



Among Friends

Friends World Committee for Consultation Europe and Middle East Section

No 156 ■ Spring 2023

EDITORIAL

BUSYNESS, DARKNESS AND LIGHT

This time of year always feels like a busy time at EMES. We are putting together our annual report of Quaker work around the Section (look out for this in April), preparing this issue of Among Friends and are well into the planning of our Annual Meeting (AM), alongside running our usual monthly online gatherings. This year the AM is at the Woodbrooke Centre in Birmingham which, as you may already know and you'll read about later in this journal, is sadly closing in October 2023. This means that our AM is a great opportunity for you to visit one more time, or even for the first time – I look forward to seeing some of you there! As always it will be a chance to make connections with Quakers from other countries and meet old and new Friends.

We also continue to be busy trying to support Quaker efforts to alleviate the suffering of people in and from Ukraine; the war there continues to impact the lives of many people – including some Quakers – in our Section. Many Friends are working hard by supporting Ukrainians who have fled to their countries.

I know that many of you are also very busy. Being busy is good – there are many stories in this issue of Among Friends about the busyness of Friends trying to make the world a better place. I think it's important to test my busyness and



■ Image by Lynn Finnegan (IYM), speaking to our Annual Meeting theme
'Responding with hope to God's Call to Cherish Creation and One Another'

know that it is Spirit led. At a recent EMES representatives and roleholders gathering, I was reminded of Britain YM's Advices & Queries number 1:

Take heed, dear Friends, to the promptings of love and truth in your hearts. Trust them as the leadings of God whose Light shows us our darkness and brings us to new life.

It is one of my favourite passages in this book of discipline and reminds me why I am involved in the work of EMES and I imagine it resonates with many of you too. I try to search for the promptings of love and truth in my heart when I am in Meeting for Worship. How do you search for those promptings?

Recently it feels like there is a lot of darkness in the world; I'm thinking particularly of the war in Ukraine – now going on for more than a year – and other conflicts in our Section and other parts of the world. This advice & query reminds me that there is also light to find in our world. I hope in reading this issue of Among Friends you will see some of this light shining through.

Michael Eccles *EMES Executive Secretary*

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Friends World Committee
for Consultation
EUROPE & MIDDLE EAST SECTION

fwccemes.org

EACH USED STAMP IS VALUABLE!

Dear Friends,

I have been sending used stamps on behalf of Finland YM to Friends in America for over 20 years. The Friends group that is collecting and sorting the stamps auctions them to

collectors on behalf of Right Sharing for World Resources. You can read about their work via the following link:

bit.ly/40icyW7 [PDF]

So, dear Friends in Europe, Please DO send me your stamps – even one or two make a difference. It is true that in general people are sending fewer letters and cards by post, but if you could save the few that you do get and send them to me with a ‘real stamp’ on the envelope (!) – I am more than happy to gather the twos and threes together to make a small bundle to send over to the Friends who are doing the selling and thereby making a difference to women’s lives.

Thank you in advance, Jane
Lehtoseläntie 102, 91500 Muhos



IN MEMORIAM *Egil Magne Hovdenak* 1927-2022

Egil Magne was born on May 4th 1927, and grew up in Romsdal, on the north-western coast of Norway. Through the years, Egil served Quakers in a number of other positions, nationally as well as internationally, including Clerk of Norway Yearly Meeting from 1983-1988, and Clerk of the Europe and the Middle East Section (EMES) from 1996-98. He was the Quaker representative to the ‘old’ Council of Free Churches (now fused with ‘Churches Together in Norway’).

Egil’s importance to Quaker Service Norway is priceless. The name “Quaker Service Norway” was already used during World War II, but Quaker Service Norway as an organisation was established in 1963 when Egil began the Algeria project before going on to develop other projects in the African Great Lakes region. Norwegian Friends particularly noted “his ‘connectedness’ with less developed communities, and the importance [he placed on] understanding local culture in ‘development’ projects. We feel that this, and the emphasis on genuine friendship with the locals, are so particularly relevant to Friends and our testimony to equality.”



