

Among Friends

No 99: Autumn 2005

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Dear Friends

In July I visited Friends in the USA for the first time. In a two week period I met many wonderful Friends; visited Quaker Meetings, Churches, Colleges and Organisations; and attended the Triennial Meeting of Friends United Meeting which was held in Des Moines, Iowa. But in the short space I have here the first story I want to share is not about American Friends but of one young woman from Rwanda. It is a story of peace witness in the toughest of settings, a witness which is underpinned by a strong Quaker faith.

In a small “workshop” at the FUM triennial Cecile Nyiramana, member of Rwanda Yearly Meeting, shared her dramatic story. She spoke of how, during the Rwandan genocide of 1994, whilst pregnant she spent three months hiding under a bed in the home of friends. She and her family then spent two years in a refugee camp. During their stay in the camp she learned her mother had been murdered by ethnic Hutus. After their return to Rwanda in 1999, her husband (he is of Hutu descent, she Tutsi), was imprisoned as a suspect in the genocide, along with thousands of other men and remains there still. Cecile has chosen to help other women who have suffered similarly. With the help of Rwanda Yearly Meeting she founded “Women in Dialogue”, which brings together widows of genocide victims with the wives of imprisoned suspects, and teaches them to work together in their communities for healing and reconciliation. She gave a moving account

of the painful and difficult beginnings of that process, of the temptation to give up but of the rewards of seeing people slowly healing and genuine friendships emerging.

How does she keep going? The daily struggle continues, but most of all what shines through is her faith and her commitment to the very tough work of bringing peace and reconciliation amongst the local women. Her work like that of other local Quakers is supported by international partners, Friends Peace Teams, Norwegian Quaker Service, and others. But most of all it is clear she is nurtured and gains strength through her local Quaker community.

I want to share with you a description of Quaker worship in the part of Africa in which she lives. This comes from Church and Peace which recently distributed an account by Eric Schiller, a member of a Christian Peacemaker Team delegation to the Great Lakes region. It is entitled “Horror and Hope from the Heart of Africa.” And it is the “hope” part of his message which I share with you here:

“In the midst of this devastation, people are renewing their hope. At the workshop in Gitega, Burundi, various “artisans de la paix” (peacemakers shared their experiences in trauma counselling, conflict resolution activities, election monitoring and other preventive measures. How can they do it? Why do they do it? Their actions grow out of their faith. I had the opportunity to attend a Quaker church service in the Burundi countryside. I witnessed a veritable explosion of joy in the service. Hearty singing from the five choirs accompanied by drums, permeated the atmosphere. Moving testimonies and fervent prayers were given, led for the most part by women. The preaching, in Swahili, was electrifying. I thought I was back in a Pentecostal church service in the south of the U.S., with the addition of drums, colourful clothing and little children trying to dance in the midst of it all. Here we saw a faith community deeply rooted in the African reality, inspired by a higher vision--and a calling for peaceful action.”

Inside this issue:

| | |
|-----------------------------------|----|
| On-Line Study Circle | 2 |
| Quaker Quest | 4 |
| Central European Regional Meeting | 5 |
| World Gathering of Young Friends | |
| Lancaster Epistle | 6 |
| Africa Epistle | 7 |
| Among Friends Survey | 8 |
| Letters, Woodbrooke library | 9 |
| News in Brief | 10 |
| Diary Dates | 12 |



Stopped by sticks - Stars of Bethlehem

The other story to share is from very close to home - Edinburgh in August. For three weeks each summer our Quaker Meeting House is transformed into a small theatre, exhibition space and vegetarian café and we participate with enthusiasm in the lively Edinburgh Festival Fringe. This is not a story of Quaker witness, as such, but of how Quaker involvement empowered young people to bring an important message to an international audience. Our Festival Committee usually arranges a great programme with up to twelve visiting drama companies performing in our temporary theatre space. This year the highlight was the participation of ten schoolgirls from Bethlehem with three of their teachers. They came to perform their play: "Our Diaries through the Wall".

This was a project born out of the despair of the early days of the second intifada in 2000. Susan Attalah, English teacher at Terra Sancta School in Bethlehem, was faced with attempting to teach English amidst the disruption of frequently imposed curfews and girls too traumatised to engage with lessons when they were in school. She introduced them to diary-writing as a form of self-expression and of a way of coping with what was going on. The project blossomed and the girls threw themselves into it with enthusiasm. "Miss Suzy" was asked to help teachers from other schools in the West Bank to introduce similar work into their classrooms. American Friends Service Committee supported the

training workshops and the publication of the book of the diaries, "The Wall Cannot stop our Stories" and a play was devised based on the materials in the diaries.

