



Annual Report 2024

Faith in Action: Quaker work in Europe & the Middle East



Friends World Committee
for Consultation
EUROPE & MIDDLE EAST SECTION

fwccemes.org

FWCC-Europe & Middle East Section

FWCC-EMES
PO Box 18578,
Birmingham.
B30 9GH
UK

Scottish Charity number SC036528

Executive Secretary

Michael Eccles
michael@fwccemes.org
+447934310715

Communication & Programme Officer

Julia Walloch
julia@fwccemes.org

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

For dates of Yearly Meetings and other events please
see the calendar page: fwccemes.org/calendar

Note: The formal annual report and accounts, prepared in
accordance with UK charity requirements, are available as
a separate document on request from the EMES office.



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What is FWCC?

The Friends World Committee for Consultation was established at the Second World Conference of Friends held at Swarthmore, Pennsylvania, in 1937. The concept of a world organisation to express the sense of world fellowship of Friends arose as an important part of the evolution of the Religious Society of Friends in the first two decades of the twentieth century. This tentative development gained impetus from the 1920 Friends World Conference in London and the Young Friends Gathering at Jordans, England, held in the same year.

No other organisation exists which links together Yearly Meetings around the world. Authority within the Religious Society of Friends lies at the Yearly Meeting and Monthly Meeting/church level, leaving these groups potentially in isolation. Hence the vision arose of an organisation to keep Friends connected and in touch with each other across the diverse spectrum of the Society.

FWCC was established to be a channel of communication among Friends, helping us to explore and nurture our identity as Quakers so that we can discover and be faithful to our true place in the world as a people of God.

The current mission statement is:

**Answering God's call to universal love,
FWCC brings Friends of varying traditions
and cultural experiences together in
worship, communications, and consultation,
to express our common heritage and our
Quaker message to the world.**

Representatives appointed by affiliated Yearly Meetings and groups gather in plenary sessions every few years. Between plenary sessions, the Central Executive Committee, which is broadly representative, meets annually to continue FWCC's decision-making processes and to guide staff. The World Office in London is the centre of worldwide communications for Friends and supports the work of the Sections. It also represents Friends within non-Quaker international organisations such as the United Nations.

In 2012, FWCC held the 6th World Conference of Friends at Kabarak University, Nakuru, Kenya, on the theme **“Being Salt and Light: Friends living the Kingdom of God in a broken world.”** Almost 900 Friends attended from some 52 countries.

In 2016, a World Plenary Meeting (formerly the Triennial/International Representatives Meeting) was held in Pisac, near Cusco, Peru, from 19-27 January. The theme was **“Living the Transformation: Creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of God's children (Romans 8:19).”**

In 2024 a World Plenary Meeting was held near Johannesburg in South Africa from the 5-12 August. The theme was **“Living the spirit of Ubuntu: Responding with hope to God's call to cherish creation – and one another: *For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope* – Jeremiah 29:11 (New King James Version)”**.

This was the first hybrid World Plenary Meeting held by FWCC, with around 250 Friends participating at the venue and over 250 participating online including many at 'hubs' where Friends gathered in meeting houses or churches to join online.

See: fwcc.world/epistle-of-world-plenary-meeting

In the future World Plenary Meetings will be less frequent for sustainability reasons. The next will take place in around 2030.

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

FWCC-Europe & Middle East Section

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

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

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

EMES consists of 13 Yearly Meetings, 1 Monthly Meeting, a number of recognised meetings and worship groups and some isolated Quakers. There are approximately 25,000 Quakers in the affiliated meetings in the Section (this figure includes members, attenders and children, and is based on the information provided by meetings in early 2025). We are in contact with Evangelical Friends Church International who maintain their own congregations in Croatia, Hungary, Ireland, Romania, Serbia.

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

EMES Activity in 2024

There are many highlights from 2024 that we would like to share with you.

EMES continues to bring Friends together regularly at our variety of online gatherings and events. Friends in Europe and the Middle East feel better connected through these opportunities for fellowship and worship together. We are building an all age community of Friends.

In April we held our Annual Meeting online and in September our Peace & Service Annual Gathering met online. Each month we hold online gatherings for our Representatives & Roleholders, for our Peace & Service Network and for our Youthgroup. Our roleholders gather monthly for worship and jointly with Woodbrooke and Quakers in Britain EMES hosts a Parents Worship each month. Our international members and isolated Friends gatherings are held three times a year.

In August many EMES Friends took part in the FWCC World Plenary Meeting held online and in South Africa and during the meeting we held three hybrid sessions for EMES Friends to connect with each other and share their experiences of the meeting, whether online or in South Africa.

2024 has again been a difficult year for many people in our region; the war in Ukraine has continued and the wars in Gaza, Lebanon and Israel continued. We continue to stay in touch with the small Friends' groups in these countries offering them support while Friends from across

our region and from further afield continue to work for peace. Our weekly meeting for worship to pray for peace every Tuesday afternoon has continued to meet; a small group of very committed Friends regularly attend. Please do join us on Tuesdays for 30 minutes of worship if you are able:

fwccemes.org/calendar/peace-worship

We regularly add new stories to the news page of our website: fwccemes.org/news

War in Europe and the Middle East

During 2024 the wars in Ukraine and Israel, Gaza and Lebanon sadly continued. EMES holds a weekly meeting for worship to pray for peace each Tuesday. We also maintain contact with the small Quaker communities in the countries most affected by the wars, including Russia. Read more about the peace worship here:

fwccemes.org/calendar/peace-worship

During 2024 we continued to work in partnership with Central European Yearly Meeting's *Funding for Ukraine Group* to fund work with Ukrainians suffering as a result of the war – this allows individual Friends to give their money to these causes. You can read more about this work here: fwccemes.org/news/quaker-support-for-ukraine

You can read about our support for Quaker organisations working in the Middle East here: fwccemes.org/news/quaker-attention-on-peace-in-Israel-and-Palestine

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee (EC) acts as the EMES trustees and met five times during 2024. They had two weekend meetings, one in Brussels in February and one in Copenhagen in September. These weekend meetings allow for more in-depth decision making.

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

Lena Froese joined the committee in May replacing Melanie Huopp as the EMEYF representative, who left the committee in May.