REPORT ON FEEDBACK SURVEY FOR AMONG FRIENDS

As a result of EMES' new Sustainability Policy, we launched a survey in our last issue of **AMONG FRIENDS**, as well as online appeals through social media and our newsletter, to request feedback about how and what people read and appreciate about Among Friends while specifically asking about the need to print and mail paper copies. The period to submit was open-ended, but we left several months for people to receive their issues, fill out and mail a response while also regularly reminding people to contribute via online channels. We received 32 responses both online and in paper form (28 online, 4 paper) from which we draw some general conclusions:

First the significant majority of respondents read Among Friends online through our direct mailing or via other digital sources. 7 of 32 respondents said they read it in print, and of those, two said they would not read Among Friends in another format, two said they would read if not available in print, and 3 were unsure. We had hoped to

understand whether we would lose readership if Friends did not receive a copy of Among Friends in their preferred format. While not definitive or exhaustive in representing all of our readership, the survey does seem to suggest we could still retain most readers by switching to online format only.

We asked people how strongly they felt about the need to continue printing Among Friends, on a scale from Unimportant to Very important. Interestingly, 15 people suggested it was important or very important to keep printing, among them a significant majority of online readers. My interpretation is that at least some respondents based their answers on a perceived need for print copies for others rather than their personal needs, excepting 4 of those 7 readers reading in print who said print copies were important.

As a result of this feedback, the following was minuted at the Executive Committee meeting in March...

EC 2023/16: AMONG FRIENDS – READER SURVEY

“We agree to discontinue printing and posting Among Friends after the next edition. Staff can print copies on a case by case basis for those who request a print version.”

This will represent up to several thousand Euros of cost savings as well as alignment with our sustainability policy. **This issue is therefore the last print edition of Among Friends**, with future issues available as usual via dedicated online links on our website and printed copies available by request for those who require them.

We also asked other questions about content preferences and language translation, with Personal Reflections from Friends and News About or for EMES as the top categories, with several requests for French and other language content.

An Among Friends survey conducted in 2005 focused on content. Personal Reflections from Friends seem to be of growing interest to readers since then, while News remains among the top areas of interest. We have taken this feedback immediately to heart in this issue and will continue to do so moving forward.

What kind of articles do you like to read in Among Friends? (check all that apply)

33 Responses



FRIENDS WORLD COMMITTEE FOR CONSULTATION GLOBAL FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN

We invite individuals and meetings to join us on a special campaign to make the next World Plenary Meeting (WPM), to be held in August 2024 in South Africa, the most inclusive gathering of Quakers ever!

WPMs are really important to strengthen our global family of Quakers and each Plenary has been deeply enriching. Now organised less frequently, cutting down on expense and travel, we want to ensure that the WPM in South Africa is genuinely open to all Friends from across the world, whatever their personal circumstances. You can learn more about the WPM here... fwcc.world/event/world-plenary-meeting-2024

This is the first time a WPM will be held as a blended event so we are determined to ensure that a much greater number of Friends across the globe, no matter their financial circumstances, can either attend in person or join for at least part of the event online. In EMES, we are committed to raise €35,000/£30,000 during 2023. This will go towards the two key ways of ensuring inclusion:

- First, it will support the travel costs of Friends from the global south, who would otherwise not be able to go, to be part of the 270 Friends who will be in South Africa. This will ensure that the “in person” part of the Gathering is genuinely representative of all Friends and not just for those who can afford it.
- Secondly, we are raising funds, similar to our own Digital Equality Fund, to help many more Friends worldwide to join the WPM digitally. Many Friends in the global south do not have the financial resources or equipment to make such digital connection possible. It is essential that this gap is closed, and that we financially support this too.

We are writing to ask if you are able to make a contribution to the fund (in addition to your usual contribution towards EMES work if you make one), and help us achieve our target by December 2023. We encourage you to share this letter with Friends in your meeting or Quaker community and consider holding a collection. Information and bank details for donating to EMES can be found here: fwccemes.org/donations

When making a payment please use the reference: **GFC2023**.