On my first visit to Palestine Tareq al Bakri, the AFSC Programme Coordinator, showed me the book and he and I mused on how good it would be to gain an international audience for both the book and the play. Two years later and with lots of enthusiastic support and hard work on the part of Quakers and other friends in Edinburgh we made it. The girls surpassed all expectations with the brilliance of their performance. We gained enormously from their presence and their glowing demonstration that hope is still possible. They have told us that they too have had their lives changed by the visit. Ongoing

links have been established between young people and adults in the two communities. And as for that dream of reaching a wider audience? This is part of what a newspaper reviewer, Fiona Shepherd, writing in the Scotsman, had to say:

"ANYONE searching for that elusive "spirit of the Fringe" should investigate this vibrant, moving production devised, written and performed by ten talented Palestinian schoolgirls who call themselves The Stars of Bethlehem.

These girls are wise beyond their years. With the help of their English and drama teachers they have opened up their mental diaries and present a masterfully rounded portrayal of day to day living in Bethlehem which rings utterly - in places devastatingly - true.

But Our Diaries Though the Wall is no dour polemic. It is a charming, funny and often celebratory glimpse of their world view. One girl enthuses about her love of puzzles. Others chirpily debate the pros and cons of being a girl in Palestinian society. All have such a sparkly eyed confidence and eloquence, and their greatest skill is in handling the radical shifts in tone with consummate fluency. The piece ends, as it is almost obliged to, on a sombre note, rendered all the more powerful because these are eye-witness testimonies.

But, like their namesake, these Stars of Bethlehem shine brightly and point the way forward."

Bronwyn Harwood

An On-Line Study Circle

Julia Ryberg is one of EMES Visiting Friends. Here she tells the story of her growing experience with on-line study. Following the success of her Swedish study circle we are hoping it will be possible to launch an English language version in 2006. This is not intended primarily for native English speakers but for isolated Friends who are sufficiently fluent in English to feel comfortable joining an international study circle. It would be of great assistance to us in the planning if those who might be interested in joining such a circle could let us know quickly. We will keep those who make contact informed of the evolving plans. Please send an email to: julia.ryberg@tele2.se and emes@fwcc.quaker.org.

Studies with the Earlham School of Religion Access program have entailed several years of on-line study combined with intensive 2-week courses in the United States. The program began in 2001 as an alternative to residential study for those who feel called to study for Quaker ministry in its broadest sense but cannot re-locate to Indiana, USA. The on-line component has been a fascinating and rewarding way to learn, gathering primarily people from different parts of the United States, but also open to students from other parts of the world. It is possible to build community on-line! On-line studies have included courses in pastoral care, peace and justice, Bible and Quaker history. A year of Field Education is included in the Master of Ministry degree program, and it was offered on-line during 2004-2005 for the first time in the history of the school.

My Field Education year included undertaking some new projects with Swedish Friends. Why not investigate informal on-line learning for Friends? There was considerable interest for a study circle among Friends and attenders in Sweden. Initially, there was interest also from Swedish Friends located in USA and England. During the spring of this year, I led an on-line study circle using Rufus Jones' *The Faith and Practise of the Quakers* as the main resource. Twelve participants from the very north to the very south of Sweden, half of whom were Friends, interacted weekly with literature and each other. One participant was virtually bed-ridden and unable to participate in any other way. An interesting discussion revolved around the benefits and drawbacks of getting together for a face-to-face session.

Distance study is of course not new. Neither is fellowship at a distance. New in this context was perhaps the component of small group fellowship at a distance. The e-mail format enabled participants to read and discuss each other's responses to study questions and to share with each other events of their lives during the course. Future study groups might benefit from the use of internet discussion group forums.

Evaluations from participants indicated that informal, on-line study is indeed a valuable way to interact and to learn. It is a way for isolated Friends and attenders to interact. It is a way for those curious about Quakerism to dialogue with and learn from more experienced Friends. It is a way for new worship groups to learn from more experienced groups. The medium would enable Friends from different continents and branches of Quakerism to share in study and spiritual enrichment. Future circles could include study of Quaker history, testimonies, faith and practise. In-depth studies of individual Friends would be a possibility, as well as investigation into current Quaker issues. Focus can be on study or on spiritual nurture and development.

Judging from my own experience as both an on-line learner and leader, I believe that the on-line medium can be a way to help Friends grow inwardly and outwardly, individually and collectively.

*Julia Ryberg, Sweden Yearly Meeting, EMES
Visiting Friend*

Among Friends

– 100th Issue.

For Among Friends to truly reflect the diversity of Quaker life and experience across Europe and the Middle East we are dependent on our readers. We welcome contributions - articles, letters, photos, news of forthcoming events, even poems (it is a long time since we received one!).

Among Friends no. 100 is due out in the Spring. Please send any items for inclusion to the EMES office by **31 January 2006**.

