empathy for professionals. The course consists of a series of workshops designed to strengthen empathy skills and highlight the relevance of empathy-led practice in the Peace and Human Rights fields. The participants are policy professionals of different ages and stages in their career.

Additionally, the programme hosted an event called "Connecting the dots" for QCEA supporters. It was an opportunity to come together and look for the bigger picture. It is by filling the gaps and growing connection that justice, peace, and equality will no longer be considered as radical ideas but become a lived reality for all. »



In 2020 QCEA brought people together to discuss how human rights are experienced in practice. For example, QCEA held its first intergenerational meeting on human rights and migration. Attended by representatives from institutions, youth, faith-based and human rights organisations and with a parity of professionals with lived experiences of migration, the event was the opportunity for participants to retrace the evolution of migration policy and discourse from the 80's onwards.

From the rich discussion came calls to end the instrumentalisation of migration for political reasons, the need for systemic change based on the re-examination of economic models and the dismantlement of colonial frameworks.

In December, together with other Quaker organisations, the Human Rights programme developed and signed A Quaker Statement on Migration.

After the beginning of the pandemic, QCEA started an initiative called

“During Covid-19”, which was a project focussing on civil liberties which got curbed due to Covid-19, making notes of them to make sure that these liberties will be given back after the pandemic.

QCEA continued to meet governments and European policymakers throughout 2020. Many of the meetings focused on fundamental inequalities further exposed by the Covid-19. To bring this work to wider audiences, QCEA published interviews with MEPs Maria Arena, Chair of the European Parliament's DROI Subcommittee on human rights issues and Dietmar Koster to discuss the impact of Covid-19 on EU human rights and migration policies.

To reach more Quakers in Europe, QCEA launched two blogs in Dutch (qceadeltalicht.wordpress.com) and French (qceapasserelles.wordpress.com) which publish many of the blog posts posted on the English (qceablog.wordpress.com) QCEA blog.



Quaker Service Sweden

2020 was the year in which Quaker Service Sweden (QSS) became an independent organisation, with its own constitution, guidelines, members, nominations committee and annual meeting. QSS is still closely connected to the Religious Society of Friends in Sweden, but now has separate financial and organisational functions.

QSS is a member of the Swedish Mission Council (SMC), an umbrella organisation through which Swedish development aid is distributed. In spring, SMC carried out an overarching organisational review of QSS as a newly constituted organisation, which led to us developing a plethora of new and clearer policies and guidelines. This turned out to be a useful exercise, especially as we wanted our policies and guidelines to reflect our Quaker ways and processes, rather than simply filling an administrative function. It also led to SMC becoming much more aware of our Quaker approach, actions, and work. In addition, SMC asked QSS to carry out an organisational review of Sabalamby Unnayan Samity (SUS), our partner organisation with projects in the Mymensingh/Netrakona districts of Bangladesh for which we receive Swedish development aid. As a member organisation, we have also taken part in several of SMC's courses, workshops and seminars, as well as its annual meeting, all of which were held online in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

QSS supports projects in Bangladesh, Burundi, Ethiopia, Georgia, Palestine (Ramallah), Uganda (an AVP project in collaboration with Quaker service organisations in Germany, Norway and the Netherlands), Zimbabwe (through Friends of Hlekweni in the UK) and channels donations to Quaker Service Norway for its preschool projects in Gaza. In 2020 we also raised funds for the Friends Helping Friends project supported by the FWCC World Office and Friends United Meeting (FUM) in Africa for equipping medical facilities during the pandemic. Details about the various projects can be found here: kvakare.se/in-english/quaker-service-sweden

In spring, QSS facilitated an online network meeting for the Swedish organisations supporting SUS. In the autumn we learned that our application for another 3-years of Swedish development aid funding for SUS's integrated project work with the ultra-poor in NE Bangladesh had been successful. QSS and SUS also applied for a one-year value added intervention via SMC to develop the capacity of SUS's staff in IT and were granted funding. Applications like these are bureaucratically steered and take time and energy for a small organisation like ours with five (volunteer) board members and no paid staff. In this respect, success is a major cause for celebration!

In November we were represented at the EMES Peace and Service Consultation (PSC) held on Zoom. Members of the QSS board also take part in the monthly Zoom PSC meetings – a new and welcome initiative on the part of EMES.

In short, 2020 was an extremely busy, rewarding and at times challenging year for QSS. We look forward to 2021, new challenges and new developments.

Sue Glover Frykman on behalf of the QSS board

Quaker United Nations Office and Committee (Geneva)

For QUNO Geneva, 2020 has been a year of disruption and adaptation, but also of reflection, resilience and resolve, drawn from our Quaker belief in the value of every member of our human family and from the strength found in working with others.

