

Among Friends

No 92: Summer 2003

Published by the Europe and Middle East Section of Friends World Committee for Consultation
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In April at a church conference centre in a small village on the edge of Lake Balaton, Hungary, Europe and Middle East Young Friends met for their annual Spring Gathering. They received an invasion part way through of EMES representatives arriving for the Annual Meeting and the first ever joint EMEYF/EMES sessions took place before most of the Young Friends dispersed. We all enjoyed the opportunity for shared worship and social time. We were fortunate that some were able to stay on as welcome participants in the full EMES meeting. Several items in Among Friends this time bring news from those meetings in Hungary: the epistle and a photo from EMEYF, and news of the plans for the forthcoming World Gathering of Young Friends; and from EMES, the major decision to launch a new Visiting Friends Programme and an invitation to join a Trees for Africa scheme.

We were sad that yet again no representatives from the Middle East were able to be at the Section meeting, although as ever there was a strong sense of unity with them. I hope to report news from Ramallah in the next edition of Among Friends following a visit in August.

The photo on this page comes from the first ever Grenztreffen held by Swiss and German Friends. A wonderful occasion by all accounts. I am sorry lack of space does not permit me to include a report this time.

Much of this issue seems to focus on internal Quaker affairs. But before you get into all of that, our first contribution, from Marion McNaughton reminds us of our place in the wider world.

Bronwyn Harwood

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Seeing the face of God

Marion McNaughton

We have always known how little we really know each other, but events like September 11th bring home to us the dangers of our ignorance, and the depth of the mistrust and hostility that can exist between different faith communities. We ask ourselves what we can do to be part of the healing.

For the last thirty years an extraordinary event has taken place annually in Bendorf, Germany. Called the Standing Conference of Jews, Christians and Muslims in Europe, it is the result of co-operation between the Berlin Akademie, the Leo Baeck Rabbinical College in London, the German Muslim League in Bonn and the Hedwig Dransfeld Haus in Bendorf. It has no central offices or officers, but is brought into being each year through the dedication and love of a small interfaith committee who plan, struggle and pray the event into life.

It is primarily intended for students and teachers of religion, but includes those who are involved in ministering to their own communities, people who have gone some way down the road of holding fast to their own beliefs while knowing the importance of opening their hearts, minds and spirits to the messages from other faiths. I had known about Bendorf for

some 15 years, had longed to take part, but heard that attendance was by invitation only, and so I hung back. Then in 2000 I boldly asked if I could attend and was warmly welcomed - for the last three years I have usually been the only Quaker there.

What do we do? We attend formal lectures, grappling with religious concepts from other faiths, waiting patiently while everything is translated between English and German and sometimes Arabic. We meet in small informal study groups, struggling to understand each other, breaking down barriers. Our language skills improve, we make friendships across religious divides, we encounter fear and intransigence; but also cautious hope, laughter and delight.

Each day we attend each other's religious services, sometimes engaged, sometimes baffled, sometimes unaccountably moved to tears. I am reminded of the courage and humility that ordinary human beings are capable of; there is a deep longing for peace between us, but an even more acute longing for the justice that precedes peace. I have seen mistrust move towards a wary openness. I have seen willingness to change. I

have seen breakthroughs, limitations, visions of possibilities and hard realities. As I have learned and unlearned, closed worlds have opened to me and I have slowly moved towards a more truthful understanding.

Some years the conference is angry, passionate, full of pain and accusation. During the Iraq war to our amazement it was sad, gentle, considerate, there were no fireworks of encounter. It was as if we understood how precious these people are, how much it had cost them to come together now. We seemed to know that what we most needed to do at that moment was pray together, mourn together.

I am left wondering why religions find separation so much more comfortable than unity, and why we allow our differences to loom so much larger than what we hold in common. There is a unity that holds us all if only we would learn to sense it and trust it. To catch a glimpse of it is unforgettable.

Jacob said to Esau: I have seen your face as if seeing the face of God and you have received me favourably. (Genesis 33:10)

New Visiting Friends Programme

At the EMES Annual Meeting in April proposals for a new Visiting Friends Programme were welcomed with enthusiasm. It is now ready to be launched.