■ Friends at the last FWCC WPM in Pisac, Peru in 2016



KEEPING HOPE ALIVE

Report on a journey to Palestine and Israel, 14-21 November 2021

As part of a delegation of the Council of Churches I went to the West Bank and Jerusalem to meet with representatives of churches and NGO's. The journey took place at the invitation of Palestinian Christians and church leaders, who visited the Council of Churches in the Netherlands in 2019 and invited us for a counter-visit.

In just a week we visited Hebron, where we were guided through the Jewish settlement at the heart of this Palestinian city by EAPPI observers, the Tent of Nations farm of the Nassar family still struggling to get the ownership of their land recognized by the Israeli (military) authorities, the Walled-Off Museum and the wall itself in Bethlehem. We spoke with

church leaders of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church, the Latin Patriarchate of the Roman Catholic Church and the Greek Orthodox Church. We also had meetings with the Palestinian Presidential Committee of the Churches, Kairos-Sabeel, the Wi'am Centre, EAPPI, Nes Ammin, Rabbis for Human Rights and YMCA.

Unfortunately, although we tried we have not been able to meet with members of the Quaker Meeting or the staff of the Quaker schools at Ramallah.

It was my very first visit to Palestine and Jerusalem. My summary of the many impressions of the occupied territories is: *distressing* and *devastating*.

FINDINGS

1. Israel is governed by the need for security. Controls are everywhere, especially on the Israel-Palestine border and around settlements. Palestinians groan under occupation, are powerless in the face of Israeli supremacy and lack good and sound leadership. The human rights situation for Palestinians is dire. Reports by Amnesty International, B'tselem and Human Rights Watch rightly draw attention to this. The statement 'Seeking Justice and Peace for All in the Middle East' adopted at the 11th Assembly in Karlsruhe therefore calls for the World Council – and thus the member churches – to study the reports mentioned thoroughly to form a considered opinion on the matter.
2. The splitting-up of the Palestinian territories into Areas A, B and C is a veiled way to increasingly restrict Palestinians' living space and expropriate land. Symptomatic is the unequal struggle that Daoud Nassar and his family have been waging against the Israeli state since 1991 to keep their land. Israel's rule of law is at stake here.
3. The two-state solution to the conflict between Israel and Palestine is no longer tenable. A new vision is needed for the future of a single state of Israel/Palestine in which both peoples can live together peacefully on the basis of equality and with respect for human and civil rights. In the political elaboration, attention will have to be paid to the distribution of top positions in the government in such a way that Israelis can be confident about not being outvoted as a minority. The Episcopal Justice and Peace Commission in Israel/Palestine has developed and published a balanced vision to this end.
4. Churches in Palestine and East Jerusalem are struggling. The number of Arabic-speaking Palestinian Christians is steadily declining and now stands at no more than 50,000 (1% of the population). They, like the 125,000 or so Christian Palestinians in Israel, suffer from fragmentation, both denominational and geopolitical. A major problem is the brain drain of the highly educated youth among them, who leave the country after completing their education. Although the number of Christians is

numerically small, the Christian presence is of great importance – mainly to Israel – because of the millions of pilgrims travelling to Israel and Palestine.

5. In Israel and Palestine, Christian schools and universities play a crucial role in connecting different groups and religions. The quality of this education is generally high. The schools are increasingly struggling to secure funding. Support for these schools and universities is vital.

In a detailed report to the Council of Churches it was recommended that the Council and its member-churches should strengthen ties and partnerships with Palestinian churches and increase their support for EAPPI and Kairos-Sabeel.

Kees Nieuwerth Netherlands YM



■ Daud Nassar at the Tent of Nations

EXPLANATION FOR THE ALTERNATIVE SERVICE APPLICATION

RAFAEL ROLAN RAND

Being born in the new millennium of Europe that is characterised by peace, I know about the horrors of war only from films or from my relatives' stories and their experiences. These have convinced me that in order to prevent such murders that were committed in history one has to have a fresh and positive look into the future.

I understand that national defence is an obligation to protect my family members. National defence has, also, a broader meaning. For example, a person who donates time and resources defends the nation likewise. The Book of books, the Bible, also speaks about defending. I respect my fellow citizens' patriotic opinions, because in their heart they are proud of their country and want to preserve it.