Travelling Quaker Quest

Travelling Quaker Quest is prepared to support and encourage Friends throughout Europe, to set up more adventurous programmes of Quaker outreach to speak to the growingly urgent spiritual needs of seekers today.

But what is Quaker Quest? It is a new approach to outreach and to inreach, affirming the Quaker Way as a spiritual path for today - simple, radical and contemporary. By offering rolling programme of continuing cycles of 3, 4, 5 or 6 sessions to inform absolute beginners about different aspects of Quaker witness and worship, it deepens the faith and understanding of those Friends involved as well.

Initiated by Hampstead Monthly Meeting in January 2002 for just one year, to mark the Society's 350th anniversary, it has proved so popular with those attending, as well as those presenting, that it is now about to complete its fourth year and aims to continue. It averages about 45 weekly sessions on a Monday evening each year, soon completing 200, and is probably the most committed attempt to 'publish our Truth' since early Friends. Currently there are six themes which make up the rolling cycles: the Quaker Experience of Worship, our Faith-in-Action, Recognising the Divine, Peace-building and Non-violence, our Christian heritage & today's Universalism, and Equality in the Spirit. The presentation of the sessions has become a new latter-day public ministry and the growing public advertising to make these programmes accessible is also a way of making the Society more visible.

Based on this growing confidence and in the interest by the Society at large, as other Preparative and Monthly Meetings began to explore similar patterns, *Travelling Quaker Quest* was launched after Easter 2005. It was set up by a group of London Friends acting under concern as a two year venture, part-funded by The Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust on the understanding that to share our faith is to grow in faith and that to speak to the needs of the seeker deepens the spiritual awareness of everyone involved. There is no better way for a local meeting to develop its sense of community than to take on a Quaker Quest project where every member and attender can play a part.

The team responds to initial enquiries by offering talks to meetings to spark enthusiasm, sharing in planning

meetings, running half-day, whole-day or residential weekend workshops to explore such issues as forming a team, understanding enquirers' needs, organising a cycle of sessions, preparing presenters, creating an open ethos and undertaking advertising, publicity and fund-raising. Networking with other QQ teams and websites, follow-up and evaluation are growingly important. By the end of 2005 over 20 different Quaker Quest projects will have been held with more planned in 2006, including one in Denmark as an outcome of Danish Friends attending a Woodbrooke training workshop. It has become a new movement within the Society.

To support such work the QQ Core Group has published three pamphlets, inexpensive and accessible, to respond to enquirers' needs: *Twelve Quakers and God*, *Twelve Quakers and Worship*, *Twelve Quakers and Pacifism* and soon *Twelve Quakers and Evil*. There is also a free book of Guidelines on setting up a QQ Project, and large and small QQ posters with blank spaces for over-printing - but all texts are only in English.

Alec Davison, Hampstead Monthly Meeting
Email: quakerquest@blueyonder.co.uk

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Web-site: www.quakerquest.org.

FWCC/EMES

New Phone/Fax
Number

From 1 December 2005:

+44 (0)121 466 1263

Please amend your records

Central European Regional Meeting

From June 3 through 5, 2005, a large group of Friends from across Central Europe, as well as a number of participants from the United Kingdom and Western Europe, gathered in Hungary for a Central European Regional Meeting. The participants met at a picturesque retreat center in the town of Taksony, just south of Budapest, to share in a weekend of worship, reflection, dialogue, and learning. With an equal number of participants from East and West, the meeting provided ample scope for interaction among Friends from different regions, and the presence of seasoned Western Friends provided a supportive Quaker background for growing Eastern groups.

The events of the weekend included a broad mix of activities: large group presentations, small group discussions, silent worship, informal conversations, and casual group activities. The presentations began with a talk on Distinctive Features of the Quaker Tradition by Brian Phillips, whose inspiring discussions on the subject of Quaker testimony and living one's faith out in the world motivated a number of Central European Friends to explore such themes further with visits to Woodbrooke and Charney Manor. In later sessions, Visiting Friend for Central Europe Tony Fitt and his wife Moira Fitt led thought-provoking talks on The Corporate Character of Worship and Healing. The group was delighted to welcome back Tony Fitt – by now an honorary Central European – whose faithful visits and steadfast support have encouraged three Central European Friends to join formally over the years. In a separate presentation, Moira Fitt also shared her experience of rediscovering spirituality by singing in a choir as an entry into a intriguing discussion of discernment and the possibility of finding personal spiritual nurture in unexpected forms.

