



# Among Friends

Friends World Committee for Consultation Europe and Middle East Section

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## EDITORIAL

## WITNESSING THE BIRTH OF A NEW YEARLY MEETING



Eva Toth-Buberak

At the end of May I was lucky enough to witness the birth of the first new yearly meeting in Europe & the Middle East for many years. I hope that by the time you are reading this in the summer of 2023, many of you will already have heard of the new Central European YM (CEYM). They met in Gdansk on the Baltic Sea coast in northern Poland and – following the EMES sustainability policy – I travelled there by train, taking around 36 hours to get there from Birmingham.

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Friends World Committee  
for Consultation  
EUROPE & MIDDLE EAST SECTION

[fwccemes.org](http://fwccemes.org)

This was the twenty-sixth annual meeting of the Central European Gathering and was to become the first meeting of the CEYM. It was a privilege to be present at such a historic decision - the minute agreeing to become a yearly meeting sums it up very well:

**...We are excited to be at the birth of our new yearly meeting... On this 26th day of May 2023 in Gdansk, Poland, Central Europe, on the edge of the Baltic Sea, in the presence of 39 Friends in person and online, the CEG became the Central European Yearly Meeting.**

—Extract from minute CEG 2023/07, read more on page 2.

Some of you will know that during the past year the EMES executive committee has been reviewing the Quaker worship groups, and recognised meetings, around our Section. This prompted us to discover that the CEG had no formal status within EMES, which in turn prompted the CEG to think about what kind of grouping they wanted to be. Our structures are there to help us operate efficiently, so it is good to review them from time to time. Maybe your meeting is also thinking about this? Do get in touch if you'd like to discuss any of this with EMES. ➤

» It has been so long since a new YM was created in EMES that none of us were quite sure what to do next. The EMES Executive Committee minuted its welcome to the new YM when it met in July. The new YM can now process membership; attenders in Central Europe can apply for membership of the YM. At the moment, all members of the Religious Society of Friends living in the region are International Members – overseen by the International

Membership Applications Committee (IMAC). The EMES executive committee will ask IMAC to work with the CEG to invite Friends living in Central Europe to transfer their membership from IMAC to the CEYM. It will be exciting to watch history in the making as the first members of the CEYM are formalised!

**Michael Eccles**



Ewa Gawrońska

## THE CENTRAL EUROPEAN GATHERING FORMS A NEW YEARLY MEETING

At its meeting on the 25-28 May 2023 in Gdansk, Poland, the Central European Gathering made the historic decision to become a Yearly Meeting.

Over the coming weeks and months the EMES Executive Committee, in consultation with the FWCC International Membership Applications Committee, will be working with Friends in Central Europe to implement their decision to become a YM.

EMES Executive Secretary Michael Eccles, who was at the meeting in Gdansk, said:

‘I was thrilled to be at this special occasion and am glad to see the confidence of Central European Quakers grow and to see their structures develop to support their new yearly meeting. I welcome this development and will continue to

work with Friends in Central Europe to support them in this next stage of their lives as a Quaker community. It is exciting for all Friends to see a new yearly meeting in our Section and should give us all hope for the future of Quakerism.’

CEG Friends Cathy Butler and Arne Springorum, present in Gdansk told us:

‘Arne and I were full of joy at the CEG decision, finally, to become CEYM – we were at the table years ago when the first (verbal) seed was sown by a long-time Central European Friend when they said: “This Gathering, this real Quaker community, feels like it is becoming a Yearly Meeting for me.”’



Read the epistle from the meeting [here](#).

# UBUNTU

## WHAT'S THAT? by Paul Holdsworth

**UBUNTU** (“I am because we are”) refers to the deeply held belief in African communities that human beings are all interdependent, and that every person is worthy of being recognised, respected and heard. Archbishop Desmond Tutu explained Ubuntu as follows...

**My humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in yours.**

—Archbishop Desmond Tutu

It's a concept that fits closely with our Quaker testimony, and it will be central to the next World Plenary Meeting of Quakers; this will be hosted by Southern Africa Yearly Meeting, and will be held in South Africa – and online – in August 2024.

The theme will be **Living the spirit of Ubuntu: Responding with hope to God's call to cherish creation – and one another.**

At a World Plenary, representatives from all Yearly Meetings come together:

- to worship: the World Plenary gives us an opportunity to worship with Friends from all over the world, and to experience different ways of worship;
- to learn from other members of the Quaker family from near and far;
- to bear witness to our deeply held values and beliefs;
- to discern right action in response to the challenges facing the world; and
- to strengthen the world Quaker community by making new connections and building stronger partnerships.

At the 2024 World Plenary, the concept of Ubuntu will underpin all of this activity.

As Justin Ellis, from Southern Africa YM says, “Ubuntu works to ensure harmony and balance not only with other humans but all nature. Ubuntu is a daily practice in many African societies, and the effect of this is to maintain cohesion, balance, openness, peace, compassion and dignity in a community. It restrains self-serving and materialism. It ensures that strangers are welcome”. It implies a collective responsibility to ensure that all members of the community thrive.

World Plenaries are held less frequently than in the past, because of the damage caused by air travel. In 2024, the number of representatives attending in person will be reduced, and much of the event will be held online so that as many Friends as possible from around the world can take part.

EMES **has launched an appeal** for funds to help Friends in other parts of the world to take part, either in person or online.

To help Friends in Europe and the Middle East to prepare, the theme of our own Annual Meeting in 2024 will also be linked to ‘Ubuntu’. FWCC is preparing study guides and other materials to help Quakers prepare for the World Plenary.