Executive Committee Members in 2024:

Lena Froese EMEYF (from April)

Magdalena Gadowska
Central European YM (Assistant Treasurer)

Will Haire Ireland YM

Paul Holdsworth
Belgium & Luxembourg YM

Melanie Huopp
EMEYF & German YM (until April)

Annie Janssen German YM

Ethel Livermore Britain YM (Clerk)

Peter Spreij, Netherlands YM (Treasurer)

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



■ EMES Executive Committee at Quaker House Brussels

Staff

Michael Eccles

Executive Secretary, Britain YM

Evan Welkin

Communication & Networking
Coordinator, Quakers in Italy (until July)

Julia Walloch

Communication & Networking
Coordinator, Vienna Worship Group,
German YM (from July)

Representatives

All Yearly Meetings, Monthly Meetings and meetings in the Section appoint representatives to FWCC-EMES. Details of this are outlined in the EMES constitution.

Representatives usually serve for three years and can be reappointed once. All representatives are invited to attend the EMES Annual Meeting and monthly online Representatives & Roleholders Gatherings.

Annual Meeting

In 2024 we held our Annual Meeting (AM) online (our sustainability policy

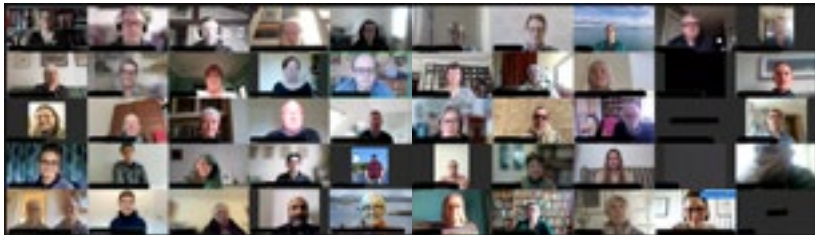
states that we will hold at least one in three of our AMs online) in late April considering Living the Spirit of Ubuntu, which was also the theme of the FWCC World Plenary Meeting in August 2024 (see below).

Over 60 Friends gathered at the meeting, and we had better engagement by Friends than at our online AMs during Covid lockdowns!

We had a powerful session led by our Peace & Service Network about war, peace and witness in Europe and the Middle East.

For the first time (ever, as far as we know) we provided interpretation into German and Russian at the AM. Nine Russian speaking Friends told us afterwards that without interpretation they would not have been able to participate. Read the AM epistle here: fwccemes.org/news/emes-annual-meeting-2024-epistle

Plans are underway for our next AM, which will be held in Warsaw and online in April and May 2025 and will include interpretation into Polish and Russian from English.



■ Annual Meeting

Finance

Last year we projected a deficit of £11,000,-. The actual deficit is fortunately much lower than that. This was because we spent less on Visiting Friends Travel and World Plenary Meeting expenses. The actual deficit is about £996,-.

Income was as expected. It should, however, be noted that more than half of EMES' income comes from a very generous grant from the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust. Although we are, of course, very grateful for their generous support, it means that for all the work we are doing we are very much dependent on the support from JRCT. The income from Britain YM, other member meetings and individual Friends, remained about the same.

On the expenditure side we spent more on salaries than budgeted. This is mainly due to inflation.

This year we did not spend any money on the preparation for the All Age Gathering. We did however move £4,000 from our unrestricted funds into an All Age Gathering Reserve fund. It should be noted that the exceptionally high expenditure on EMES grants (mainly Spiritual Growth Fund) is partly caused by a £5,000,- grant to Stop Fuelling War, which was already prepaid in a previous year but booked in 2024.

In our accounts we hold two restricted funds, The Quaker Youth Pilgrimage Fund and the John Warder (endowment) Fund.

The Quaker Youth Pilgrimage fund consists of the money that was left over when the original Quaker Youth Pilgrimage project was laid down. This fund can only be used for youth activities in the Section. In 2024 we spent just over £5,049 on youth activities. The income (fees, donations and investment income) was £2,917,-. This means that we spent some of the capital and the fund suffered a net loss of £2,132,-. The present balance is £42,445,-.

The John Warder (travel) Fund is an Endowment Fund and the idea is that we do not spend the capital, but use the investment income made on the capital for travel grants to Friends whose applications meet the terms of reference of the fund. This year we did not receive any grant applications, which means that the fund closed with a net profit of £1,565,-. The present balance is £57,767,-.

Summary of EMES Accounts

£ Pounds Sterling	2022	2023	2024
Income			
Grants	67,125	76,075	90,000
Contributions & legacies	33,893	66,712	48,873
Annual Meeting	4,347	11,484	676
PSN	3,148	4,398	800
Investments	3,070	3,924	12,487
TOTAL	£ 111,583	£ 162,593	£ 152,836
Expenditure			
Annual Meeting	15,836	17,579	405
PSN	3,654	3,181	2,602
Staff costs	34,015	37,507	41,161
Support costs	88,391	83,195	85,285
Finance costs	4,031	4,264	5,087
Governance costs	9,708	8,977	15,858
TOTAL	£ 155,635	£ 154,703	£ 150,398
Net income/(expenditure)	£ (44,052)	£ 7,890	£ 2,438

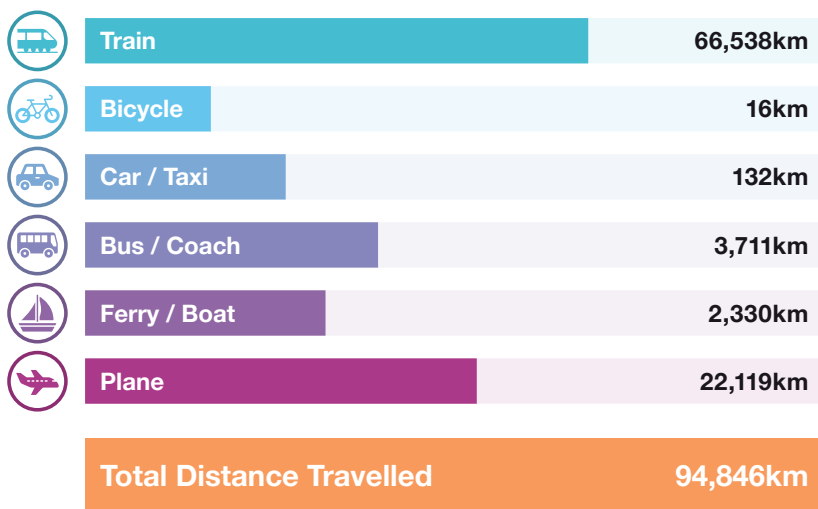
2024 figures are draft (March 2024). The full accounts are available from the EMES office on request.