In these modern times, however, the subject of war is blurred. I am concerned about the activities of the military-industrial complex that are motivated by self-interest. They seek huge sums of money while deceiving the ordinary citizens into believing via the media that their taxes are spent to secure peace. The government could spend, instead, taxpayers' money on social welfare and cultural activities.

I support serving my country by peaceful activities whereby I can perform helpful deeds right now without the training in anticipation of war. That training, furthermore, could prove to be totally useless in actual war. Considering the technological development – nuclear, cyber, biological weapons in addition to autonomous aeroplanes and

long-distance drones – it is unlikely that we can defend anything with our devices from the last century. My apprehension is based on the opinion that we have not become thoroughly aware of the new era's arrival. We need to analyse the mistakes and study the findings and wisdom of different experts, historians and spiritual leaders. As a result of such research, we should realise that it is time to incorporate ethical values, and that failing to do that, the results would be catastrophic. Automatic following of orders is expected in the military; Jesus replaced orders with love for one's neighbour.

Are all activities sensible in the military? For example, after getting up at 6 a.m., one is given 10 minutes to eat breakfast. Is it good for one's health to ingest food that fast? Or sometimes it happens that during training a young recruit steps on a mine accidentally. Who bears responsibility for that? The state? The family, who would have to look after the disabled member?

Planet Earth is also a living organism that deserves respect instead of being polluted with bombs. The military training fields cause much harm not only by the noise to the people living nearby, but they also destroy wildlife, forests and soil.

We are not only physical beings; we also possess mental faculties and spirituality. Were I to harm somebody, it would give me guilt and mental pain, because I have done harm to a part of the Creator. Our souls are too extraordinary to waste on conflicts.

My inner voice compels me to choose non-

violent service. Soul and pure Truth dwarf survival instincts, ego drives and symbols. It is difficult to explain in words what I feel inside and I shouldn't even have to. We all are different versions of the One. I have no desire to attack a different version of myself, regardless of the monster our earthly illusions have made of him.

The sixth commandment, "Thou shalt not kill", is intelligible to billions of people. A network of solidarity overcomes national borders, bringing forth genuine humanism, and unites us. It is a transition from military power to word power.

I was baptised at Tallinn's Church of the Transfiguration of our Lord in 1999. I have friends from different confessions who have expanded my world view.

The Religious Society of Friends aka Quakers, who received a Nobel Peace prize in 1947, has inspired me. Having participated at their meetings in England, France, Belgium and last year at their large conference in Norway, I embrace the belief that Christ's luminous soul leads us in a righteous direction and is available to all of us. It does not submit to evil and worldly ills, it avoids bloody principles and it does not promote battles for heavenly or earthly kingdoms.

Since by nature I am interested in creative arts and have finished some creative works for an exhibit, it is very important for me to be in an urban setting so that in addition to carrying out the service assigned to me I can pursue my vocation and, thereby, contribute also to the advancement of Estonian art.



Sadly, Rafael died in September 2022.



WOODBROOKE UPDATE

Woodbrooke is in a time of change. In February 2023 we announced that we will start the transition of responsibility for the buildings and grounds of The Woodbrooke Centre to Bournville Village Trust. Trustees believe that this difficult decision is the best way to allow the Learning & Research to thrive moving forwards. In this update, you can hear about the exciting developments and upcoming opportunities from the Learning & Research team. In November, Woodbrooke welcomed five new members to the Learning and Research Team including Programme Coordinators in Quaker Service and Roles, Racial and Social Justice and Worship and Spirituality, a Project Manager for the Climate Crisis: Spiritual Nurture and Learning Project and a Communications Officer. These appointments have aided the development of our Learning & Research team, offering new insight into our work.

We look forward to the end of April when Esther Loukin, co-founder of the disabled-led organisation Reasonable Access, will present Woodbrooke's Swarthmore Lecture 2023 focusing on how we can change society, which will be held during Britain Yearly Meeting.

Woodbrooke's Centre for Research in Quaker Studies has continued to work with the University of Birmingham to offer postgraduate learning and in December we celebrated the graduation of two of our PhD students. We are in the process of recruiting a PhD candidate to help analyse the survey results of the upcoming 10-yearly survey of Quaker believing and belonging in Britain.