The original Visiting Friend scheme was set up in 1999 in order to help meet the need for spiritual support within the smaller Yearly Meetings and groups in Europe and Middle East section. A Visiting Friend was appointed each year, released to travel in the ministry to small groups and isolated Friends within the Section. The visits were in general much appreciated.

The new plans draw on the previous experience but also attempt to address the need for spiritual support in a more sustained way through appointment of a number of Friends for a period of up to three years. Each of them will be expected to develop an on-going link with a limited number of individuals, or indeed possibly with a single group. Thus the time commitment per individual Visiting Friend will be much less than under the previous scheme. The role of Visiting Friend will not be a paid position, although of course expenses will be met. The selection of Friends to visit will be based on the known support needs of

the groups/individuals to be visited. In one place the Visiting Friend appointed might be involved in supporting a new and growing group through occasional meetings for learning; another could be called on to assist a meeting facing difficulties within the group, another could support individuals who are too scattered to attend a regular meeting for worship – through occasional visits and continuing links by correspondence. The skills required for specific situations are likely to vary – in particular languages spoken, facilitating meetings for learning or meetings for clearness and so on. We are contacting Yearly Meetings and Quaker groups to ask them to consider where visits might take place. These are most likely to be to the countries where there are very small Quaker groups and Friends live at great distances from one another but at present it is not yet possible to say exactly where the first Visiting Friends will be sent.

We expect all Visiting Friends to have the following attributes: membership of the Religious Society of Friends; sensitivity towards different Quaker traditions; listening skills; ability to express own experiences; experience in group work; supported by the Friend's

own Monthly or Yearly Meeting. In addition there will be specific knowledge and skills in relation to particular local situations.

Visiting Friends appointed will receive guidelines in relation to their role. We are currently exploring with Woodbrooke the possibility of an induction weekend to bring Visiting Friends together to consider what is involved in travelling in the ministry and to set up a system of "peer support". We see the potential for this group of Friends to develop a strongly supportive role in the spiritual nurture of the life of the whole Section.

Please make sure that this opportunity for service is brought to the attention of suitable Friends and get in touch now if you would like to put forward a name as a potential Visiting Friend. You are encouraged to apply on your own behalf if you feel that this is a form of ministry you can offer. Please send a letter/ email giving some background information about the person whose name you are putting forward. We will ask for further information if necessary.

The closing date for initial applications is 30 September 2003 – although we expect this to be a rolling programme with other opportunities arising from time to time. Selection of the first group of Visiting Friends will be made during October.

The number of visitors we can fund at any one time

will be limited but we hope that it will be possible to create a "pool" of experienced Friends willing to serve should the need arise. EMES may invite some Friends who have not applied to consider serving especially where there is a need for the Visiting Friend to have particular skills (eg specific languages).

Bronwyn Harwood

On behalf of EMES Executive Committee and Nominations Group

Please do contact me for any further information and/or with details of potential Visiting Friends by email or letter (address on page 1)

☞ *And this is the word of the Lord God to you all, and a charge to you all in the presence of the living God, be patterns, be examples in all countries, places, islands, nations, wherever you come; that your carriage and life may preach among all sorts of people, and to them. Then you will come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in everyone; whereby in them ye may be a blessing, and make witness of God in them to bless you.* ☛

The Journal of George Fox

AFSC in Europe

Since April, Michael Simmons, formerly Director Europe Region has begun his two year assignment as the European Quaker International Affairs Representative of the American Friends Service Committee. We were glad to welcome him at the EMES Annual Meeting. His assignment is to develop links between the US, European and Middle East Peace Movements. Though European wide in focus, Michael will utilize his 17 years of working in Central Europe to challenge the divisive paradigm of "new" and "old" Europe. Apart from writing reports and networking Michael will be organizing small Quaker seminars on topics and issues either being ignored or under-represented in the various peace movements. Currently Michael is planning a seminar to discuss the denial of civil liberties to Muslims in the US and the similar trend in Europe and the Middle East. Michael will also be working with the Turkish Peace Initiative to organize Tribunals to address the War on Iraq. These Tribunals will take place in the US and Europe culminating in Turkey in the Spring. Please feel free to contact Michael for further information.