Sustainability

In 2024 we recorded a total of 94,846 kilometres of travel through our travel impact form, producing about 4.5 tonnes of CO₂.

We have decided to “onset” carbon costs of this total to the FWCC Climate Emergency Fund, a total of €352. The Climate Emergency Fund provides short term funding to projects presented by members of Quaker meetings and yearly meetings, especially those in the Global South experiencing the immediate impacts of the climate crisis. More information can be found here: fwcc.world/cef

Kilometres Travelled in 2024 by Means of Transportation (not to scale)



As recorded by the EMES Travel Impact Form 2024 (not to scale)

Nominations Committee

The EMES Nominations Committee consists of up to six Friends, appointed for three years in the first instance. It receives requests for nominees from the EMES Executive Committee and/or Annual Meeting (AM) in session, normally for members of the Executive Committee and for the roles of EMES Clerk, Treasurer, and Assistant Treasurer. Nominations Committee finds nominees by a process of Quaker discernment.

Since the last Annual Meeting in 2024, the EMES Nominations Committee has held nine committee meetings. We have also exchanged many emails and messages between us.

During October, we had a weekend together, with four of us meeting in person in Malmö, Sweden, and two joining online. We had workshops and conversations to learn more about the Quaker Nomination process and how we as a committee can work together.

This year, we have discerned names for Elders. Also, we have considered the structure of how we deal with concerns, issues or doubts regarding nominations, and taken part in revising the role description for Elders.

We have held conversations with a number of new role holders, to hear about their experiences in their new roles. We believe that this way of not just nominating, but also following up on how Friends who serve are doing, is a way of caring for each other and our community.

Nominations Committee Members in 2024:

Simon Best

Britain YM & Woodbrooke

Mikheil Elizbarashvili

Georgia Worship Group

Solveig-Karin Erdal

Sweden YM (Convenor)

Leena Lampela

Finland YM (from April)

Liz Scurfield

Britain YM (until April)

Siobhan Walshe

Ireland YM

Natasha Zhuravenkova

Moscow MM (from April)

EMES Elders

In our third year of service, we met regularly online and offline, upholding EMES and PSN meetings and events and hosting Meetings for Worship.

We organised and re-organised online mutual support circles and are open for more circles depending on demand and wishes. Below these are outlined in more depth. We are also happy to say, two more elders joined us this year – Pauline Goggin from Ireland and Rita Juse-Cirkse from Latvia. Sadly, Pauline asked to be released from the service after 2024.

Annual Meeting, April 2024

We served as elders at the Annual Meeting, taking responsibility for

epilogues, as well as providing upholding to business and other sessions, and contributing to the entertainment.

World Plenary Meeting in South Africa and Online, August 2024

We had a few planning sessions with Michael Eccles and Ethel Livermore about the programme and the worship that EMES was to hold during the WPM. None of us could be in South Africa so upholding the sessions and the worship was all online.

Mutual support circles

Two online mutual support circles that were initiated more than a year ago »

met regularly throughout 2024. We have provided materials and a few questions for the groups to consider among themselves. Group members provided support to each other, with Elders not present, but only facilitating the process.

One of the groups continues meeting regularly. The second one decided to stop meeting after a year but one of its members might join the first group eventually. The third group was not so successful and stopped meeting after a couple of months but two of its members re-connected later and are meeting regularly by themselves.

Elders role description

We are aware there is an interest in more pastoral support for isolated individuals and isolated/small meetings, such as was provided by the programme previously coordinated by Julia Ryberg.

We edited the role description according to the outcome of our deliberations, and sent our proposal to the EMES Executive Committee in January, 2025.

Other activities

Elders met online approximately once a month in 2024 to discuss our various points

as well as to hear of those who might need upholding and/or developments around the section. Two of us (Jasmine and Rita) upheld and hosted online Meetings for Worship offered by Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre and EMES on a regular basis.

We created a rota and made sure that at least one Elder was present at each Roleholder worship, PSN meeting, International Member gathering, and Roleholder gathering. When necessary, one of us acted as the host of the occasional Roleholder worship meeting.

We are open for Friends across the EMES section to contact any of us via email (elders@fwccemes.org), or at EMES or PSN meetings in person or online whenever there is a need.

Elders in 2024:

Pauline Goggin Ireland YM (from April)

Annika Hollsing Sweden YM

Rita Juse-Cirkse
International Member in Latvia
(from April)

Jasmine Piercy
Britain YM & Central European YM

George Thurley Britain YM

Peace & Service Network

The PSN continued to hold monthly online gatherings throughout the year, covering a wide range of topics including the Invasion of Ukraine by Russia and specifically support for Conscientious Objectors in that conflict, permaculture training for refugees, and responses to the destruction of Gaza and bombing of Lebanon.

Over 60 representatives from Quaker Agencies and individual Quakers active in peace and service activities joined us over the course of the year, with an average of 20 people or so at any given meeting. There is currently one ad hoc group within the network specifically focusing on Ukrainian and Russian COs, that is active and holding quarterly conferences. The Israel and Palestine sub-group was active until October 2024.

The annual gathering (previously “Consultation”) was held in October with around 30 participants on Zoom. The theme of the gathering was “Being Instruments of Peace: constructing peace in ourselves and in the world around us”.

It heard a presentation in Russian about Anti-Semitism in Russia and Georgia that was consecutively translated into English followed by direct reports from conscientious objectors from Russia who described their experiences and learned about a coding project, organised by the CO ad hoc group, that supported COs in learning to code and subsequently find remote employment as a way to better support themselves. Rania Maayeh, Director of Ramallah Friends High School joined us for a session to update participants about the School, its pupils and staff. The Gathering also included social activities, a reflective movement session and worship.

Following a nominations procedure our two Coordinating Group members, Marigold Bentley of Britain Yearly Meeting and Mikheil “Misha” Elizbarashvili of Georgia Worship Group were re-nominated for two and one year respectively. Participants also considered changing the structure of the monthly sessions to better serve the purpose of the network and agreed on a new format of inviting a different speaker for each session to cover a broad variety of peace related topics in 2025.