We have a range of courses, retreats and sessions available to book on our website covering topics such as Quaker history, 'Woke Bible Study', Quaker roles, research and renewal. We are also currently working on our next programme of courses which will be bookable soon.

We continue to offer spaces for online worship including our regular online worship sessions which are run in partnership with EMES. A weekly 'Young Adult Worship' and a regular 'Quaker Parent Worship', both in partnership with Britain Yearly Meeting, have been added to our worship offer and we have also continued holding monthly 'Meeting for Worship through Dance' sessions.

EMES remains such a vital partner for our work playing an active role feeding into what we offer with Friends from EMES both facilitating worship and learning, and participating in many courses. Our Woodbrooke Where You Are workshops for communities are open to all types of Quaker community, we've recently delivered sessions online for Friends in Tasmania – so if you're Quaker community and want to participate in Woodbrooke learning as a group do let us know!

Woodbrooke's Trustees have released a statement about the future of the Woodbrooke Centre in Birmingham. Responsibility for the buildings and grounds will pass to Bournville Village Trust. Woodbrooke's Learning, Research, and worship will continue. You can find excerpts of the statement below and you can read the full statement, and a minute from the Trustees, on the Woodbrooke Website.

In its 120-year history Woodbrooke has grown and changed to meet the changing needs of Quakers both in Britain and further afield. From its initial conception as a one-year experiment, Woodbrooke has enabled thousands of Quakers to learn together as part of a much-valued Quaker community, supported by a dedicated team of staff, associate tutors and volunteers.

After careful discernment Woodbrooke Trustees have decided the time is now right for a new chapter in Woodbrooke's history. Our intention is to allow Woodbrooke to focus on its founding purpose of fostering the vital ministry of Friends and transition responsibility for the buildings and grounds of The Woodbrooke Centre to our trusted partners at Bournville Village Trust.

Pete Richmond, Chief Executive of Bournville Village Trust, has said:

"The Woodbrooke Centre has been an important part of the Bournville community for 120 years and thanks to our shared Quaker values, we have had a successful and much-valued relationship with the Centre and its dedicated team of staff for many years. Whilst the Centre will be sorely missed, we fully support Woodbrooke's new chapter in its history and its renewed focus on its founding purpose. We will be actively working alongside the Trustees of Woodbrooke to secure the best future for the site, recognising its importance to the Bournville and Quaker communities, its heritage, and the role it has played in the wider Quaker landscape in Birmingham."

We believe that the decision to close the Woodbrooke Centre will best enable Woodbrooke learning and research to continue to thrive. The vision of our charity is to be a "learning organisation which supports and informs Quakers, as individuals and as a community, to enable our work in the world and in local communities from a place of understanding and spiritual renewal".

The world has changed radically in the last 120 years. We are confident that Woodbrooke's value and purpose remain vital to Quakers today and that its founders' vision is met through our programme of online learning, as well as a growing number of in-person learning activities delivered through-out Britain Yearly Meeting and beyond.

As well as continuing our programme of learning we have agreed with the University of Birmingham Special Collections to transfer significant parts of Woodbrooke's Library collections on a permanent loan basis. This will ensure they will be accessible for research and learning in the future – including by Friends conducting their own research as well as our students who are part of our joint PhD programme with the University of Birmingham.

We thank Friends who have upheld us through difficult times and in making hard decisions. We have felt your love and care as we have explored all possibilities and we hope you will uphold all those affected as we continue to move forward together. Woodbrooke Trustees and Senior staff will be holding Woodbrooke Future sessions around Britain Yearly Meeting in April, as we have over the past three years to listen to Friends and answer questions."

Read the statement in full at woodbrooke.org.uk/news

Discovering Writing by Women of Colour

Starts Fri 5 May 2023

Broaden your horizons by reading short stories and essays by women of colour and reflecting together how they challenge our assumptions and open up new ways of seeing our world and understanding others' experiences. Book online at: bit.ly/3TvuxpZ



Have you considered **Post-Graduate Study** with Woodbrooke's Centre for Research in Quaker Studies? Woodbrooke offers MA by Research and PhDs accredited by the University of Birmingham. Join our worldwide community of students who are researching Quaker studies from a range of angles and approaches.