Paul Holdsworth is a Trustee of EMES and a member of one of the working groups preparing for the World Plenary.

# EPISTLE FROM THE FWCC EUROPE AND MIDDLE EAST SECTION ANNUAL MEETING HELD ONLINE 4-7 MAY 2023

Responding with hope to God's call to cherish creation – and one another.

For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. —Jeremiah 29:11 (NRSV)

*To Friends everywhere, greetings:*

Dear friends, annwyl cyfeillion, kjære venner, chers amis, liebe Freunde, lieve vrienden, queridos amigos, cari amici, kära vänner, kære venner, rakkaat ystävät, kallid sõbrad, drazí přátelé, dārgie draugi, dragi prijatelji, дорогі друзі, дорогие друзья, kedves barátaim, drodzy przyjaciele, Shanovni Droozi, a chairde, Salamaat Asdiqa.

Loving greetings to Friends everywhere from the FWCC Europe and Middle East Section Annual Meeting 2023, meeting at Woodbrooke, UK and online.

Our annual meeting this year saw 60 Friends gather together from the Europe and the Middle East Section and further afield. Since the start of the coronavirus pandemic this was our 2nd blended annual meeting together in person with attendees at Woodbrooke and on Zoom. 50 of us met in person and 10 Friends participated through zoom. Alma was our youngest joy at a year and a half old.

We were able to create a rich experience. Cultivating joyful relationships enabled us to do our work. We became a gathered community.

Silence was deep when we commemorated Friends who died last year, we gave thanks for their lives and they will inspire us into the future.

Sandra Berry, Director of Woodbrooke, greeted us and she invited us to share memories of Woodbrooke. From Simon Best we heard about the wide variety of courses and other possibilities to pursue studies on-line and at places we invite Woodbrooke to in the upcoming years.

Personal testimonies and introductions of Finland, France, Netherlands Yearly Meetings also from Poland and FWCC Asia West Pacific Section enriched and inspired us to know more about activities of smaller groups, and cooperation within the YMs and beyond. The situation of the sold properties was explained, as well as figuring out the new normal after the pandemic, and searching for ways of outreach.

Meetings for worship were held, and gathered friends from across the section at Woodbrooke and online. Worship sharings brought us to discern more clearly, giving rise to thoughts and encouragement to bring back home.

In the reports from last year, we heard about activities that made us grateful for the work that had been done, and the efforts Friends put in. We were encouraged to work on sharing content in different languages and to find ways for outreach on social media. During the Meeting for Business we looked at the Accounts, the Budget, making the plans for and working on the discerned and most valued activities in the upcoming year.

Quaker United Nations Office New York and Geneva, Northern Friends Peace Board, Europe & Middle East Young Friends, Quaker Council for European Affairs, Quaker International Educational Trust and the FWCC World Office inspired us with their ongoing work, through means of quiet diplomacy and ways towards human and ecological security. We were reminded that we must keep asking what love requires of us.

Timothy Ashworth opened up the keynote quotations from Jeremiah and world Friends, in the lecture *Sustaining Hope*: »





Kirsten Hills

» *Faith for Long the Term.* Can the generosity in ourselves be set free to make our partners “glow”, as Bjork sings in her song from *Biofilia*? Our speakers on climate change and Quaker history brought us challenging themes to reflect upon. In our Home Groups we attempted to answer some of the questions we were given:

- Jeremiah’s message was a deeply controversial one in his time, counselling acceptance in the face of dominant power. In our own time of crisis, are we open to a call that prioritises the nurture of our families and communities?
- Are we in a position of creative responsiveness to the biblical story, such that we can share in authentic dialogue with Friends from around the world?
- Both the early Christians and the early Quakers felt they were on the cusp of a breakthrough for humankind. Both groups used words like “yearning” and “longing” for new life to come. In our time, how do we hold in our hearts the hope for that new life even as we are realistic about the risk and pain in our present crises?
- What is our gut reaction to the idea of linking our care for creation with the parts of creation that are closest to us – our most intimate partners in life? What bridges do we need to build towards each other? Can the generosity in ourselves be set free to make our partners “glow”?
- What is the source of an authentic hope that will sustain us ‘woven together in transformative faith and love’? We are a people of faith and follow the eternal Truth of the Spirit, which has many names around the world.
- Do we challenge growth for economic growth’s sake? Early Friends like James Naylor showed great courage in their conviction. Many Friends are doing so now in their stands on the environment.
- How do we convey our epistle to those who name the spirit differently to the Bible?

A personal testimony reminded us that the words we choose to use will limit the way we think and live. All creation, including us humans, goes into the ark before the rainbow. Sustainability is the watchword. Our dependency on the earth that sustains us, is central to the continuation of our existence.

As part of the new Sustainability Policy 2022, *Among Friends* and other publications have been moved from print to instead be available online. We were considering the climate impact of our events and travel. We need to find a way to reduce the damage of the climate crises – find out what is needed and cooperate with Friends

from other Sections. We made a good start and have a road ahead. We need to find the answer for our questions such as: What is the strength of our conviction?