Our Human Rights & Refugees programme highlighted the specific impacts of criminal justice systems on children of parents accused or convicted of designated terrorist offences. This included the publication of two briefing papers – on key human rights and biometric data collection concerns for these children. Another priority was the implementation, follow up and review structures of the Global Compact for Migration. To make the Compact more than a set of commitments on paper, we helped develop implementation guidance that will be used by States in 2021. We also launched a Quaker statement on migration with other Quaker organisations.

Despite pandemic-related disruptions to our ways of working, our Human Impacts of Climate Change programme has been able to reach a wider audience around the world with virtual seminars and panel discussions. We began a series of digital quiet diplomacy meetings for climate change negotiators at the UNFCCC to discuss sensitive issues in an off-the-record, informal and more personal space.

We also published a trilogy of “climate toolkits” intended for a wide range of audiences to help empower local and regional community climate action. The Government Official’s Toolkit supports ambitious national climate policy, The People’s Climate Empowerment Series connects climate advocates with international laws and guidelines, and How to be a Hero for our

Children, connects climate science with personal action.

The focus of our Peace & Disarmament programme remained on strengthening the links between human rights and peacebuilding. Key to this work was the UN’s 2020 Peacebuilding Architecture Review, which takes place every five years to take stock of the system’s progress and sets priorities for the coming years. With QUNO New York, we supported Member States to develop progressive language in the final twin resolutions, which were adopted by the Security Council and the General Assembly. Together with partners, we also continued work to bridge silos between the UN’s arms control and business and human rights processes, and to expand ever-shrinking civil society access to multilateral institutions.

In 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic underscored the need to mobilize responses to the current crisis for transitioning towards a different kind of global economic system – a system that ensures wise stewardship and fair sharing of the earth’s resources, exemplifies policy coherence, and has a positive impact on humans and the environment. In July, our Sustainable & Just Economic Systems programme published a working paper on root causes of unsustainability and injustice and received feedback from partners and stakeholders. We hosted several meetings and participated in webinars with the UN, the World Bank, the World Trade Organisation, think tanks, and NGOs and online conferences. We also helped foster economic recovery efforts in response to Covid-19 that are equitable, inclusive and sustainable, including contributing a chapter to Building Back Better, a publication by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.

Quaker United Nations Office and Committee (New York)

2020 marked the 75th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations. Very soon in this year the onset of the global Covid-19 pandemic began to affect nearly every aspect of activities of the UN - and respective of QUNO's work. In March, as UN operations went virtual, QUNO also converted to virtual operations.

Some activities were postponed, but most went forward virtually. Only few already constrained spaces for civil society participation and engagement – both at UN headquarters and on the ground – were further diminished. Throughout the year QUNO led over 170 peacebuilding organisations in issuing an important statement on peacebuilding. (International Day of Peace Statement).

QUNO's 2020-25 strategic plan: Quiet Diplomacy at the Frontiers of Peace, approved in November 2019 began to show development. The thematic priority remains as it was ever since: Peace in Practice.

QUNO had a major role in organizing a six-part series of discussions sponsored by the Civil Society-UN Prevention Platform, which QUNO co-chairs. The discussions focused on a range of issues related to prevention. Prevention as a core effort in peace making was discussed on various examples and topics. QUNO is drafting an outcome report on the discussions for release in early 2021.

QUNO collaborates with other peacebuilding organisations and continues to do so in its online work. Coordination works well with colleagues of several engaged NGOs and other peacebuilding entities.

FY20 core program expenses were lower than budgeted due to the impact of the pandemic on travel and meeting costs, and the core budget was reduced accordingly during mid-year budget revisions. QUNO engaged a consultant to prepare a QUNO Outreach and Development plan, which will be delivered in January 2021.

The support of Friends everywhere in the world is an important basic resource for the continued success in QUNO's work. QUNO acknowledges this support with gratitude.

(This report refers to and quotes the annual report of Quaker United Nations Committee to the American Friends Service Committee, written by Cheryl Morden and Hezron Masitsa)

Jalka EMES representative to QUNC New York

Quaker Voluntary Action: From 'Using your gifts' to 'Growing connectedness'

Whatever people might say about 2020, the common thread is probably that it didn't turn out the way anyone expected. Quaker Voluntary Action was no exception. In January we planned a full year of retreats including visits to the Refugee Community Kitchen in Calais, old friends in the West Bank and Israel, a return visit to Borgo Basino eco-village and a study tour of Freiburg.