Michael Simmons

European Quaker International Affairs Representative

American Friends Service Committee

c/o Vaci Rozsa, Raday U. 17

1092 Budapest, Hu.

36 1 215 0268 land

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Epistle, Europe and Middle East Young Friends Spring Gathering 2003

Those of us gathered in Revfülöp, Hungary, for the EMEYF Spring Gathering would like to send our greetings to those not with us, and share some of our experiences. Together we explored and practised "Norms and Values: who we are and what we live by," through worship, discussion, games, questions and shared thoughts. We reflected on our testimonies and beliefs. Sharing our experiences in basegroups and on walks, both in silence during a completely silent morning and whilst discussing, helped to develop a sense of community and understanding. This was enhanced by activities such as massaging each other, meditation, table football, learning about Hungary, gazing at the moon, card games and saving the Easter Bunny. We felt supported and protected by our own community, like a flame sheltered from the wind by a glass lamp, an image suggested by Zsuzsa Eastland, as she spoke to us about the developing Quaker community in Budapest.

We challenged and explored our understanding of Quakerism through constantly asking ourselves interesting and diverse questions about our spiritual values. We concluded that a sunflower seed is an aid in explaining Quakerism to Martians. The seed needs certain conditions to grow, as we develop given the right environment; the flower turns towards the light as we continually seek inspiration; the seeds which it sends out may grow in their turn.

We tried to gain a new perspective on the story of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem by asking and answering questions of the characters, animate and inanimate,



within the story, and telling our own version.

We heard from Majk Stokes how music has been used in reconciliation work in Bosnia, and experienced for ourselves the potential music has to bring groups together through writing and singing songs. We also discussed the spirituality of music and its place in our worship.

Our thoughts and prayers are with those suffering in any way and especially all those affected by the war in Iraq.

We feel enriched by contact with representatives of Europe and Middle East Section, whose meeting overlaps with ours. We wish them well for their meeting which some of us will be attending, and look forward to meeting them again at other opportunities. We eagerly anticipate our next gathering as EMEYF, and warmly invite you all to join us, either in Germany for Annual Meeting or in France for Spring Gathering 2004.

Signed,

*Europe and Middle East Young Friends Spring
Gathering Participants from Belgium, Britain,
Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, The
Netherlands, Russia and Switzerland.*

17th April 2003.

Quaker Holiday accommodation in France

The Assemblée de France offers the Maison Quaker de Congénies for short or long lets, this summer and early autumn, to help pay the costs of renovation.

4 bedrooms, sleeping 6 to 8 people. Simple furnished self-catering accommodation for families or groups. Large garden, off-street parking. In pretty village near Sommières, Nîmes. Camargue, sandy beaches, Cevennes mountains and national Park all within 40 minute drive. Lovely country walks around Congénies.

Now from £265/week, £500 for 2 weeks. Negotiable for more than 2 weeks. contact +33 (0) 4 66 80 26 42 or +33 (0) 4 66 77 33 02.

Trees for Africa: please join!

Kees Nieuwerth

Next year January the FWCC Triennial will gather Friends from around the world in New Zealand / Aotearoa. At the last Triennial in New Hampshire in the United States in July 2000 a concern was voiced about the contribution Friends' travelling makes to climatic change through the emission of carbon dioxide. A minute was adopted that Friends worldwide plant 9000 trees to absorb these emissions in order to compensate for our journey to New Zealand.

Looking at the geographical spread of Friends around the world, as well as their numbers, proportionally Friends in Africa and the Americas would have to plant most of these trees.

In fact Friends in Africa would have to plant some 50% of these 9000 trees, whereas Friends in the FWCC-EMES would have to plant around 720 trees, out of which a small Yearly Meeting such as Netherlands Yearly Meeting would have to take care of only four trees.....