We heard testimony on what it is like to live up to Quaker values in a war situation, help refugees, stand up for the rights of those suffering and the challenges of living up to Quaker values. Video greetings from Friends in Ukraine and friends in Georgia deeply moved us. Some talked of sustaining hope for peace in the horrible war situation. Others shared their views and different experiences, explaining that you can fight without weapons, with the power of creativity and resistance. Central European Gathering and The Funding for Ukraine Group shared experience of ongoing aid work that’s still needed, as well as keeping in touch without humiliating those in need. We heard about the preparations for the FWCC World Plenary Meeting in 2024 in South-Africa. We are invited to discern the possibilities of creating hubs in our Section / Yearly Meetings / Area Meetings so that we create the environment for Friends from our area to join in the Plenary Meeting and connect to Friends from other Sections of FWCC.

The introduction of the current situation of the Ramallah Friends School in Palestine highlighted the importance of staying committed to Quaker values and the sustenance they can give when everyday activities and tasks have been disrupted or made hard to accomplish in a situation of frequent military onslaught, checkpoints and unequal civil rights. Supporting Friends from this area of our Section and their work is very much needed and appreciated. Sami Cortas from the Quaker meeting in Brummana in Lebanon reminded us of the quiet Quaker way, our peace testimony, seeing that of God in everyone and how they had inspired former pupils of the school with different backgrounds and beliefs. On Sunday morning we joined in Meeting for Worship with Quakers in Kyiv and their supporters around the globe. Our prayers are with all those involved.

Our meeting was worthwhile beyond words. Next year we hope to meet, thanks to online devices, relying only on Zoom. Please do think about joining us.

In Friendship, mewn cyfeillgarwch, i vennskap, i vänskap, i venskab, ystävyydessä, bien amicalement, in Freundschaft, in Vriendschap, en amistad, in amicizia, v přátelství, u prijateljstvu, draudzība, barāti ūdvēzletel, sōpruses, w przyjaźni, Zi Droozhnm privitom, в дружбі, в дружбе, le cairdeas, fi alsadaqa.

*Signed on behalf of FWCC Europe & Middle East Section*  
Ethel Livermore Clerk

# CHERISHING COMMUNITY, CHERISHING HISTORY

**THE FWCC-EMES ANNUAL MEETING** by Jenny Wang



Kate McNally

The group listened raptly as Betty Hagglund, Woodbrooke's librarian, picked up one dusty volume after another, introducing them warmly like old friends. When finally we were permitted to thumb through the books, many of them centuries old, the experience was akin to touching the past itself. I peered through a volume of Britain Yearly Meeting epistles from the 18th century, a testament to the continuity of community. What challenges and crises this community must've endured through the ages!

With deep concern for our own present-day crises, fifty of us gathered together at Woodbrooke May 4-7, with 10 more joining on Zoom, to engage with the theme "Responding with hope to God's call to cherish creation—and one another." Guest speaker Timothy Ashworth gave an inspiring talk, "Sustaining Hope: Faith for the Long Term." Of the four questions we were invited to reflect on, two in particular presented themselves throughout the weekend—nurturing our communities and maintaining hope for future transformation in a time of crisis.

### CHERISHING COMMUNITIES AND CREATION

In his presentation, Timothy Ashworth recounted Jeremiah chapter 29, in which Jeremiah counseled Jewish exiles in Babylon to "build houses" and "plant gardens" as they awaited their chance to return to Jerusalem. In other words, prioritize the nurturing of community even while facing crisis. Our presence at Woodbrooke was an intersecting of Quaker communities across Europe, the Middle East, and beyond at a site of long Quaker history, as well as the forming of a new little community, ours. Listening to personal testimonies of Quakers from diverse countries was enriching, and discussions in home groups and at meals brought us closer together.

Three workshops gave us opportunities to reflect on community and nurturing. The 'Pastoral Care' workshop encouraged participants to think about section-wide needs and ideas for mutual support circles. 'Quaker Songs from Around the World' (Tim Gee) invited the musically-inclined to try out, with voice or instrument, songs that may appear in the 2024 FWCC World Plenary songbook. 'Cherishing the World' (Kim Harrison) offered nature-lovers sacred moments to connect with nature in the Woodbrooke garden. This experience reminded us of our place within Creation, and that cherishing creation is no different from cherishing each other.

The gathering was also an opportunity to hear updates from numerous Quaker organizations in our section—QUNO, QCEA, QuIET, Ramallah Friends School, FUG, and EMEYF. These presentations shone a light on the work being done to support various groups in this much wider community of ours. Particularly poignant were the testimonies given by Julia Horn, QuIET trustee, and Rania Maayeh, head of Ramallah Friends School. From them we learned of the respective challenges faced by students and teachers at Brummana High School in Lebanon and Ramallah Friends School in Palestine. The work being done by teachers to maintain safe learning environments despite electricity outages, explosives damage, and wrongful arrests of students is a stark illustration of "planting gardens" in the face of crisis.

### PRACTICING HOPE

How do we hold in our hearts the hope for new life despite the risk and pain in our present crisis? In posing this question, Timothy Ashworth invoked the ideas of the late Eden Grace, who spoke of childbirth as an apt metaphor for early Quakers' yearning for the coming of God's kingdom. Childbirth, he pointed out, means not only hope for the future, but also pain and risk preceding it. As we long for new life, we are not separate from all that is created. When we feel that deep longing for transformation, the yearning of creation is being expressed.

Hope was certainly a prevailing emotion in the video greetings from Kyiv Worship Group. Despite occasional power outages, they managed to conduct 60 online meetings for worship between February and May. "We are gathering more and more hope and good feelings about the future because we've become more confident... that we will not only survive but we will blossom once the military actions are over," Nadyia declared. Roman, an artist, proclaimed, "The only thing that is universal for all is love. Multiply your love. Express your love. And the world [will become] a better place."