During the plenary meetings, presentations were followed by time for open discussion among the full assembly. For more focused discussions throughout the weekend, the large group was divided into five smaller groups, each conversing in a different language – English, Hungarian, Russian, or Esperanto. Gatherings for silent worship provided the opportunity for Friends from isolated groups to share in worship with a large group. The weekend was rounded out by recreational activities, including a folkdance performance highlighting the Swabian-German

cultural heritage of the Taksony area, and an afternoon boat trip down the Danube to visit the historic town of Rackeve, site of the oldest Serbian Orthodox Church in Hungary.

All in all, the meeting proved to be an enjoyable and engaging experience for the participants, and Friends from both East and West went home feeling refreshed, renewed, and enthusiastic about continued cooperation in the future. Before the meeting officially drew to a close on Sunday evening, discussion was held regarding concrete plans for the future, with the group reaching a general agreement that the meeting should continue to be held on an annual basis. Friends from the Czech Republic graciously offered to coordinate next year's meeting, now tentatively planned to be held in the Czech Republic in May of 2006.

In addition, after the main part of the meeting ended on June 5th, a number of participants chose to remain for an optional extra day of volunteering at a Habitat for Humanity project in nearby Dunavarsany, Hungary. Those who stayed on spent the day hard at work at the site of a building that, when completed, will provide housing for three needy families with small children. Friends worked side by side with some of the future owners of these homes, shoveling and transporting dirt for a new driveway and building wooden structural framing. By the end of the day the base for the driveway was ready, and the outside walls of the house were almost completed!

This year's Central European Regional Meeting was organized by the Budapest Worship Group under the fearless leadership of Zsuzsa Eastland. The group wishes to extend its heartfelt appreciation to our speakers, and to those who volunteered to lead seminar discussions on special interest topics. Finally, special thanks are due to EMES for the generous financial support without which many an Eastern Friend could not have attended the Central Europe Regional Meeting.

*Linda Carranza and Michael Simmons
Budapest Worship Group*

World Gathering of Young Friends Lancaster Epistle

To all Friends everywhere,

Greetings from the *World Gathering of Young Friends 2005*. 226 Friends gathered together in Lancaster University, United Kingdom, from 16th – 24th August 2005. Our theme was ‘*I am the vine, you are the branches. Now, what fruit shall we bear?*’ taken from *John 15*; and William Penn’s challenge ‘*Let us then try what love will do*’. Among us, 58 Yearly Meetings and 9 monthly meetings and regional groups were represented, with speakers of more than twenty different languages. We were called to be gathered together at the place where our Quaker movement first bore fruit, the heart of 1652 country. We returned to our shared roots, to the birthplace of our collective spiritual identities. Through climbing Pendle Hill as a community, to live out George Fox’s vision of a great people gathered together, we found a unity with the place and one another, among the bright green hills, surrounded by grazing sheep.

We felt great joy in being together and many Friends gave thanks for being here. However, our hearts were filled with sadness too. In the hall where we met there were many empty chairs, and we were always aware of those Friends who could not join us here in Lancaster. Many were absent because they were denied visas, others because they found when the time came that they could not join us after all. Their loss is our loss as well, for without their presence we could not feel their truth reflected in their words, their experiences, their faces and their smiles. However we could feel their presence in our hearts. We have selected 2 representatives from each region to go to a post-WGYF gathering in Kenya to share with these brothers and sisters the Love and Spirit that we felt in this gathering.

Twenty years have passed since the last *World Gathering of Young Friends*, held in Greensboro, North Carolina, USA. To what purpose were we summoned once more?

Here we tried each others’ forms of worship, silent and programmed, songs in many different languages, scriptural readings, hand holding. We were open, amazed, stretched and blessed. We learned that the great presence in our lives can be called by many names, Jesus, Christ, God, Inner light, Spirit, Love or many others. Ultimately, through listening to the Spirit that moved us, not the words in which we expressed our movement, we strived to become one organism, one body made up of many different parts

(*1 Corinthians 12:13*). We were united not so much in the expression of our faith as in our common desire to be unified and by the power of the Spirit amongst us during these 9 days. We were challenged to put aside the labels we hide behind, programmed, unprogrammed, liberal, evangelical, and come together as Friends of the Truth, seeking together for the common truth behind our language. We have not finished this process. We are only at the beginning of a long path, but the love and joy we have felt in being in this place together have allowed us to come this far, and we pray that they will lead us further yet.

The time here has been a chance to reflect on our lives. We have been challenged to recognize ourselves as God’s children, and respond in willing devotion. The love we have found here is not for us to own but to share. We desire to show our love by doing good and avoiding harm to all people and to all the Earth. We must let others see this love and know its source so that they may come to share it.

The Spirit present in our gathering summoned us to be a gathered people, and spoke through the many different people and cultures here to remind us of its glory, power and purpose. The Spirit is at work in all of us, and it is calling us not to judge one another’s forms of worship but to examine our own hearts, find our own calling. We are called to take what we have experienced here and give it back to our communities.