More information is available here:

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

EMES Youthgroup

The EMES online youthgroup continued to meet during 2024 and held its annual in person gathering in September alongside the Border Meeting in Walberberg, Germany with the theme: *How to Live*.

Sixteen young people and three adults took part making it our largest in person gathering yet! The online group has participants aged 14-18 from around eight different European countries. Although the youthgroup currently primarily operates in English, we still offer German interpretation

if needed and offer to support young people with other languages if needed.

The youthgroup is organised by a small coordinating group of Friends which includes some of the young people from the youthgroup. In 2024 we covered a wide range of topics at these gatherings including; a session about Quaker work for peace in Northern Ireland, Dungeons & Dragons, making cards for each other, sharing our favourite snacks and a session about climate justice with Woodbrooke.

Read reports from the youthgroup gathering here:

fwccemes.org/news/emes-youthgroup-gathering-in-walberberg-3-reports



■ Outside Activities

Spiritual Growth Fund

Our Spiritual Growth Fund continues to support meetings and their work and In 2024 we gave five grants. The fund aims to promote Quakerism within our meetings and also to enquirers and to support Quaker meetings around Europe and the Middle East.

Grants in 2024 funded work such as a Telegram channel about pacifism run by Georgian Friends; translation of a book about Quakerism into Estonian and support for the development of the archive at the Congénies Quaker centre. You can find more information here: fwccemes.org/emes/emes-spiritual-growth-fund



■ A Busy Time for the Youthgroup!

Digital Equality Fund

Our *Digital Equality Fund*, set up in 2020, has continued to be available to help Friends get online. In 2024 we gave one grant to fund the purchase of a screen at one of the World Plenary Meeting hubs in Europe.

Since 2020 the fund has given nine grants to Friends supporting them with training, equipment or services to enable them to join online and hybrid Quaker activities. In September 2024 the EMES executive committee agreed to lay down the fund and to amend the Spiritual Growth Fund funding criteria to include funding for hybrid technology for meetings. Updated criteria will be agreed in 2025.

Partnerships and Communication

We continue to maintain close relationships with other Quaker organisations in Europe and the Middle East, in particular our member yearly meetings and worship groups, but also Woodbrooke, the Quaker Council for European Affairs, the Quaker United Nations Office in Geneva, the Quaker Educational International Trust and Europe & Middle East Young Friends.

We continue to run online worship with Woodbrooke throughout the week, and once a month EMES hosts the bi-monthly parents' epilogue. For some Friends their online worship group is now their primary meeting. There is more information here: woodbrooke.org.uk/worship

We send regular news emails to approximately 470 Friends twice each month (you can sign up here: fwccemes.org/newsletter) and maintain an active and growing presence on social media ([Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#)), alongside using our website to keep Friends up to date. Along with several other Quaker organisations (including the FWCC World Office & Section of the Americas) we left Twitter in December 2024 because of the erosion of journalistic integrity and public discourse directly contradicting the Quaker principles of integrity, truth and peace.

We also continue to produce and send out our newsletter *Among Friends* three times a year. In accordance with our 2022 Sustainability Policy, this Annual Report is our only publication printed in paper format, but any materials can be printed and mailed to individual Friends by request.

International membership

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

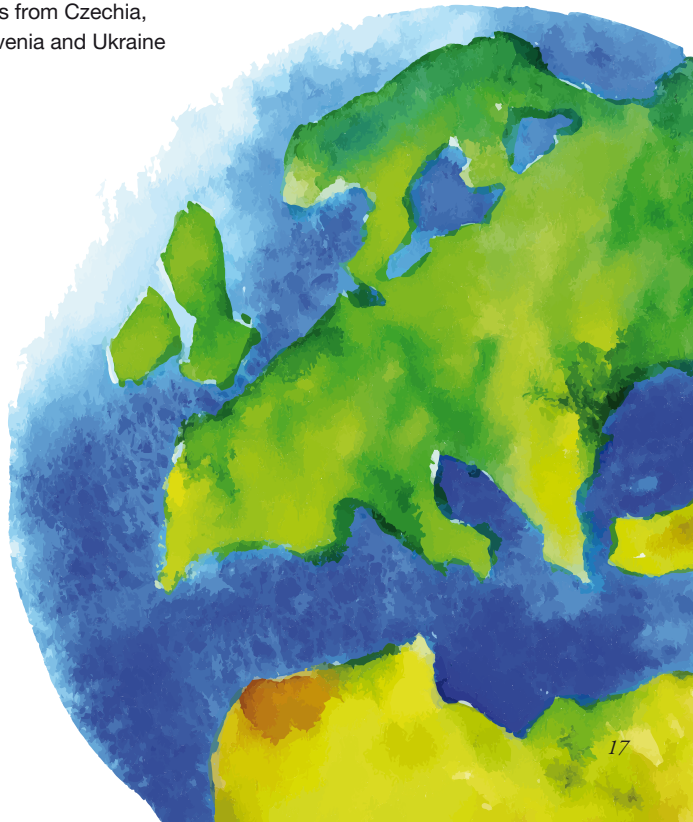
These are people who want to become members but live in an area where there is no Yearly Meeting or other Quaker body they can formally join; their membership is held through the FWCC World Office. There are approximately 50 international members in our Section. Some of these Friends are part of existing worship groups or other Quaker meetings, while others are more isolated. EMES tries to maintain contact with these Friends to ensure that they are aware of our activities and invited to our events.

In 2024 EMES held three online gatherings for international members and isolated Friends living in Europe and the Middle East. We also welcomed one Friend into international membership, in Italy, this year.

In June 2024 IMAC formally agreed to transfer the membership of fourteen international members to Central European YM (CEYM). They will be formally accepted in during CEYM's meeting in June 2025. Eleven Friends living in the CEYM region are continuing as international members. Future applications from Czechia, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Slovenia and Ukraine will be made to CEYM.

You can read more about the international membership programme here:

fwcc.world/areas-of-work/international-membership





FWCC World Plenary Meeting (WPM) 2024

The FWCC WPM is a joint effort between the FWCC World Office and the four regional sections of which EMES is one.