Two workshops allowed us to explore the notions of hope and transformation. In drawing on the principles of "Active Hope" and Quaker insights, 'Hope as a Practice' (Simonne Wood) guided us from gratitude and grief through to action and finding our role in a larger movement to heal the world. 'James Nayler's Vision of Economic and Ecological Justice' (Stuart Masters) offered participants a chance to learn about this radical 17th century Quaker figure and to reflect on what we can learn from his vision of transformation and healing in today's world.

The weekend brought about many new encounters, but perhaps none so hope-inspiring as that with our adorable toddler guest whose presence brightened all our spirits. The impending closure of Woodbrooke saddened our hearts, and activities like walking the labyrinth, relaxing in the garden, and taking a tour of Bournville felt bittersweet, like the end of an era. But while in the library, I glimpsed Tim Gee (father of said toddler) taking a photo of a page in a Woodbrooke memory album. "I found a photo of my mum," he said, showing me a black and white image of a little girl. "I'm going to try to recreate this picture with my daughter."

On the final evening, we relaxed and shared moments of music, Quaker jokes, and a hilarious Coronation Chicken game. Then the grand finale—a Eurovision quiz game which brought out the surprisingly competitive side of Quakers. The "prize" was dancing to Abba's 'Waterloo'... and making the losing team get up and dance with us. Dancing together to a cheesy 1970's pop song was the height of both hilarity and joy. It is shared joy that binds us together as a community, and it is hope that ensures continuity. The story goes on...

*This article originally appeared in French in the Summer 2023 edition of La Lettre des Amis.*

# UPDATE

# EMES' PEACE & SERVICE NETWORK

Are you keen to get together with other Quakers to learn about sustainability? Or migration? Or the global financial system? Or...? Friends from smaller meetings sometimes find it difficult to connect with others who share their concerns. Here's how the EMES Peace and Service Network (PSN) can help...

The PSN is a longstanding group that connects Quakers who are involved in work that could be described as peace and/or service. This may mean the staff, volunteers and board members of Quaker peace or service organisations, individual Quakers involved in non-Quaker peace or service organisations, or individual activists.

The Peace and Service Network exists to provide mutual support and to promote the sharing of experience and information; it maintains communications in several ways:

- A Google group that all participants can contribute to.
- Monthly Zoom sessions on the second Thursday of each month (except August) alternating between daytime on odd numbered months and evening on even numbered months.
- Occasional speakers from inside and outside the Network.
- An annual hybrid or online gathering held in the autumn.
- A Miro board space where participants can share ideas and work together (used primarily around Annual Gatherings).

Although not an exhaustive list, our monthly sessions have included the following topics:

- Updates on our activities and/or activism
- The war in Ukraine, Funding for Ukraine via the Central European Gathering
- Just Peace as an alternative to Just War
- Conscientious objection

- Israel and Palestine, Ecumenical accompaniment
- Sustainability and the care of creation
- Experiences of laying down organisations and projects

Themes emerging from the EMES Annual Meeting in May included Support Circles (an EMES Elders' initiative), Funding and fundraising for projects, Peace plans and proposals and Making connections. The latter theme came from members of Switzerland Yearly Meeting, who are discussing various issues and would like to connect with other Friends in the Section who are interested in the same. The Peace and Service Network can help with this. Interested Friends are very welcome to join the PSN and come along to our meetings. We also encourage Yearly Meeting Representatives to EMES to let us know about any live issues on which they would like to connect with others. Social media (like the EMES Facebook page) may also be a useful communication vehicle.

The Network holds a weekend gathering each year. In 2023 this will be held in Brussels and online from 20 to 22 October and promises to be a lively event. More information and registration details here:

[forms.gle/BbgFbNSYdNhNqMbV7](https://forms.gle/BbgFbNSYdNhNqMbV7)

Between annual gatherings, the Network is guided by a small coordinating group which meets every month. We invite Network participants to consider whether they could serve on this group from autumn 2023.

To take part in the Peace and Service Network email Evan Welkin, EMES Communication and Programme Officer, at [evan@fwccemes.org](mailto:evan@fwccemes.org)

# ON CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION

by PSN member Derek Brett

Quakers have for a century worked for recognition of the right of conscientious objection to military service, and have supported conscientious objectors world-wide. The Russia-Ukraine war has posed an unprecedented threat to what we have achieved. It was no accident that it was in the context of the first “World War” that persons of all beliefs who refused on grounds of conscience to fight were excused service in the armed forces. Now, in the biggest European war in a lifetime, both participants feel that they can mobilise men without giving them access to exemption procedures. What does the right of conscientious objection mean if it does not apply in wartime?

The time is ripe for Quaker bodies at all levels to issue authoritative, loud and unequivocal restatements of our historic support of all those refusing on grounds of conscience to fight, irrespective of the justice of the cause. Any more specific advocacy must be based on this.

At present, the major practical help we can give is to the hundreds of thousands of Russians who have managed to flee to neighbouring countries, principally Georgia, Kazakhstan and Armenia. They are permitted to stay for only a limited period of time before being returned to Russia, where, having once fled the incalculable risk of military call-up, they can now count on being prioritised for it. There are also among them deserters from the armed forces, who face very heavy penalties on return. We must recall that shortly after the invasion, several European politicians issued statements encouraging members of the Russian armed forces to desert and giving assurances - which they are unable to fulfill - of asylum in Europe.