Far away meetings now have faces, stories and friendships that make them real to us. Bridges have been built at our Gathering which we call on Friends everywhere to nurture and support. We will keep this contact alive through exchanges, more frequent gatherings and opportunities to work together. Through this contact we will give strength to each other and share our gifts. We must face the future challenges of the Religious Society of Friends together.

Where we explored the theme of the vine and the branches we found that its fruits are born from love. We have experienced what Love can do in this Gathering, now let us try what it can do in the world.

World Gathering of Young Friends Africa Epistle

To all Friends everywhere,

Greetings from the World Gathering of Young Friends – Africa. It has been nearly two months since the World Gathering of Young Friends held in Lancaster, in the United Kingdom. During this gathering, God led Young Friends around the world to work for a post gathering, to be held in Kenya, Africa for those Young Friends who could not make it to Lancaster, mainly due to visa-related difficulties.

The WGYF-Africa was held in Kanamai, Mombasa in Kenya from 20th – 24th October 2005. 81 Young Friends gathered together, both from around Africa and representatives from the regional groups that participated in the Lancaster gathering. These Friends were from 27 Yearly Meetings and communicated in five different languages though more than twenty languages were represented. The gathering in Kanamai shared the same theme with the gathering in Lancaster – “I am the Vine, you are the branches”...now what fruit shall we bear? (from John 15).

It was a collective idea of the WGYF in Lancaster that the representatives should take with them all the experience they witnessed, and pass it on to Young Friends who participated in the WGYF-Africa. This WGYF-Africa was another great opportunity that brought joy to Young Friends who represented most of the Quaker Community and enabled us to exchange our different traditional backgrounds of faiths and practices, cultures and spiritual journeys. Our presence together helped heal the deep hurt that was felt at the denial of visas for the Lancaster gathering.

During our time in Kenya we were able to visit various local attractions, and we were enriched by our wonderful surroundings. We worshipped and danced together, worked together in much valued workshops and heard three valuable talks by our guest speaker Dr. Esther Mombo. We also enjoyed regional and yearly meeting presentations and an exciting cultural night.

Similarly to those who participated in the WGYF in Lancaster, Young Friends at WGYF-Africa felt that we had an opportunity to explore different interpretations of the theme as mentioned above. We believe this opportunity has revealed to us the diversity that exists among us, and it has challenged us to always recognise this diversity of religion and faith, not only among the Society of Friends, but among all people.

Young Friends at this gathering also felt that the following were the challenges and opportunities that will help us grow in our faiths and practices in various ways:

Experiencing different forms of worshipping among Friends was an opportunity for Young Friends to share, understand, and accept each other no matter how we relate to God. We believe this has led our minds to be more liberal on our faiths and practices, thus challenging us to always promote love and unity among Friends regardless of different traditional and faith backgrounds. Young Friends experienced what we believed to be Quaker Faith in action as we experienced the Love of God working through us in different ways.

We felt, however, that we are faced with some challenges. We had to think of how to question others without seeming challenging. We felt challenged to carry the theme of this gathering, along with our experiences here, to other Young Friends across the world. We find the world's socio-economic & political barriers increase the weight of this challenge. Young Friends also found the leadership and structural conflicts among Friends in their different Meetings to be a great challenge facing the future of Quakers.

We recognised that we have no right to judge each other, but leave judgement unto God. We call for love and unity among Friends worldwide as we are all branches of the one True Vine.

World Gathering of Young Friends - Britain 2005

Europe Based Committee, Young Friends General Meeting Office,

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Among Friends Readership Survey

Thank you to all those Friends who sent in completed questionnaires – about 40 of you, from seventeen countries did so: Belgium, Britain, Croatia, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Russia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine

The comments were very helpful and will help in our future planning. The majority were happy with the lay-out, timing and language used. The most popular articles are those which give news of Yearly Meetings and groups and the least popular book reviews.

Some of you would like to see Among Friends appear more frequently and others to have it in languages other than English. Some Yearly Meeting newsletters do occasionally translate articles from Among Friends and re-publish them. Our readers have access to a remarkable spread of Quaker journals with 30 different newsletters being mentioned in total; the majority being from Britain, Ireland and Yearly Meetings in the USA. One Friend suggested that it would be useful to publish links to Quaker journals in other languages. See the list below – and please do send in details of any European Quaker journals we might have missed.

One Friend commented: “I wonder how the editing of Among Friends is organised. Does it not take up too much of the time and energy of our Executive Secretary?” Well yes it does take up my time and energy but it seems an important part of the role. However those who would like to see Among Friends appear 12 times a year and in multiple languages will remain disappointed as EMES just does not have the resources at present.