At the time of writing this it must be clear to most of the readers that we already live in a comparatively green environment with relatively speaking quite a lot of forests, parks, hedgerows and trees....whereas this is not so in other parts of the world....

Last year my wife and I went to visit Kenyan Friends whom we worked with as development workers 30 (!!) years ago. It was quite a happy reunion and lovely to meet (those still alive), their children and grandchildren. What struck us however is that the population pressure on the natural resources has increased considerably. Where we remembered forested slopes in the highlands agricultural crops had replaced the trees. Deforestation has taken place on a pretty large scale.

So Kenya really needs to plant trees again! However, Friends in Kenya hardly have the means to do so!

While reporting this to Netherlands Yearly Meeting it was felt that Friends in FWCC-EMES might combine their resources and enable Africa Section to plant (at least) all the 720 trees to be planted by our section in Kenya by transferring the means to do so to Kenyan Friends.

In order for this to be effective and for carbon dioxide to be stored on a long term these trees would preferably have to be planted in groups and be managed to grow to maturity, either in small sustainable forestry plots or as fruit trees in the compounds of e.g. Friends Meeting Houses and Churches. It goes without saying that of course the tree species involved should be indigenous ones.

Netherlands Yearly Meeting supported this concern and brought it before the FWCC-EMES Annual Meeting in Hungary at Easter recently. Dutch Friends offered to receive and coordinate financial contributions from Friends around Europe and to arrange for the implementation of the project in close cooperation with FWCC-Africa Section and a local Quaker forester. The Annual Meeting adopted a minute asking members of FWCC-EMES Section to encourage their Yearly Meetings and individual Friends to join in this venture. So this is where I ask all of you as Yearly Meetings, Monthly Meetings and as individual Quakers: please join!

Donations should be marked 'Trees for Africa' and sent to:

Quaker Hulp (NL), Giro Account 220644. Bergen op Zoom. The Netherlands

Contact person for money transfers: Martin Touwen (e-mail: pnm.quakerhulpfonds@zonnet.nl)

Contact person for the project: Kees Nieuwerth (e-mail: k.nieuwerth@wxs.nl)



We are counting on a little help from our Friends!

WORLD GATHERING OF YOUNG FRIENDS - BRITAIN 2005
 Europe Based Committee, Young Friends General Meeting office,
 Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, 1046 Bristol Road, Selly Oak,
 Birmingham, B29 6LJ, United Kingdom
 yfgm@quaker.org.uk ~ +44 (0)121 472 1998 ~ www.wgyf.org

World
 Gathering
 of Young
 Friends 2005

Our Dear Quaker Friends Everywhere

We are excited to share with you an opportunity for Young Friends around the world! In 2005 we will be coming together for a World Gathering of Quakers ages 18-35. We invite you to gather with Friends all over the world to build community, share faith journeys, worship together, minister and learn from one another. Momentum gathers as we continue to spread the news. We anticipate this gathering will provide direction for Friends to pursue God's desires for us as a People and for our world.

Fifteen years after the last World gathering of Young Friends in 1985, and almost a decade after the 1991 international Young Friends' Gatherings, Young Friends at the 2000 Friends World Committee for Consultation shared a vision of a world gathering for the current generation of Young Friends.

Since then, a Spirit-led process of discernment and communication has led to the formation of two planning committees, one based in Europe, another in North America and hopes for a committee to be forming soon in Africa. We have also had input from young friends in Australia and Latin America. Our vision is to create a space to seek God as we overcome our differences, find common ground amidst our diversity, respect each other regardless of the contradictions and learn from our cultural and spiritual differences. These committees have taken the vision forward, planning for a gathering of over 300 Young Friends from around the world, to be held in the north of England in 2005.

Those involved in the planning process so far can testify to a spirit of unity and hope which has given them the faith to carry this project forward. We look forward with excitement to what will be an enriching and challenging opportunity to share our Christian and spiritual experiences. One participant at a 1962 international Young Friends' gathering said: "The life of the society has to be rejuvenated each generation." We hope that the 2005 gathering will be a significant experience for those who attend. We believe it has the potential to define and shape the future of Friends as a whole.