The first priority for all is simply to remain outside Russia. (Many of those who have left are able to continue doing their jobs in Russia online.) They seek to get into Europe on tourist or residence visas; above all it is essential that they be allowed to apply from the countries outside Russia which they have reached. Advice and help to individuals who come to our notice must be supplemented by lobbying at the political level.

Ukrainians have hitherto been granted refugee protection in Europe – we must monitor closely whether this continues: They have no problem entering Europe, but men are not permitted to leave Ukraine (similar measures are now in place in Russia). Numbers in future will thus be limited to those who contrive to leave illicitly.

Conscientious objectors can qualify for asylum (including as deserters), but a strong individual case must be argued, and success is never guaranteed. In the case of Russians, it may be strengthened by the condemnation by the international community of the invasion, or by the danger of being ordered to commit war crimes, but the latter is almost impossible to prove in practice.

I suggest we call on Governments, political parties, legislators and members of the European Parliament and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, to ensure that...

- a) that for the duration of the war no-one should be returned against their will to either Russia or Ukraine, including men of “military age”.
- b) that applications be favourably considered for asylum from men who would face persecution on return to Russia on account of their avoiding or deserting from service in the armed forces,
- c) in principle all applications from Russians for (c) or (d) entry visas, including applications made from such third countries as Georgia and Kazakhstan be granted, and without unreasonable delay.

I suggest also that we, individually and through our Meetings and other networks, monitor what happens at the policy or individual level regarding Russians and Ukrainians in our own countries, and feedback so that this network can act as a two-way channel for information.

## RESOURCES

For background information on the right of conscientious objection and refugee issues I suggest two publications by QUNO:

**International Standards on Conscientious Objection to Military Service 2021**

[tinyurl.com/3eb336bb](https://tinyurl.com/3eb336bb)

**Report on Conscientious Objection to Military Service and Refugee Status Determination**

[tinyurl.com/4f4zwxnu](https://tinyurl.com/4f4zwxnu)

For the situation of, and updates on, conscientious objectors worldwide:

**War Resisters' International** [wri-irg.org/en/co/rtba](https://wri-irg.org/en/co/rtba)

...and specifically in Europe, including links to EBCO's annual reports and recent press releases...

**European Bureau for Conscientious Objection**

[ebco-beoc.org](https://ebco-beoc.org)

Georgian Friend Misha Elizbarashvili stands with Ukrainian Conscientious Objector Yuri Sheliashenko in Kyiv, July 2023



# LOVING EARTH PANELS COME TO BRUSSELS

Twenty-seven of the panels created for the **Loving Earth Project** will be displayed at Quaker House in Brussels from 25 August to 6 September 2023. The panels were made by people from all over the UK and other European countries as a response to these questions:

**Think of something you love: a place, a person or a thing.**

**How will climate change and environmental breakdown affect them?**

**What action is needed to reduce the risk of harm?**

**What will you do to help?**

The exhibition will be open to the public and there will be a series of events to attract as wide a range of people as possible. These will include a launch with invited speakers, two panel making workshops, including one for families, and a poetry workshop.

There will also be a 'climate dinner' with invited guests, including policymakers and politicians. Over food,

guests will be encouraged to share their fears about the climate crisis, what needs to change and how that might happen in ways that promote peace and justice.

Those who work on the climate crisis and environmental breakdown in European institutions are aware of what is happening and the challenges we face. However, they feel pressure to 'be professional' or that they are required to represent a particular interest. QCEA believes that by encouraging them to share with others their fears and hopes – and being faced with the fears and hopes of other people – they will be encouraged to consider what they can do and find the courage to do it.

The exhibition will be an opportunity to make people aware of Quaker House as a venue and as a safe space for discussing difficult issues as well as highlighting QCEA's work on climate justice and peace.

**[lovingearth-project.uk](https://lovingearth-project.uk)**





# WOODBROOKE UPDATE

**Woodbrooke is delighted to start this update by announcing that Ben Edson will be joining the team as the new CEO of Woodbrooke Learning & Research. Ben will start in September 2023, taking over from Interim Co-CEO Martin Ford, while Woodbrooke Director Sandra Berry will continue to manage the Centre until its transition to Bournville Village Trust is complete.**

Ben brings a wealth of experience in faith-based and educational institutions across the last two decades. He was most recently Director of St Peter's House Chaplaincy, an ecumenical charity that serves over 80,00 staff and students across Manchester's multiple universities.

Ben says: "I'm really excited to be starting this new role with Woodbrooke Learning and Research. I've been drawn to the values of Quakerism for a number of years and this post presents the perfect opportunity to use the professional skills that I have learnt over the years, and also for me to engage more fully with Quaker approaches to learning, worship and justice. I look forward to working alongside you in this next stage of the development of Woodbrooke."

Ingrid Greenhow, Clerk of Woodbrooke Trustees says: "We are grateful to Martin Ford for his work in leading Woodbrooke's learning and research through the last year of transition, and we look forward to working with Ben at this exciting time for Woodbrooke."

We have been busy since our last update. In April, members of the team and Trustees were at Britain Yearly Meeting, where it was great to meet and talk to Friends in person about our work and the future of the organisation. The weekend also saw this year's Swarthmore Lecture, which was given by Esther Loukin, co-founder of the disabled-led organisation Reasonable Access. Esther looked at how we can bring about change in broader

society, including reflections on what established systems could achieve and what they cannot. Shortly after in May, Rachel Muers delivered this year's George Richardson Lecture on the topic of 'The Seed and The Day of Small Things'. It was our most well attended George Richardson Lecture with over 200 people registered to watch. Simon Best, Tanya Hubbard and Timothy Ashworth were also delighted to be part of the EMES annual meeting held at the Woodbrooke Centre in May.