CONGÉNIES ET LES ORIGINES FRANÇAISES DU QUAKERISME

by Edouard Dommen (Ouverture Poche, Fondation Ouverture, 2022)

Available at bit.ly/3TqArIN CHF 12.00.

This little book was written for the occasion of the bicentenary of the Maison Quaker in Congénies, November 2022. It is not a book for those who know nothing about the Quaker house in the Nîmes area of France but rather a fascinating bringing together of all the protestant strands and spiritual initiatives in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries which led up to the evolution of Quaker groups from around 1785 onwards.

Dommen begins his narrative during the time of religious persecution of secret gatherings of these non-conformist groups. Readers may have heard of the Musée du Désert which records the lives of the religious groups (or communities) (sects) living hidden away in the mountains, each community embracing a slightly different form of worship. I found much new information in this section, which made clearer the eventual arrival of the trembleurs (Quakers) in the eighteenth century. Interestingly, the first proto-quaker to venture north to the Lowlands in 1769 was unable to speak French because his first language was Occitan. But in 1785 we read of the first real link

with British Quakers through Edward Fox. Jean de Marsillac, who met with these Friends, was a native French speaker and thus communication was established. A letter from several French trembleurs, provided in full in the book, is signed by some key Quaker names from the past including Mazolier fils (aka Majolier) and Bénézet. One further name, De Lord, stood out for me because a present resident of Congénies is a descendant of that family.

Dommen includes several colour photographs of the region as well as a number of historical images. I would have liked a timeline to clarify the chronology of his narrative. There are plentiful references to support his thorough research, though tracking down some of the sources could be problematic. But these are minor points in a publication that brings together for the first time all the disparate writings and correspondence of the pre-Quaker history of the Vaunage region of south-west France, leading up to the establishment of recognised Quaker Meetings. The book is written in clear French for those for whom it is a second language.

Ce petit livre a été écrit à l'occasion du bicentenaire de la Maison quaker à Congénies, près de Nîmes, en novembre 2022. Cette œuvre ne s'adresse pas spécifiquement à ceux qui voudraient en savoir plus sur cette historique propriété quaker ; il s'agit plutôt d'une mise en perspective de l'ensemble des courants protestants et des initiatives religieuses des XVI^e et XVII^e siècles qui ont conduit au développement des groupes quakers à partir de 1785.

Dommen débute son récit à l'époque des persécutions religieuses, quand ces groupes non-conformistes se réunissaient clandestinement (« au désert ») pour tenir leurs cultes. Certains lecteurs ont probablement entendu parler du Musée du Désert, qui témoigne de la vie de ces groupes vivant cachés dans les montagnes, et développant des formes de culte variées. Cette section comporte beaucoup d'informations nouvelles pour moi, qui m'ont rendu plus claire l'émergence des trembleurs (quakers) au XVIII^e siècle. De manière étonnante, le premier « proto-quaker » s'étant hasardé vers le nord, en l'occurrence la Hollande, en 1769, ne savait pas parler français, car sa langue maternelle était l'occitan. Le premier lien avec des quakers

britanniques eut lieu quant à lui en 1769 par l'intermédiaire d'Edward Fox. Jean de Marsillac, qui rencontra ces Amis, était un locuteur français ; une véritable communication put ainsi s'établir. Une lettre de plusieurs trembleurs français, reproduite intégralement dans le livre, est signée par quelques noms quakers importants de cette époque, y compris Mazolier fils (dit Majolier) et Bénézet. Un nom de plus, De Lord, m'a frappée : une résidente actuelle du village de Congénies descend en effet de cette famille.