At this time, we ask Young Friends and those in contact with Young Friends to spread the word about this event, and to get in touch with us. Involvement of Quakers everywhere will be at the heart of this process, and we want to hear from as many people as possible. Also, we ask Friends who attended or were involved with the 1962, 1985 or 1991 gatherings to contact us. We would greatly value the input and assistance of those who have experienced the inspiration and challenges, which a major international gathering of Young Friends provides. In the coming year, we plan to reach as many Friends as possible through publications, networks, visitation and travel. Please contact us with any ideas or hopes you may have in regards to this gathering. We would like to expand the network of those involved in the planning process. Finally, we would ask all Friends to give this project their prayerful support.

Secondly, we appeal to all Friends to give any support they can, be it spiritual, practical or financial. Large resources are needed even for the planning and promotion of the gathering, and any contributions would be greatly appreciated. If you or your yearly meeting can contribute please see the contact information below.

We believe that there is strength in joining together Quakers from all regions and areas of the world. There will be two application processes for this event. In the first, we will be asking all yearly meetings to choose two representatives to send. Application materials and forms will be sent to yearly meeting offices or clerks in late 2003. Alongside that process will be a general applicant process for those wishing to attend and who may not have established Yearly Meeting connections or were not one of the two representatives chosen. General applications will go out in 2003 as well.

We look forward to further contact with you! Please note below our contact information. Also, for further information go to our website at www.wgyf.org

Blessings,

The European Based Committee & the North American Based Committee for the World Gathering of Young Friends 2005

Contact Us:

Europe Based Committee, Young Friends General Meeting office, Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, 1046 Bristol Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham, B29 6LJ, United Kingdom Phone: +44 (0)121 472 1998

North American Based Committee, First Friends Meeting, 2100 W. Friendly Avenue, Greensboro, NC 27403 USA Phone: 336 299 8869

If you would like to make a donation to the World Gathering of Young Friends you can either send a sterling cheque or make a transfer to the following account: YFGM World Gathering of Young Friends Europe, Co-operative Bank, Kings Valley, Yew Street, Stockport, Cheshire, SK4 2JU. Account Number 6592820 Sort Code 08-92-99.

The World Gathering of Young Friends – Europe is a group of Young Friends General Meeting registered charity no. 1064763

Quaker Youth Pilgrimage 16 July-13 August 2004



Every two years the European & Middle East and the Section of the America of FWCC, organises a four week pilgrimage for Young Friends. The next Quaker Youth Pilgrimage will take place in the Summer of 2004 in England, The Netherlands and Germany.

The four week Pilgrimage gives an opportunity for young people to:

- * develop fellowship with other Young Friends
- * form lasting friendships
- * meet others from different Quaker traditions
- * experience other forms of Quaker worship.
- * explore Quaker history
- * take part in a service project
- * develop their spiritual experience

The Pilgrimage brings together 14 Young Friends from Europe and 14 from North America aged between 16 and 18. There will be four adult leaders, two of whom will be from Europe. The participants will come from different cultural, language and theological traditions. During their time together they will experience travelling and learning together and seek to nurture their spiritual lives.

The pilgrimage will start in England visiting Woodbrooke in Birmingham and the 1652 country before moving on to the Netherlands and Germany.

If you know of a young person who would like to take part in the pilgrimage please encourage them to apply. Application forms will be available in September and applications will need to be in by early January 2004. Please contact one of the members of the organising committee listed below.

The Committee is also seeking two adult leaders for the pilgrimage. If you are interested in being a leader or you know a Friend you feel would be suitable, please get in touch with one of the committee members. Leader application forms will be available from September to November 2003.

For further information please contact :-

Julia Ryberg	Tel +46 (0)1 175 715 69	ryberg.svartbacken@swipnet.se
Alice Drewery	Tel +44 (0)118 958 6010	a.e.drewery@reading.ac.uk
Richard Waldmeyer	Tel +44 (0)1429 235046	waldmeyer@ntlworld.com
Allanah O'Neill	Tel +44 (0)2838 332324	moon@dnet.co.uk
Batian Nieuwerth	Tel +31 317 414931	batian@nieuwerth.com

Meeting for Worship in Athens, Greece

Every First Day at 17-30 until the Lord ends it.