The WPM was held in August 2024 online and near Johannesburg, South Africa and was the culmination of several years' work. Around 500 Friends participated, 250 in South Africa and 250 online. Both EMES staff and several executive committee members played key roles in the organisation and running of the event. The epistle stated:

In this joyous gathering, we have expanded our understanding and appreciation for who we – as Quakers – really are. What a gift.

It really was a privilege and a gift for the Friends from EMES who participated.

Read more about the WPM here:

fwccemes.org/news/world-plenary-meeting-epistle-and-weaving-document

FWCC Central Executive Committee

The Clerk and Executive Secretary of EMES serve as members of the FWCC Central Executive Committee (CEC) along with their counterparts, and other Friends, from the other FWCC Sections and the FWCC World Office. The CEC met five times in 2024, including immediately after the World Plenary Meeting near Johannesburg, South Africa. Their other meetings were online.

Other issues considered by the CEC in 2024 included beginning a review of the World Plenary Meeting, the approval of a strategic plan for the FWCC World Office and a decision to hold quarterly online global Quaker gatherings to strengthen the world family of Friends.

Read more about the CEC here:

fwcc.world/about-us/people/governing-committee



■ Scenes from the World Plenary Meeting

Reports from Yearly Meetings, Monthly Meetings and Groups

Belgium and Luxembourg Yearly Meeting

In 2024, BLYM consolidated our new structure of four separate Worship Groups, in Brussels, Ghent, Luxembourg and Online. Some BLYM friends attend only worship in only one of these groups, whilst others attend several, so we have overlapping communities offering a variety of forms of worship.

All four worship groups came together as a 'Hub' at Quaker House in Brussels as well as on-line to take part in the 2024 World Plenary Gathering. This allowed more Friends both in Belgium and from neighbouring Quaker worship groups to join in the gathering in South Africa, without adding to our carbon footprint. It was the first time that Quakers have organised a hybrid world gathering, and the first time that BLYM have organised a 'Hub', doing so with the generous support of the Quaker Council for European Affairs which offered their internet equipment and their time to making the hub a new experience and rewarding experience for all of us.

The online group has learned how to be a community, not only worshipping together but caring for each other, studying together, using the book "With a tender hand" by Zélie Gross, to make their group a place where the Spirit thrives, where

people feel included and cared for, and which nourishes outward ministry? They extended an invitation to all BLYM, so the meeting as a whole could learn and grow in this way.

The Gent Group continued its focus on peace work and support for conscientious objection, in particular in Ukraine, Russia and Belarus. They met both in a community building in Gent and on-line, and are reflecting on whether a meeting might be held in Antwerp.

The Brussels Group has experimented with semi-programmed meetings for worship. They take part in meetings organised by the Quaker Council for European Affairs when guests come to Quaker house.

The Luxembourg Worship Group has met regularly despite its small size, nourished by new participants.

The experiment began last year of having a Clerking Circle has continued with Stefanie De Koker, Nick Rendle and Jeremy Lester: when Meetings for Worship for Business are held, the blending on line and in person helps to hold BLYM together as a Yearly Meeting. Caroll Ewen continues to care for our finances.

Britain Yearly Meeting

Welcome and greetings to all our Friends in EMES.

It has been good to link with EMES Friends this year through the monthly online meeting, welcoming EMES Friends to Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) in London, and the participation of some BYM Friends in other European Yearly Meetings and gatherings. These included the newly formed Central European Yearly Meeting (CEYM) in Budapest in May, when the happiness of these Friends in holding their first ever Yearly Meeting was infectious! In July we enjoyed the intervisitation to our Yearly Meeting from both Kenyan and French Friends. We have also been enriched by links with European Young Friends, with QCEA in Brussels, and with QUNO in Geneva.

Our region has seen the escalation of wars in Ukraine/Russia and Israel/Palestine and beyond. We continue to uphold our Friends in these regions and also in Lebanon. We remain anxious about the impact of new global leaders on these situations in 2025 and pray for the finding of peaceful solutions, and the ending of suffering for all.

Our discernment at Britain Yearly Meeting in July considered how we have acted on our previous Yearly Meeting commitments to care for our planet, to become an anti-racist church, to make reparations for historical injustices, to welcome and affirm those who are transgender, non-binary, and gender diverse. Going forward, we are challenged to continue to honour these commitments in our Quaker meetings everywhere.

The themes of the FWCC World Plenary Meeting (WPM) in August in South Africa reflected some of these same concerns: Community/Ubuntu, Caring for Creation, and Healing Historical Injustices. These were brought together beautifully in the WPM Tapestry. WPM provided new in person and online links between EMES Friends and Friends around the globe. We celebrated different forms of Quaker worship and shared worldwide concerns together. The hospitality from Friends in South Africa and FWCC staff gave an insight into the future of Quakerism, with young people managing the programme and technology competently, and participating with great enthusiasm. Many British Friends marvelled at our first time experience of joining WPM remotely from some meeting house 'Hubs.'

Across BYM in 2024 we also considered 'Being a Quaker in a Changing World'. Communications and technology are opening up a new world that we need to embrace. We are also coming to terms with falling numbers and calls for change in our patterns of membership. During any period of transformation, we have to experiment with new ideas and 'be open to new Light.' Things will be dropped while new forms begin. At a conference in October to consider the future of Quakerism in Britain, Friends discussed whether we might worship and share concerns in new and different ways? Are our traditional buildings and existing governance structures still useful and relevant to our needs today? How can we ensure that the expression of our Quaker faith reaches out to seekers and young people, or to people from diverse

backgrounds? Can we include signs of fresh green shoots as part of our necessary change?

Although Woodbrooke no longer exists as a physical building for Quakers, it does continue as a centre for learning. A rich variety of courses continue online and some in person courses are also offered at various locations around Britain. While Woodbrooke does not organise its own in person courses outside of Britain Yearly Meeting, they are happy to travel by arrangement to offer their 'Woodbrooke Where You Are' workshops elsewhere. European Friends are encouraged to explore more at Woodbrooke Quaker Learning & Research.

In 2024 we celebrated the 400th anniversary of George Fox's birth with exhibitions, picnics, and celebrations in song across our meetings. We look forward to continuing the important and strong links with our European and Middle Eastern Friends, hoping we can continue to work together to build a better and more peaceful world based on our Quaker testimonies to simplicity, truth, justice, sustainability, and peace.