Dommen agrmente son texte de plusieurs clichés en couleur de la région ainsi que de quelques images historiques. J'aurais aimé disposé d'une frise chronologique rendant plus clair l'ordre des événements de son récit. Il inclut également d'abondantes citations pour étayer ses recherches minutieuses, bien qu'il soit parfois difficile d'identifier certaines sources. Ce ne sont que de légers regrets. Ce livre rassemble pour la première fois tous les textes et lettres de l'époque conduisant à l'émergence du quakerisme dans la région de la Vaunage, jusqu'à l'établissement de groupes quakers reconnus. Le style de ce livre est très clair et lisible pour celles/ceux dont le français n'est pas la langue maternelle.



A shorter version of the book is available in English online:

bit.ly/3JyuaWS [PDF]

Reviewed by Judith Roads, (BYM)



■ 08 Congenies Cemetery



QCEA NEW PUBLICATION RELEASED STORYTELLING FROM THE FRONTLINES

QCEA has released a new report entitled **Storytelling from the Frontlines: Forefronting the voices of communities most affected by climate and militarism**. The report compiles a selection of stories from communities around the world who are united by the connecting thread of militarism and the climate crisis. Through storytellers' eyes, readers can learn how militarisation and securitised responses negatively impact the natural environment that communities depend on to survive and thrive, as well as how militarisation hinders local efforts to tackle climate and environmental issues at the community level.

A virtual event to launch the publication was held on 10 March, bringing together a range of actors to

learn ways forward to amplify the voices of frontline communities in policy and action. The event opened by Guam-born, Denver-based Filipino poet and rapper Meta Sarmiento, followed by colleagues Edwick Madzimure from WILPF Zimbabwe and Deborah Burton from Tipping Point North South, who welcomed the publication in the light of their respective work on climate and militarism.

The full report can be found on QCEA's website. Friends are encouraged to disseminate these stories in their own communities, revisiting their own storytelling and oral traditions and rekindling the practice.

bit.ly/3yQSn5T [PDF]

"There is a colourful, diverse, horizon of possibility that materialises when communities find the space, resources and agency to pursue their own solutions and create their own futures"





QUAKER UNITED NATIONS OFFICE UPDATE

The Quakers United Nations Office (QUNO) in Geneva highlighted racism in migration governance and reparations for past injustices at the debut session of the UN Permanent Forum of People of African Descent (PFPAD).

QUNO Geneva's director Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge, who is from South Africa, led a QUNO delegation to the Permanent Forum's debut session at the Palais des Nations in Geneva from 5 to 8 December 2022.

The Permanent Forum is a consultative mechanism for people of African descent and advisory body to the Human Rights Council. It has been tasked with contributing to the elaboration of a United Nations declaration on the promotion, protection, and full respect of the human rights of people of African descent.

Its birth followed the UN General Assembly's unanimous decision to adopt UN Resolution A/RES/75/314 on 2 August 2021 to establish this 10-member Permanent Forum.

The Permanent Forum's inception and schedule of priorities was informed by evidence-gathering and programmes of action undertaken in the two decades since the UN General Assembly's landmark Durban Declaration of 2001.

The anti-racism commitments, actions and recommendations arising from the

discussions in Durban, South Africa, in 2001 were further reinforced by UN Resolution 68/237 of 2013 – which designated the years 2015-2024 The International Decade for People of African Descent (IDPAD).

About 500 people attended the Permanent Forum's debut session. This included human rights activists and leaders of African descent, state representatives, United Nations organs and bodies, civil society leaders, and other relevant stakeholders.

Madlala-Routledge said the Palais des Nations was filled with jubilation at the Permanent Forum's debut session.

"The vibrant mood at the launch was palpable. It spoke of hope and anticipation of the righting of the wrongs of the past through dialogue, acknowledgment of wrongdoing, truth telling and atonement. The UN Decade for People of African Descent and the UN Forum on People of African Descent are steps in the process towards reparations and racial justice," she said.

Discussions focused on the fight against systemic racism, climate justice, reparatory justice, and equality for all people of African descent.

Madlala-Routledge's statement at the session supported "strong calls for reparations".

"We support the call of the Permanent Forum for a clear understanding of

reparations as vital towards the overcoming of structural racial injustice; be it legal, cultural, political, or economic. We support the framework of retrospective justice advocated by the BlackQuaker Project," said Madlala-Routledge.

"QUNO Geneva plans to expand on the work we have been championing towards racial justice in migration."