Study of Scripture or Early Friends writings.

Every Fourth Day 17-00 until 19-00.

Meeting for praising with Songs.

Every Sixth Day 17-30 until 18-00.

Meeting for Worship is done in the unprogrammed style in the Name of Jesus. For more information (place, etc.) contact Themis Papaioannou via telephone: (area code) 210-64.53.392. or 69.38.56.30.97. (mobile phone) or via e-mail at: fcm_quakers@ziplip.com If you want to send a letter write to: Elias D. Papagiannis, Post-Restante 116 34, Athens, Greece.

Diary

2003

26 July - 2 Aug Britain Yearly Meeting, Summer Gathering *Light Fantastic*. Contact Friends House, Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ, www.summergathering.org.uk

27-31 August France Yearly Meeting Contact Françoise Tomlin, 13 Combe de Tourel, 30111 Congénies, France

13-14 September Denmark Yearly Meeting Contact Mogens Clausen, Quaker Centre, Drejervej 17, 2400 Copenhagen NV

12-14 September Border Meeting in Germany (for Friends from Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Netherlands). Contact Eva Liebmann, Grafenwerthstr. 7, 50937 Koln, Germany

2-5 October German Yearly Meeting Contact Quäkerbüro Planckstr. 5, D-10117 Berlin, quaekerbuero@quaeker.org

17-19 October EMEYF Annual Meeting, Bad Pyrmont, Germany, Contact EMEYF, QCEA office, Quaker House, Square Ambiorix, 50, B-1000 Brussels, Belgium

28-30 November European Quaker Peace and Service Consultations, Plaistow, East London. Contact Bronwyn Harwood, 1 Cluny Terrace, Edinburgh EH10 4SW, tel: +44 (0)131 447 6569; emes@fwcc.quaker.org

2004

16 - 25 January FWCC Triennial, Auckland, Aotearoa/ New Zealand.

3 - 9 April EMEYF Spring Gathering, Congénies, France

8 - 11 April EMES Annual meeting, Svartbacken, Sweden

Quaker House Belfast

are looking for two representatives in Northern Ireland (offers from a single person will be considered) for up to three years. QHB seeks to enable people to move from violence, intransigence and indifference towards 'normal society' by promoting and building up trust and shared ownership of new community statutory and social developments and institutions.

The role of the representatives will be to develop and maintain trust between people of all points of view and all faiths and creeds. The current fluid situation will allow scope for new initiatives and ideas, so flexibility is important.

For further details please contact Felicity Boyd, 82 Gortin Park, Belfast BT5 7EQ, or email: rosemaryfulton@hotmail.com. Informal enquiries can be made to the current Quaker Representative in Belfast, Mark Chapman, Quaker House, 7 University Avenue, Belfast BT7 1GX (telephone 028-9024 9293) quaker.house@ntlworld.com.

Closing date for applications: **Friday 26th September 2003**
Probable interview date: **Mid/late October 2003**
Probable starting date: **early 2004**

Among Friends is the newsletter of Europe and Middle East Section of Friends World Committee for Consultation. Also available at <http://www.quaker.org/fwcc/EMES>

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. Contributions towards the costs of production are also welcome.

EMES has a new treasurer, Laurie Naumann. At present the Swedish bank account is still in existence and any contributions in euros or Swedish kroner can be sent there (Postgirot Bank AB, S-110 83, Stockholm, Sweden, account no: 466964-4). Correspondence about that account should go to Laurie Naumann, St Ann's, 6 Alexander III Street, Kinghorn, Fife, KY3 9YG, Scotland.

Cheques (in UK£) should be sent to the Executive Secretary (address on page 1)

Payment in US \$ should be sent to FWCC(EMES), 1506 Race Street, Philadelphia, PA 19102, USA.

Deadline for Among Friends 93: 1 November 2003.