Georgia Worship Group

2024 was productive and interesting for Georgian Friends.

A representative of Georgian Friend attended the World Plenary Meeting in South Africa. That was a wonderful possibility to share experience and meet Friends from all over the world. The Gathering was organised at a very high and professional level. A representative of Georgian Friends with her father attended the EMEYF gathering and EMES Youth Group and Border Meeting in 2024.

Friends in Georgia continue actively meeting for worship and often pray for Peace in the whole world. The war in Ukraine did not end in 2024 and Georgian Friends continued providing assistance to Ukrainian refugees in Georgia and Conscientious Objectors from Russian/ Ukrainian war.

A few of Conscientious Objectors attend the Meeting of Georgian Friends Worship Group in Tbilisi. They are warmly welcomed by Friends in Tbilisi, Georgia.



Central European Yearly Meeting

The Central European Yearly Meeting (CEYM) is now in its second year. We rejoice in having come so far and we support each other in facing new challenges. We have taken on responsibility for our own members – currently fourteen who transferred from international membership – and in autumn 2024 we had our first Meeting for clearness for membership.

This year, CEYM donated to both EMES and QCEA in recognition of the importance of the work of these two bodies, to which we also send representatives. We were glad to have Magda Gadomska as our delegate to the FWCC Plenary session, and many of us joined with her via online hubs.

The two wars in the region were much on our minds and we are grateful to the many Friends from Moscow to the USA who support CEYM's Funding for Ukraine Group (FUG), enabling us to donate towards charitable organisations working with Ukrainian refugees in our area.

The online CEYM Meeting for Worship, started during the Covid pandemic, meets every Sunday, jointly with Prague Friends, who are still based in the zero waste shop.

Other local Meetings continue to gather. Budapest recognised Meeting, longstanding and more recent F/friends meets monthly, in-person when possible. They cherish enriching connections with Friends and meetings in CEYM and other YMs, and are glad to take home any experience gained. Budapest Friends hosted a wonderful YM in May, with storytelling, singing, lectures, including on possible solutions to the climate emergency and Ben Pink Dandelion's session, Dynamic Quakerism;

Constancy and Change – everything sweetened by a vegan CEYM birthday cake.

In November, Polish Friends had their annual gathering in Katowice, Silesia -16 people with guests from abroad and EMES. Friends from Warsaw and Poznań meet regularly in person, and on-line meetings allow other Friends to do their best to stay in touch around the country.

There have been exciting new developments, with an in-person Bible study group opening in Prague and a new group of seekers in Brno offering regular Sunday evening online worship. A mainly online, group, based in Kyiv, opened in 2024, a welcome light in this war-torn country, to add to the faith shown by other Ukrainian Quakers, whether at home or refugees abroad.

CEYM appreciates the work of those who initiated these new groups, and also the support offered to them by EMES, Kristen Richardson from Chatham-Summit Meeting in New Jersey who visited Kyiv, and seasoned Friends from CEYM.

In such a multinational YM, the issue of language inevitably arises, especially whether Friends less confident using English (often the working language when we meet together) feel disadvantaged, particularly when discernment is needed. Mindful of this, we offer interpreting where possible, but recognise that language is not necessarily the only problem – more knowledgeable or articulate Friends, for example, can sometimes inadvertently dominate. So lessons to take into 2025? Humility, awareness and good clerking!

Denmark Yearly Meeting

The Danish meeting is very small; we are 17 friends and c.50 friends of friends. We are holding two meetings in Copenhagen every month: the first Sunday and sometimes also on the third Sunday.

We have a meeting place, a rented room at Drejervej 15, 2400 Copenhagen NV, on the fourth level (there is a lift). We fortunately often have friends visiting Copenhagen as guests.

In Aarhus a group of friends are meeting in the home of Niels Kjaer. They meet every second month.

At the 400th anniversary of George Fox's birth Niels Kjaer wrote an article in the Danish daily newspaper, Kristelig Dagblad, and one of their journalists interviewed friends at a meeting in Copenhagen, also published in the paper.

In the first part of the year, the rented room in Copenhagen was reduced by a third and in that way, we save some rent. Now we have two thirds of the room which is enough to our small group. The rebuilding caused the Copenhagen friends much work reducing the things and discarding.

On September 22, EMES executive committee took part in a meeting. We had guests from Sweden as well. We were total of 19 people. We were presented with a tapestry from Woodbrooke made by Elisabeth Holmsgaard. It shows

scenes from the Hanna School, which was a Quaker school in Bagsvaerd, near Copenhagen.

We have three clerks, Niels Kjaer in Aarhus, and Vibeke Stage and Bodil Linnea Ingversen in Copenhagen.

We are a small group and most of the friends are older people. We try to be open to requests from groups who want to know about the Quakers and invite them to come to the meeting.

But we are getting older, and our economy is not so good that we can donate and support as much as we would like.



■ The Hanna School Tapestry

EMEYF

EMEYF is a part of EMES and a loose community of Young Friends aged 18 to 35 across Europe and the Middle East, which doesn't have 'official' membership.

Just as in most groups or meetings, many of us do not actively participate on a regular basis and the EMEYFers who attend the gatherings – aside from our role holders and Communications Committee – are continuously changing. Our two meetings are Annual Meeting in autumn, which is usually held at Quäker Haus Bad Pyrmont in Germany or Quaker House Brussels in Belgium, and Spring Gathering.

The week-long Spring Gathering takes place in the Spring, usually over the Easter weekend. It is hosted by a different country each year, exploring a theme through worship and discussion. At Annual Meeting we usually have around 10 and at Spring Gathering around 20 attenders. Since the All-Age-Gathering in 2016,

several members of our community now have children.

In 2024 Spring Gathering was held in Eggenburg, Austria, where we explored the theme of “Living Faithfully: Self-Community-World” as a community of almost 40 people, including several children.

Read more about it or watch the video-epistle here:

emeyf.org/2024/04/15/emeyf-spring-gathering-2024-epistle

Annual Gathering 2024 was held 22-24 November in Bad Pyrmont and online.

We are looking forward to Spring Gathering 2025, which will take place 12th to 19th April 2025 at Brittebo lägergård, near Jönköping in Sweden. For more information, as well as who our current role holders and representatives are, see our website: emeyf.org

Quakers in Spain

2024 has continued as a year of “low activity” with attempts to revitalise our small community of scattered Friends in Spain like meeting first Tuesday every month to study different subjects, either biblical or Quaker ones. For next year we have decided to move this activity to Sundays, after Meeting for Worship Which which we keep it every Sunday evening by Zoom.