She also said in her statement to the Permanent Forum that she was representing the "concerns of Quakers worldwide, the majority of whom are in Africa".

Madlala-Routledge concluded: "We believe that racism must be understood as a systemic issue and seen through the lens of intersectionality. We stand ready to support the Permanent Forum in its task, and to hold member states accountable for the commitments they have made to end racism."

The Permanent Forum meanwhile intends to pursue reparations for past injustices and to "rally a consolidated effort towards full restoration of the dignity of people of African descent by confronting and addressing the legacies of the past".

QUNO Geneva plans to participate in the World Plenary Meeting in Johannesburg, South Africa, next year when reparations for historic injustices would also be discussed. This upcoming meeting's theme would be "Ubuntu – Human Interdependence".

The QUNO website has access to all meetings at the Permanent Forum's first session held in December 2022: bit.ly/3LFe28G

■ QUNO Geneva director Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge (far left) with other guests at the launch of the UN Permanent Forum of People of African Descent (PFPAD) in December 2022



DIARY DATES 2023

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

Woodbrooke & EMES offer several weekly online Meetings for Worship. Please check the Woodbrooke website for the latest information: woodbrooke.org.uk/worship

EMES NOW RUNS REGULAR ONLINE EVENTS

PEACE & SERVICE NETWORK

Monthly gatherings for people involved in peace and service work are held on the second Thursday of each month. More details: fwccemes.org/emes/peace-and-service-consultation. Contact evan@fwccemes.org for more information.

EMES YOUTHGROUP

Monthly gatherings for young people aged 14-18 are held on Saturday mornings (and also midweek evenings). More details: fwccemes.org/youthgroup. Contact michael@fwccemes.org for more information.

We also hold weekly worships with a concern for the war in Ukraine, monthly gatherings for EMES Representatives and Roleholders in the first week of each month, and three times a year run online gatherings for International Members in the Section. Contact michael@fwccemes.org for more information about these events.

8-16 April

European and Middle East Young Friends Spring Gathering, Congenies

13-16 April

Ireland Yearly Meeting, Dublin office@quakers.ie

14-16 April

Border Meeting (German speaking), Black Forest, Germany grenztreffenchd@quaeker.org

27 April-1 May

Britain Yearly Meeting, London ym@quaker.org.uk

4-7 May

EMES Annual Meeting, Woodbrooke & Online michael@fwccemes.org

12-14 May

Netherlands Yearly Meeting, Bennekom secretariaat@quakers.nu

18-21 May

Sweden Yearly Meeting au@kvakare.se

25-28 May

Central European Gathering, Gdańsk, Poland

26-29 May

Switzerland Yearly Meeting, Herzberg symclerk@swiss-quakers.ch

9-11 June

Belgium & Luxembourg Yearly Meeting quakerclerk@gmail.com

29 June-2 July

Norway Yearly Meeting, Kristiansand kveker@kveker.org

8-10 September

Border Meeting and EMES Youthgroup Gathering, Heerlen, Netherlands border.meeting@gmail.com

20 September

EMES International Members Gathering

1 October

World Quaker Day worldquakerday.org

5-8 October

German Yearly Meeting clerks@quaeker.org

20-22 October

Peace and Service Network Gathering, Brussels evan@fwccemes.org

28-30 October

France Yearly Meeting admin@quakersenfrance.org

3-5 November

Italian Friends Gathering, Borgo Basino evan@borgobasino.org

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Among Friends is available free of charge at: fwccemes.org

To receive a copy by post please contact us at the EMES office.

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Sterling account

Bank name: CAF Bank
Bank address: 25 Kings Hill Avenue, Kings Hill, West Malling, Kent. ME19 4JQ UK
Account Name: FWCC EMES
IBAN: GB73CAFB40524000025578
SWIFT/BIC: CAFGBB21XXX
Account Number: 00025578
Sort Code: 40-52-40

For holders of UK bank accounts please send cheques or CAF vouchers in GBP to the EMES office or directly to CAF Bank using the account number and sort code above. Scottish Charity number: SC 036528

Among Friends 157 Deadline
1st July