At the end of June, staff and members of the Learning & Research committee gathered at Penny Bohn in Bristol to reflect on our recent programme and to plan Woodbrooke's learning for 2024. There was a lot of space for fellowship, creativity and worship as we considered the needs of Quaker communities and individuals in these turbulent times. We were delighted to be joined by Jude Acton from Quaker Life (Quakers in Britain) on our final day to focus on how Woodbrooke can provide more opportunities for children and young people.

Throughout June and July we held our bi-yearly Woodbrooke Learning Survey, where we offered participants the opportunity to share their thoughts and opinions on our work, including the topics we cover, how we deliver our courses and more. We are looking forward to reviewing this information and seeing how we can further support those interested in Quaker learning and research.

Our partnership with EMES has continued to grow and foster new opportunities. Following the success of our previous European Quaker Voices courses, in June we launched a new course in partnership with FWCC called World Quaker Voices, which covers the themes of community, worship, history and experience. We also continue to regularly hold online meetings for worship with EMES, providing opportunities for worship for those all over the world.





# 75TH ANNIVERSARY EVENTS!

Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) is celebrating its 75th anniversary with a host of events aimed at fundraising for its programmes and strengthening relations with Quakers.

Since 1948, QUNO has had an influential role at the United Nations (UN) via its offices in Geneva and New York where it works to uphold the original ideal of the UN to strive for sustainable peace and justice.

QUNO's consistent commitment to speaking with integrity, lifting up the voices of those on the margins and bringing to light diverse perspectives, insights, and concerns, has led Quakers to be recognised as trusted partners who create space for new and creative solutions in response to global challenges.

In May, QUNO's Geneva office director Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge hosted a celebratory dinner at Quaker House, a base for staff and the Geneva Monthly Meeting (GMM).

GMM members were invited to celebrate with QUNO staff. Madlala-Routledge reflected on their work via four programmes: Peace and Disarmament; Human Rights and Refugees; Sustainable and Just Economic Systems; and Human Impacts of Climate Change.

"Our programmes are grounded in the Quaker testimonies of sustainable peace, justice, equality, simplicity, community, and stewardship of the earth," she said.

"Quakers believe that there is that of the Divine in everyone and are known for

speaking out against injustice and war – issues that are incompatible with our vision of a world in which peace and justice prevail.

"Throughout its 75 years as a Quaker presence at the UN, QUNO has had an impact on policies and actions taken by the UN."

The event's guest speakers were Bob Bowers and Caroline Dommen. Bowers, who is a Geneva-based Quaker, reflected on Quakers presence at the UN.

"Quaker presence in Geneva goes back to the 1920s and the founding of the League of Nations, which was founded at the same time of the Geneva Monthly Meeting. That brought Quakers to Geneva," he said.

"The Quaker International Centre was founded in 1923, essentially the origins of QUNO a hundred years ago."

Bowers said Quakers "want to live our values".

"It's particularly strong with Quakers who come to work in Geneva. All sorts of international organisations bring Quakers here to Geneva to pursue action they feel strongly about from the testimonies of peace and inclusion. That drives Quaker concerns and makes the Quaker work that QUNO does part of our existence here in Geneva."

Bowers said for Quakers it was "important to have a voice at the United Nations".

"The UN is an international forum for peace and conflict resolution and it's very important that Quakers have a strong presence. We have a consultative status at the UN," he said.

"When I came here for the first time

and walked into the Palais des Nation (UN headquarters in Geneva) I could walk up to individuals and bring them together to Quaker House to speak openly and off-the-record and find common ground.

"That is the point of Quaker advocacy here. It is to bring people together where they can share openly and find the commonality that you need to establish to resolve conflict. Often they are not able to do that at the UN."

QUNO's office in New York held a fundraising dinner on June 9. It gathered at least 140 Friends, colleagues and supporters to mark its rich, 75-year history.

QUNO's New York office director Sarah Clarke said at this event that Quakers have "consistently served as ambassadors for peace".

"In that effort we have emphasised the importance of listening to, and lifting up voices that otherwise might not be reflected in UN decision-making... In the world of global diplomacy, having the space to connect, build relationships, and share, offers the chance for transformation."

Ambassador Olof Skoog of the European Union delivered the keynote address, highlighting the impact of QUNO's work at the UN. Skoog said there was an urgent need for Quaker working methods in today's divided world.

Cheryl Morden, co-clerk of the Quaker UN Committee, and Joyce Ajlouny, General Secretary of the American Friends Service Committee were also guest speakers at the event.



Quakers gather at Quaker House in Geneva for the 75th anniversary dinner in May.



Bob Bowers (centre), a Geneva-based Quaker, was a guest speaker at QUNO Geneva's 75th anniversary dinner.



QUNO Geneva director Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge (right) with guest speaker Caroline Dommen at the 75th anniversary dinner.

To keep updated on QUNO's 75th anniversary event have a look at its website [quno.org](http://quno.org) or follow Quakers United Nations Office pages on social media platforms Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.