Bronwyn Harwood

Finland: Kveekari Uutiset - Quaker Centre, Vaasankatu 4 C 53, SF-00500 Helsinki

France: Lettre des Amis - Centre Quaker, 114 rue de Vaugirard, F-75006 Paris

Germany: Der Quäker - Kerstin Mangels, Küferstr.2, D-69168 Wiesloch
redaktion@quaeker.org

Italy: Lettera Quacchera - Pier Cesare Bori, via Angellelli 18, I-40137 Bologna

Netherlands: De Vriendenkring - Wensenkampsweg 5, 9541 EB Vlagtwedde
www.vriendenkring.info

Norway: Kvekeren - Vennesen Samfunn Kvekerne, Skovveien 20, 0257 Oslo.

Sweden: Kväkartidskrift - Ingmar Hollsing, Isabellag 8, 56040 BORÅS, Sweden

Switzerland: Entre-Amis - Molly McJohn, Ch. des Epinettes 20, 1007 Lausanne mmcjohn@freesurf.ch
The one European Quaker journal which is always produced in three languages: German, French and English.

A selection of your comments

“Lighter - Shorter articles and more news items”

“I would like to continue receiving Among Friends by post. I do not go into the Web”

“This is a time of terrible things happening but also a time of wonderful development near and far, a kind of awakening”

“More on Visiting Friends and their personal reflections”

“Don’t take too much notice of comments from British Friends such as myself!”

“How about a column by the Executive Secretary on “My life over the past three months” (at least in relation to EMES) to help us realise all that she does.”

“Postings dates are often after events being advertised have happened. Please leave out or advertise well in advance.”

1. More Christian Quaker Views.
2. More studies on Early Friends.
3. Articles about other denominations in Europe.”

“I like to receive Among Friends - it keeps me connected with some of what is going on among European Quakers. I think the lay-out is much better now, and the photos liven things up. Would it be possible to produce it more often? Could it be part of Quaker Outreach in Europe? Also connecting us more isolated Quakers and drawing us in.”

Letters

Dear Friends,

Greetings from our Ramallah Monthly Meeting!

I am so pleased to report that since our inspiring re-dedication of our Meeting House in March of this year, hundreds of international visitors and locals (both Palestinian and Israeli) have used the Friends International Centre in Ramallah to gather, inform and strengthen their commitment to peace. The richness of weekly meeting for worship is moving, as worshippers gather in silence and song from across the globe, across traditions, across cultures and even across religions and political persuasions.

So many of you have stood with us during both joyful and very difficult times. It cannot be underestimated how key your accompaniment has been to the continuation of a Quaker presence in Palestine. Indeed, our accompaniment of each other has empowered me personally and our Meeting, in general, to persevere in some of the most difficult and dangerous of circumstances and it is what will see us through to the day when truth, justice and peace truly do embrace.

May our ministry together continue to grow and may we continue to sow the seeds of peace.

In grace and great gratitude,

Jean Zaru, Clerk, Ramallah Friends Meeting

The first Friend in Residence/Coordinator for the Friends International Centre in Ramallah has been appointed. It is hoped that Kathy Bergen will be in residence by February 2006.

In August the Swedish Fellowship of Reconciliation non-violence prize for 2005 was awarded to Jean Zaru for her life-long engagement for non-violence and a just peace between Palestinians and Israelis. The citation read: Jean has worked continuously to create justice and peace together with her concern to 'see that of God in every person'. Jean's witness about a vivid non-violence culture has made deep impressions on the International movement for Peace as well as among Muslims, Jews and Christians.

Dear Friends,

FWCC/EMES received the sad news that Brian Stapleton passed away on the morning of 7 November 2005. In 1979 Pat and Brian Stapleton took up the challenge of becoming the first Representatives of the Quaker Council for European Affairs in Brussels. Very soon their commitment, their knowledge and their enthusiasm for bringing a Quaker message to the heart of the European Institutions and to communicate European matters to Friends in Europe and worldwide, as well as their sense of humour made them very special to many Friends in the Section.

A Memorial Meeting for Brian Stapleton will be held in Brussels around 21 January 2005, the exact date and time still to be set.

We hold Pat and the family in the Light in these dark weeks.

*Anita Wuyts
Clerk FWCC/EMES*

Woodbrooke Library Open for Business

After four months of refurbishment, Woodbrooke's historic library emerged from its cocoon with an opening ceremony on 17 September.

The new interior is a more welcoming and comfortable environment for a quiet read; a cosy corner has been created in the bay window, and the browsing area has been opened up to be more inviting and accessible for wheelchair users.

Most importantly, the refurbished library will allow Woodbrooke to preserve its unique collection for future generations of students. There is a new heating system with separate thermostats for each room so that the temperature can be fine-tuned for preservation of the ancient texts, which include half of all 17th century Quaker literature and some Geneva bibles from the 1500s.