In Madrid we are trying to find a place in the centre to have Meeting in person, at least once a month, to be more accessible to Friends who come to Madrid for holidays or that live here for a longer period of time.

At the end of the year part of the region of Valencia was flooded. One of our attenders, Jaky Pérez, lives near there and she felt called to help in person. So we decided to support her the best we could. She stayed there all the time helping and she still does today.

Finland Yearly Meeting

Finland Yearly Meeting is a small, scattered and striving community. We have three worship groups and we also meet online twice every month.

One of the highlights of the year was of course the World Plenary. And we got to be there! One Friend in-person and two online. During the year we gathered around the theme of Ubuntu several times, and it continues to inspire us.

The year also saw the Finnish translation of the Q-classic *The Testament of Devotion* by Thomas Kelly, a project we helped financially. Currently we are planning a study group with the book in mind.

Helsinki worship group:

Around 20 people frequents the capital city's worship group that meets on Sundays. Worship is often followed by a lively discussion, enjoyed by Friends of all ages, international students and curious newcomers. "I thank Jesus for guiding me here" one new attender said in her touching spoken ministry.

And from within this group emerged another! Spiritual Jam meets in Puotila chapel on Wednesdays to let "the spirit spark" as the facilitator Alyssa puts it. She welcomes anyone interested to join in a language that feels most authentic. "No agenda, no program, just holding space for the quiet

whisper of the spirit and our common desire to dialogue about spiritual life."

Tampere worship group:

In 2024 Tampere Friends were delighted by international guests and of course active individuals coming to worship every Saturday, also making space for the children to join. Both the Spring and the Fall gatherings of FYM are held in Tampere, so it's only natural that the Tampere group is heavily involved when needed. You can find Friends from Tampere in the ex com of FYM, Ecumenical Council of Finland and as an EMES representative. The Quaker spirit has led many Friends and friends of Friends to do active work in many different directions.

Northern Friends:

Northern Friends have met for worship and fellowship twice this year in the home of one of our Friends. We are hopeful that we can meet more regularly in spring 2025 in a more public space, making it potentially easier to attract new enquirers. A room has already been booked in a Settlement run college in Oulu. The impetus for making this change has been the arrival of a committed enquirer/attender in the autumn and the enthusiasm of one of our members living in Oulu. Otherwise, group members are in contact with each other on an individual basis and three of us participate regularly in FYM online worship.



■ Finland Friends Pose in Silhouette



The great national promise of ‘Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité’ is often a good way to start to explain our vision and practice to our French neighbours. To encourage such exchanges we now have pins to wear with the France Quaker logo.

Quakers are spread thin in France so there are few great national initiatives but when we look at the membership we see an enormous range of dedicated work in our communities and associations from individuals. We are no bigger in membership than a year ago but get regular inquiries and new folk attending each monthly meeting. The online weekly meeting of ‘Amis Isolés’ is an important gathering of friends living too far from any meeting group.

The big news of the year is the opening of the new Centre Quaker International in Paris after a long search for its home. 58 Rue des Champs Elysée will be open to the public early in 2025 when adaptations are completed to the building. Here we have our first ‘Ami Resident’ – having the space for this was one of the reasons for the move. Our Amis Residents at the Centre Quaker Congenies have shown what a difference their care and dedication can make to a centre. The ancient Quaker House at Congenies near Nimes welcomes Chambre d’Hôte guests regularly as well as workshops and the annual family week.

Our Assemblée Annuelle will be in Paris this year in the Toussaint holidays.

At the Assembly of 2024 near Bordeaux we were concerned with our role in these tempestuous times and were much inspired by the FWCC messages of ‘Ubuntu’ – a key concept to understand our interrelation and guide our endeavours.



Quakers in Italy

In 2024, Friends in Italy cultivated a sense of Ubuntu through an array of hybrid, in-person, and online Meetings for Worship that were coordinated between groups in Bologna and Florence, with individual members in the Milan area and growing activity in Rome.

During monthly, online Meetings for Worship for Business, Friends cooperated beyond regional interests, embracing the Spirit's movement throughout the country. Our Quakerly activities saw growth in three areas:

- 1) community development and outreach
- 2) cooperation with faith-based entities both Quaker and beyond, and
- 3) increased peace and service activities

Thankfully, we responded to 85+ public inquiries about the Religious Society of Friends and its activities in Italy. In-person events for Quakerism were organised in Bologna and Milan, the latter as an annual event involving high school youth. The "Quakers in Italy" website quaccheriitalia.com saw the addition of three new sections of resources, including an Italian translation of Advices and Queries.

Ongoing website efforts with the Quaker Library at the English Cemetery in Florence were redoubled to offer additional Quaker materials in Italian in the future. From Nov. 8-10, 2024 with Ethel Livermore visiting from EMES, our hybrid Annual Gathering in Tuscany drew new participants and faithful Members, all of whom were encouraged by the Spirit. Finally, our community was delighted to support two requests for international membership before year's end.

In 2024, Friends in Italy also strengthened our alliances with faith-based entities, both Quaker and ecumenical. To attend the World Plenary Meeting, two Friends were

nominated by the community and generously sponsored by the Francis Camfield Trust; in August, a crowdfunding initiative for an injured Friend provided widespread support from many Quakers around the globe.

The Clerk of online M4W4Bs was grateful for training support through Woodbrooke, while the Florence worship group touted its historically significant Meeting site in EMES' spring newsletter. Our European relationships have been refreshed with Switzerland Yearly Meeting, through communications about archives and in-person exchanges, and with Quakers in Ireland through online participation at their Yearly Meeting. In the spirit of welcome, our 2025 Annual Gathering will be held from July 25-27 in the Apennines near Bologna.

Aspiring to live out our Peace testimony, Quakers in Italy expressed solidarity and offered service in 2024. A "Faith in Action" presentation highlighted a Friend's longstanding ministry to prisoners and refugees in Bologna. Friends in Milan contributed to a local fundraising campaign for Gaza and dedicated efforts to a translation project for conscientious objectors in Russia and Ukraine, collaborating with the Quaker Peace & Service Network.