29 Sept - 1 Oct 2023  
Baarlo, Netherlands

## Overcoming Racism in the Church

*Then God said, 'Let us make human  
beings in our image, after our likeness'  
(Genesis 1:26)*

Find out more and register at:  
[www.church-and-peace.org](http://www.church-and-peace.org)



**church and peace**

### EUROPEAN CONFERENCE: OVERCOMING RACISM IN THE CHURCH

29 September – 1 October 2023 in Baarlo, the Netherlands

Racism, anti-semitism, islamophobia, sexism, discrimination against Roma and Sinti are forms of group-based enmity, which are unfortunately still being reproduced through praxis and doctrines of European (peace) churches and communities today.

We know by now that Black, Indigenous & People of Color (BIPoC) have historically suffered from racist violence in white dominated church spaces. This conference will address the effects this continues to have on peace communities and the Church today and will investigate ways to mitigate these patterns from being reproduced in the future.

For more information and to register visit...

[church-and-peace.org/en/2023/05/european-conference-overcoming-racism-in-the-church](http://church-and-peace.org/en/2023/05/european-conference-overcoming-racism-in-the-church)

# ENLARGING THE TENT: TWO QUAKERS IN CONVERSATION ABOUT RACIAL JUSTICE DIALOGUES AND WORKSHEETS

by Jonathan Doering and Nim Njuguna

Review by Evan Welkin

Christian Alternative, ISBN 978-1-803-412-993, To be Published: December 2023.

As I picked up *“Enlarging the Tent: Two Quakers in Conversation About Racial Justice Dialogues and Worksheets”* by Jonathan Doering and Nim Njuguna, I was reminded immediately of another book that’s greatly inspired me: *“We Make the Road by Walking: Conversations on Education and Social Change”* by Myles Horton and Paulo Freire. Both offer a similar premise: exploring social transformation from different perspectives in dialogue, voiced by individuals with varied backgrounds who grow and challenge each other as the conversation progresses.

I came across *“We Make the Road by Walking”* while exploring different models of learning and community activism, specifically place-based “community development” as it is called in Britain. Paulo Freire, a revolutionary educator from Brazil, became a friend of Myles Horton, the founder of Highlander Folk School in the Appalachian region of the United States. The book serves as a kind transcript and witness to their exploration of common threads of community activism, education, and creating space for learning in small and systematic ways. Their dialogue bears witness to the considerable global influence they have had on the themes they discuss, inviting readers to explore their thinking and process decades in the making. The Highlander Center is about to celebrate its 100th anniversary and Friere has influenced generations of educators, including the authors of *Enlarging the Tent*.

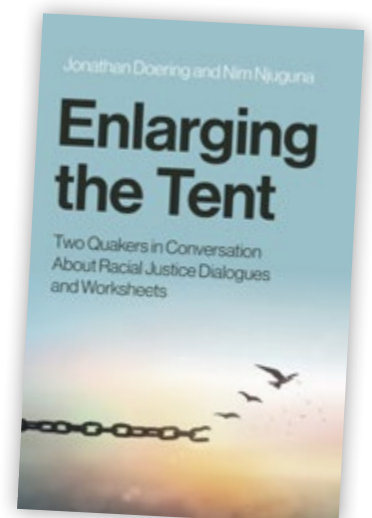
In *Enlarging the Tent*, the authors cite the inspiration for their conversations being the murder of George Floyd by police officers in 2020. For this writer, originally from the United States where police murder of unarmed black men has become commonplace (Despite representing just 12% of the US population, black people, unarmed and alleged to be nonthreatening, represented 33% of the 1200 US police killings in 2022 [link](#)) it has been interesting to reflect on conversations about race in my adopted home. Transplanted to Europe just as the “immigration crisis” began in 2015, I’ve witnessed brown and black people used as political talking points while they flee climate collapse, post-colonial warmongering and resource exploitation but rarely considered humans whose lives matter. Especially in Italy, it is rare to hear black and brown immigrants considered part of “the tent” of shared community and identity in public discourse. As I write, headlines here blare with the threat of “contagious rioting” “spilling over” from France as immigrants there protest the

police killing of a teen of African descent during a traffic stop. As Friends in Italy we are native Italian, white and black immigrants all seeking to build community together and challenging this sensationalism and dehumanisation.

In this context, I welcome Jonathan and Nim’s honest and forthright conversations, not just for Friends in Britain or those personally touched by immigration but for all Friends in our Section. Nim makes frequent reference to a “law of thirds” he’s experienced: a third of us will reject new information that makes us uncomfortable, a third will accept it outright, and a final third will need to be convinced that they should engage. Our work should focus on this final third, inviting them into a new perspective they hadn’t yet imagined.

Because *Enlarging the Tent* is a conversation between two Quakers, one a white writer at the beginning of his exploration of race, one a black consultant, activist, chaplain and government adviser with extensive experience of discussing race and racial justice, their dialogue invites us to identify with and imagine our own engagement with race and racial justice. Personally, I found their conversation sparked new lines of thinking for me about race in Europe, colonial history here, and even this image of “the tent”, a space for shared dialogue. Over the course of the conversation, Jonathan and Nim suggested that the flaps of this metaphorical tent could be left open, perhaps to allow some of the “unsure third” space to listen in and join in. Do you find yourself in or near the tent?

Exploring that question, and with their approval, Jonathan and Nim have offered to join us in the EMES Section in a series of conversations framed within the final part of their book. After exploring various themes in conversation in the first part of the book, they offer 10 workshop activities which could be conducted online. EMES has offered to host these workshops, which include guided reflections, profiles of Quakers of colour and theological exploration. I encourage us to consider that we can “enlarge the tent” together, and that this collective liberation will be a process of “making the road by walking”, talking and sharing in honest dialogue with each other.