The colossal task of refurbishing the library involved moving 8 tons of books, and threw up a few surprises along the way. Most astonishing was the discovery behind a bookcase of two volumes of Burnet's *History of His Own Time*, and one of Calvin's *Institutes*, which had been hidden for 95 years.

News in Brief

Europe and Middle East Young Friends Spring Gathering 2006: Cross-Cultural Spirituality 13 – 18 April 2006, Nr Barcelona, Spain

Come and explore cross-cultural spirituality in Spain next Easter.

At the World Gathering of Young Friends, we were exposed to different interpretations and ways of living out the Quaker tradition.

Spring Gathering 2006 will build on the experiences and dialogue shared at the World Gathering by exploring how a variety of sources inform our spirituality- both from different traditions within the Quaker community and including those from other cultures.

In today's globalized world, religious concepts travel and implant themselves in entirely different cultural contexts. How do these concepts challenge and enrich us? Have they caused us to perhaps expand our own spiritual lives and imagination?

The 2006 Spring Gathering will be a unique opportunity to rethink the boundaries of our spirituality in the beautiful and sunny setting of Spain.

Anneke Spreij: a.spreij@demon.cx

Changes at Quaker Voluntary Action

Recently we were sad to say farewell to Sue Dixon as our Executive Secretary. Sue has been with us for six years, since the start of QVA, and has done much to establish our work. She will continue with QVA as a volunteer. We wish her well for the future.

The good news is that we have appointed Jane Rosenberg of Brighton Meeting to become our new Executive Secretary. Jane who has a wealth of experience of working with volunteers – both in the UK and abroad – began work for QVA on 1st November 2005. One consequence of the appointment is that we are closing our existing office in Manchester and opening up a new one in the Brighton area on the south coast of England. For now, until a new office is

established, Jane can be contacted at her home address: 5 Rosslyn Road, Shoreham-by-Sea, England, BN43 6WL. Her telephone number is +44 (0) 127 346 5696 – please ring before 21.30 hours UK time.

Martin Smith: Clerk for QVA

The Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA) is pleased to announce the launch of the Online European Peace Directory on its website. The European Peace Directory is an online resource for all those in Europe who are working for peace and want to find out who else in Europe is working in this field. The European Peace Directory is produced in association with Mouvement Chrétien Pour la Paix. The directory, along with information for Groups & Organisations wishing to sign up, is available from the QCEA website at: www.quaker.org/qcea/peacedirectory.

Robin Bloomfield, Programme Assistant

The Wider Quaker Fellowship

A programme of FWCC Section of the Americas

There is a twice a year English language mailing to subscribers of short writings from across the Quaker traditions, presenting different aspects of Quaker, faith, practice and spirituality. This can be of particular interest to isolated Friends. (There is also an annual mailing of writings in Spanish.)

The Fall 2005 packet contains writings on “Quakers working together for Peace and Reconciliation in the Africa Great Lakes Region”, including a paper by Cecile Nyiramana, and brochures on “William Penn and the Poetry of Sorrow” and “God's Presence in Trauma”

For the first time these materials are now freely available on the FWCC Section of the Americas web-site or you can write and ask to join the mailing list: The Wider Quaker Fellowship, Friends World Committee, Section of the Americas, 1506 Race Street • Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19102 • (215) 241-7293

Our Diaries through the Wall

A professional recording of the girls' performance was made while they were in Edinburgh, with additional interview material from the girls and staff, telling the story of the diaries and the show. This is available in DVD format and we also have some copies of the book for sale.

Please send orders to Phil Lucas The Quaker Meeting House, 7 Victoria Terrace, Edinburgh EH1 2JL. To addresses in the UK: £9 for the DVD, £9.50 for the book, £17.50 for both. Cheques made to The Religious Society of Friends. For Friends in Europe, outside the UK, copies can be obtained from EMES. Payment through the EMES euro account (see page 12 for details) DVD, 16, Book, 20, both together, 34. Any profits made will help seed a continuation project already being planned.

LEARN ABOUT THE UN AT THE UN

Quaker United Nations

Summer School

9-21 JULY 2006, GENEVA

Do you have an active interest in international affairs?

Would you like to study the UN at first hand?

Do you want to meet people from all over the world?

Are you aged 20-26?

Yes?... Then write today for an application pack to:

Helen Bradford (QUNSS), Friends House,
Euston Rd, London, NW1 2BJ, UK.

Email: helenb@quaker.org.uk

Deadline for applications:

Friday 17th March 2006

News of local Meetings and Worship Groups

Dubai

A small group of Friends in Dubai would welcome contact from any Friends - even if/especially if they are just flying through Dubai. The group meets semi-monthly in one of their homes. Contact: Dubaiquakers@hotmail.com or phone Justin at 971-50-505-1640, Olivia at 971-50-845-2015, or Sarah at 971-50-552-3476 (When inside the UAE, replace the 971 with 0).