Here in the UK we looked forward to our annual retreat at Swarthmoor and to forging new relationships with local voluntary sector partners in England and Scotland.

It's tempting to think that all those things went by the board, steamrollered by the relentless spread of Covid-19, becoming lost intentions and things that 'might have been'. Except that's not the whole story. Before the initial lockdown, our first retreat of the year brought together a team of participants to support ASSIST Sheffield by decorating accommodation for use by asylum seekers.

As well as its impact for the residents, this event served as a model for a form of retreat we intend to develop when circumstances allow groups to meet again in safety. Being promoted to and attended by participants living locally, it fits the description of a 'commuting retreat': where individuals travel from their nearby homes each day rather than making a longer journey to a place far removed from their daily routine. In the coming months, this model may serve us well as lockdowns begin to relax whilst removing the complexities of managing safe social distancing in hosted accommodation.

But we see more significant benefits arising from the connections made between participants and retreat hosts local to them. If we can facilitate those connections through the events we create, the resulting shared experiences may have deeper, longer lasting resonances for all concerned.

As the year unfolded, we kept in touch with our partners, facilitators and participants, maintaining channels of communication and continuing to hold them in the light. There is a growing sense that people and organisations in vulnerable circumstances need connection more than ever. We are looking to uphold that through our programme of online events, soon to be released. It was one such an event with which we ended the year: a series of three online gatherings facilitated by Rosie Carnall and Evan Welkin, exploring ideas of creative spiritual and social action.

In the new world of socially distanced activities, we need to work harder to maintain and grow connectedness between ourselves and with the world around. So our retreats for 2021 will take up this theme, exploring the need to connect spirit and action, to hold connection between peoples and perhaps most urgently of all, reconnect our humanity with the natural world that supports us.

Follow our news and blog at qva.org.uk and get in touch via retreats@qva.org.uk if you'd like to participate, offer a retreat venue or invite the Working Retreats Co-ordinator to speak. We look forward to connecting with you soon!

Simon Watkins



In a year fraught with difficulties one of the positive aspects of 2020 was how Quakers around the world were able to connect. With all activity at the Woodbrooke Centre in Birmingham suspended since March, we expanded our online programme to continue offering learning and support for Quakers.

The response to this was amazing.

As well as people signing up for courses, we saw a 37% increase in bookings compared with 2019 – despite disruption and running fewer events. What has been special about this is how many people from around the world it's brought together – having you on our courses has brought so much richness to Woodbrooke.

Woodbrooke has always been international but the limitations of the physical location hasn't always made it easy to reach out as much as we have in 2020. Accelerating our plans for a greater online presence for Woodbrooke learning has been hard work but rewarding as new people have experienced Woodbrooke for the first time – joining with old friends to create international learning communities. Whether through courses, worship, Facebook groups or one-off sessions we've been gathered together to enrich our faith in challenging circumstances.

2020 was a time of innovation. Woodbrooke on the Road became Woodbrooke Where You Are which can be provided entirely or partially online to Friends anywhere in the

world. We've run our tried and tested model of online courses but also one-off sessions, online weekends, shared videos via Facebook, held academic conferences online, live streamed the Swarthmore Lecture from Tom Shakespeare's home and of course offered more online worship than ever. Together with the support of EMES we have added eight new meetings for worship and the total attendance of these in 2020 was over 18,000 – not including regular online meetings for worship for dance sessions.

We see our relationship with EMES as being a particularly special one. Many of you have supported us through our earliest days of online learning and worship, without that support we would not be where we are today. In 2020 Friends experiencing Woodbrooke came from Germany, Belgium, France, Norway, Switzerland, Sweden, Spain, Finland, Ukraine, Israel, Netherlands, Italy, Luxembourg, Russia, Denmark, Slovenia, Portugal, as well as from across Britain and Ireland, and the rest of the world.

2020 has been a year of challenge and evolution for Woodbrooke that sets us up for a future where we continue to experiment and respond to the needs of Friends. Our main message is thank you! Thank you for supporting us with your encouragement, donations, volunteering, upholding and promotion of Woodbrooke. We would not have made it through 2020 without you. Woodbrooke is here to support you and your Quaker communities as best we can in 2021 and beyond this pandemic.

Bank account & 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

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Bank address

25 Kings Hill Avenue, Kings Hill,
West Malling, Kent, ME19 4JQ. UK

Account Name FWCC EMES

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SWIFT/BIC CAFBGB21XXX

Account Number 00025578

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To make a contribution in another currency please contact **michael@fwccemes.org**



Friends World Committee
for Consultation
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