*Enlarging the Tent* will be available in December, and you can pre-order your copy now at [Amazon](#).

We invite those who are interested to contact Evan at EMES [evan@fwccemes.org](mailto:evan@fwccemes.org) to express their interest in the online workshops, which would likely begin in early 2024.

# EARTH'S VOICES. MESSAGES FOR OUR TIMES FROM NATURE'S GUARDIANS

by Laura Newbury

Review by Sue Glover Frykman, Sweden

Tatterdemalion Blue, ISBN 978-1-915123-12-1, Published: 2022.

As an art student, Laura Newbury tried to capture the beauty of nature around the River Nairn, in northern Scotland, on large sheets of paper. Twenty-nine years or so later, from 2011 to 2017, she returns to the moors and, through the angel Ariel, hears the voice and messages of the deva, Immortelle. Immortelle describes the devas as angels of the Earth and as shape shifting Light bodies. Her overall message is for humankind to send Light to our planet. We don't need to understand how it works; we just need to do it! The most important quality that is needed from humans for the devas to cooperate, survive and evolve, and for humans to exist on Earth, is Respect. If the Earth dies, the entire universe will be thrown out of balance.

In the book, Laura describes the colours, sounds and sights of the nature she witnesses on her various visits to the moor and Immortelle's pools. The rich and vivid descriptions help readers to imagine being there in the different seasons themselves. The depictions of the moor are an important part of the book too, because they bring the vibrations of the moor to the page. The descriptions of the pools are also repeated at each visit because this is necessary to connect with Immortelle and the nature spirits. Laura covers some of the history of this part of Scotland that she lived in when growing up and that she knows so well, which adds further colour to the book. She also reveals secrets about the Clava Cairns, but you'll have to read the book to find them!

As an experienced scribe of angels' messages (see her first book, *An Angels' Guide to Working with the Power of Light*), Laura conveys the deva's messages in full, as they

are translated to her by the angel Ariel. She also includes her own observations and fears of the industrialised wilderness that many parts of Scotland – and the Scottish Highlands in particular – have become. Electricity pylons, wind farms and turbines that generate power to supply far off regions, forestry operations, infrastructure for the roads serving them and housing developments have all ravaged and raped the landscape in the name of clean energy and profit.

Immortelle tells Laura that the wind farms and today's technology are already outmoded and that we humans have the means to create the technology we need to provide light, heat and electricity without disrupting the environment. Natural kinetic energy does not destroy life forms. Rather, the Earth needs caretakers and custodians (not necessarily environmentalists) who do not see nature as something to battle with, tame and develop in concrete and metal.

Immortelle's words speak to us in our times. We are charged to hold the Light, send it out to friends, to those with whom we have no connection, to the places we love and the places we don't like, to animals and nature. Change comes from within, from the heart, with love. According to Immortelle, turning our thoughts from fear to love would lead to world peace.

The book is thought provoking and a clear message to us in our troubled times. It shows that our ancestors listened to the teachings from the more-than-human world and respected the world around them. The question is, when will we do the same?



**Laura Newbury** was brought up in a Quaker family and as a child attended Meeting in Inverness with her parents. Besides being a practising artist and teacher, Laura is also a spiritual healer. Following the publication of her book, *An Angels' Guide to Working with the Power of Light*, Laura began teaching workshops based on the material in the book. Since 2020 she has held online workshops on prayer and healing, based on communications with the angels and focusing on nature. Many Quakers – mainly from the UK, Sweden and Finland – attend her online prayer sessions. The main focus of her work is on channelling angel messages for people. Passionate about mountains, trees and the wild places in Scotland, she was led to write her second book, *Earth's Voices: Messages for our Times from Nature's Guardians*. There's more information about Laura and her work on her website: [lauranewbury.co.uk](http://lauranewbury.co.uk)

## Meeting for Worship

by Jeannette Tien-Wei Law

Pure hush, Whole held, still hearts joined  
Whiff Word, tinge Light, Voice skims void  
Fount brims, flesh cracks, urged souls quake  
Awe's axe, blade rings, jade hearts joyed

Similar in spirit to the haiku, the “English jueju” descends from the traditions of classical Chinese poetry from the Tang Dynasty (618-907). For further details on this hybrid poetic form, please visit the Institute for US-China Issues, College of International Studies, University of Oklahoma: [tinyurl.com/3bp74c8z](http://tinyurl.com/3bp74c8z)

## QUESTION

### Typography of a Guarded Mystic

by Jeannette Tien-Wei Law

I.

This Q was born a native revolution—  
O, how smug the perfect circle:  
hermit soul, a self-sustaining bungalow  
with brook and veggie patch cradling.

Spotted through shrivelled stems by elderbird eye,  
this swirling spineshell of dwelling  
sans its swash of sisterly absolution  
turns infinitely roundabout.

As overshot arms of stiffening snowbanks  
January hug with icy  
petrification, a salt-flecked prayer whirls  
to pry crossbars from winter's wile  
  
entreating ligatures of Spring to burgeon  
through such husk-bound circumspection.

II.

Every question questions its quest:  
wingward tittle of disjoined “i”  
  
glides gossamer on moonlit air  
rootless, zanzara, spiritplane

long it scours Orion's dome splashed  
with queries for runways more plumb

airdrome terminals expect an  
Arrival while ears hook and spur

axes of fleeting certainty  
to float concrete on gathered seas

glide paths of held epiphany  
gleam with strobes of beckoning Light

a hovercraft extends its wheels  
to touch the earth at truer North