Elektrostal, Russia

Meetings are held on an irregular basis. Contact from any Friends travelling in the area would be most welcome: Natalia Fedorchenko: natalygf@mail.ru

Italy

Bologna – Friends now meet in new premises in Via Lombardia (a former school, which now houses a variety of associations). Meeting for Worship is held on the second Sunday in the month. Friends also meet on the last Wednesday of the month in the evening for a talk and discussion. There is also news of a new worship group starting in Rome. For more information contact the clerk, Mauro Bonaiuti: pet7407@iperbole.bologna.it

Strasbourg

Mike Zipser has informed us of a change of meeting day from second to third Sunday in the month. The place changes from time to time. Contact Mike for details: zipsemi@earlham.edu

Diary Dates 2006

We are short of space for full postal addresses and phone numbers. Please contact the EMES Office if you need this information.

27 - 29 January Seminar - "Martin Buber: Ich und Du", Bad Pyrmont, Germany. See <http://www.quaeker.org/termine/index.php> for more details

28 - 29 January Quaker Study Weekend, Quaker International Centre, Paris. Au programme: causerie de Pierre Lory et Elizabeth Velasco sur Marshall Hodgson, quaker américain du 20ème siècle, spécialiste de l'Islam. Contact Jeanne-Henriette Louis, jeannehenriette@ifrance.com

13 - 18 April EMEYF Spring Gathering, Barcelona, Spain. Contact Anneke Spreij, a.spreij@demon.cx

13 - 16 April EMES Annual Meeting, Scottish Churches House, Dunblane, Scotland. Contact Bronwyn Harwood, emes@fwcc.quaeker.org

20 - 23 April Ireland Yearly Meeting, Dublin. Contact Rosemary Castagner, Quaker House Dublin, Stocking Lane, Dublin 16. office@quaekers-in-ireland.ie

28 April – 1 May Woodbrooke on the Road in Liepaja, Latvia. "Coming Home to Friends." Further information from Ivars Abelis: ivars43@yahoo.com

Early May Central European Gathering, Czech Republic. Contact Roman Branberger, romanbra@vol.cz

12 - 14 May Netherlands Yearly Meeting, Woodbrookers Huis, Barchem. Contact Hadewich Touwen, secretariaat@quaeker.dds.nl

26 - 29 May Britain Yearly Meeting, Friends House, London. Contact Michael Hutchinson, michaelh@quaeker.org.uk

2 – 4 June France International Salon for Peace Initiatives, Paris. French Friends are coordinating international Quaker involvement on behalf of FWCC. Contact: Jeanne Henriette LOUIS, jeannehenriette@ifrance.com

29 June - 2 July Nordic Yearly Meetings, (Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden Yearly Meetings) Nordiska Folkhögskolan, Kungälv near Gothenburg, Sweden. See http://www.kveker.org/index_trossamfunn_eng.htm for more details

13 July – 11 August Quaker Youth Pilgrimage in Ohio and Indiana, USA for young people aged 16 to 18. Closing date for applications – 11 January 2006 Contact Nigel Hampton or Caroline Evens for details.

7 - 10 September Middle East Quaker Yearly Meeting Gathering, Brummana High School, Brummana, Lebanon. Contact Sabah Baz, baz@inco.com.lb

15 - 17 September Grenztreffen Deutschland, Belgien, Nederland, Luxemburg und Frankreich, Strasbourg, Deutschland. See <http://www.quaeker.org/termine/index.php> for more details

17 - 19 November EMEYF Annual Meeting, Bad Pyrmont, Germany. Contact emeyf@qcea.org

Among Friends is the newsletter of Europe and Middle East Section of Friends World Committee for Consultation.

Also available at: <http://www.fwccemes.org>

We want Among Friends to reflect the diversity of Quaker life and experience across the Section and welcome articles, photos and news of forthcoming events.

There is no set subscription fee for Among Friends. We depend on voluntary subscriptions. Costs of printing and distribution are rising and we hope those who are able to pay will consider an annual donation of around 10 Euros.

If you wish to make a bank transfer, please use the details below:

From outside the UK (EUR):

PlusGiro (part of Nordea Bank AB)
SE-105 71 Stockholm, Sweden
Europe & Middle East Section
Friends World Committee for Consultation
IBAN: SE92 9500 0099 6034 0466 9644
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For holders of UK bank accounts please send cheques or CAF vouchers in GBP to the EMES office. Scottish Charity number: SC 036528

Deadline for Among Friends 100: **31 January 2006**