Through monthly participation in online M4W4Bs, our community demonstrated active support for many peace initiatives: AFSC's Vision for Peace in Palestine and Israel, FCNL's statements on a ceasefire in Gaza, the Interfaith and Values Appeal to both the 2024 Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty and to COP 29, and materials in Italian for QCEA's Choose Respect website and EU Elections Project. Having humbly received so many blessings in 2024, Friends in Italy look forward to deepening our sense of Ubuntu and giving back in the coming year, as the Spirit continues to lead.

Ireland Yearly Meeting

During this year, Irish Friends have sought to join with our Friends around the globe as we have both celebrated George Fox' 400th birthday and joined in the World Plenary's theme of Ubuntu.

It was this that we took as the theme of our own Yearly Meeting, a longer summer one in Cork during July, when over 120 Friends, several from other YMs, joined us for 5 days. Representatives from local faith groups also played an active part in Cork, with their contributions reflecting our shared experiences. Exploring the different aspect of Ubuntu, helped greatly by our Public Lecture by Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge, we know that as we grapple with economic inequality in our own communities we must look beyond temporary fixes towards solutions which empower those living in poverty to have more dignity and control in their own lives. In Cork we also reflected on our Peace Testimony and the steps required to understand and improve how we deal with conflicts which may arise in our interactions.

The subsequent reports from our representatives in Johannesburg, and the online Plenary meetings that we joined in August, very much made us feel part of the worldwide Quaker family. We have also watched and prayed as we see the continuing horror of violence across the world, particularly troubled by developments in Gaza, the wider Middle East and the Ukraine.

In addition the global climate crisis continues as a deep concern. We are seeking as a YM to adopt a sustainability statement, helped greatly by EMES' own approach, while we have also produced a set of Sustainability Queries, to be considered each months in many of our Meeting for Worship, helping us focus on this challenge in our personal lives.

■ Cork Meeting House



German Yearly Meeting

On 30 June 2024 the Quaker Meeting House in Bad Pyrmont was re-opened after substantial reconstruction and renovation works. It's a wonderful place for events organised by Quakers and also by external groups.

Moreover the Quaker library which is hosted there, is being complemented by a digital catalogue, compatible with other Quaker libraries in Europe. There will be a series of lectures and workshops in our Quaker Meeting House from 1 February to 25 May dealing with „Creating peace! Without weapons?!“

Young Friends were responsible for preparing the content of our Yearly Meeting in 2024. They challenged us not to look away in the face of the existential threat to life on Earth, and to include all generations in our activities. They invited us to pause, to move, to become aware of and express our emotions. In the Richard L. Cary lecture

during our Yearly Meeting we were reminded to „hear within us the sound of the earth crying“ (Thich Nhat Hanh).

German Yearly Meeting has joined the statement of American Friends' Service Committee on the war in the Middle East, called „A different future is possible: Quaker organizations share a vision for peace in Palestine and Israel“.

In the fall of 2024 German Yearly Meeting decided to give moral and financial support to the German sailing yacht „Trotamar III“, which is active in the Mediterranean.

In 2024 Quäkerhilfe e.V., the relief organisation of German Quakers, supported projects in Nepal, South Africa, Kenya, Gaza, the West Bank, in Frankfurt/Main and Bonn.

In 2025 German Yearly Meeting celebrates its 100th birthday, opening with an event on 2 March in Berlin about „The role of the Quaker office in Berlin within German history“.

Netherlands Yearly Meeting

At our yearly meeting session 2024 our theme was: Sowing Peace. Introductions to this theme were offered by Frits ter Kuile, Tracey Martin (QCEA) and Kees Nieuwerth.

Frits ter Kuile of the Catholic Worker Community in Amsterdam, a life-long peace activist, made us reflect on what we might/should do if the Netherlands would be invaded or finds itself at war, like Ukraine. A useful exercise on practising non-violent resistance!

Tracey Martin of the Quaker Council for European Affairs shared with us essential stages of her pilgrimage of peace throughout the years and on various continents. These helped her to prepare for the challenging tasks she now faces at Brussels.

Kees Nieuwerth gave an update on the project Inclusive Security. This is based upon similar initiatives on 'rethinking security' inspired by Quakers in the United States and the United Kingdom, as well as the protestant church in Germany. This resulted in a scenario study on how to transform the current military security policies into a civil and inclusive peace and security policy. Later that year in September the resulting project document was presented to the peace movement in the Netherlands and well-received.

During our autumn meeting Saskia Kühlman and Kees Nieuwerth reported on the World Plenary Meeting in South Africa. We explored the challenges this inspiring meeting poses to us as a small Yearly Meeting.

In view of the small number of Friends being able to take on responsibilities and tasks we continue to explore ways in which we may simplify our organisational structures.

A small but faithful group of attenders is visiting our monthly meetings and groups regularly, which is a source of joy and hope for the future.

Norway Yearly Meeting

Another year of several wars has brought further feelings of frustration, hopelessness, and defiant optimism to our members. Our Kvekerhjelp organization is continuing to support what is left of the kindergarten work in Gaza.

Friends in Norway have supported and attended many peace demonstrations, the World Week for Peace in Palestine and Israel, and other church services for peace in the region and solidarity with Palestine.

UN's day for elimination of nuclear weapons, September 26th, was marked as usual with other Norwegian peace organizations. An important part of our peace work is inter-faith dialogue and community through STL, national and regional cooperation councils for faith communities. It also helps Quakers in Norway being more visible, connecting with others at events like Mangfoldsfest, an inter-faith festival, Velkommen til Oslo, a Christian day-festival for new students, and the neighborhood festival Grønlandsfest.

There's also been gatherings in Stavanger from STL and the Church's Dialogue Center, with Quaker participants. Stavanger also marked a «migration anniversary»,

200 years after the first migration voyage to the USA. A Quaker meeting for worship was therefore held in a boat, a copy of «Restauration» docked safely in the town's marina.

The year has seen new children and young people attend our meetings for worship. The digital worship group is going strong. The Oslo meeting is slowly growing, searching for new premises while attempting a restart of its pre-pandemic movie night tradition, as well as more family friendly gatherings. The annual family gathering at Jønnebu was also successfully carried on by new generation of Friends.

The Bergen, Stavanger and Agder Monthly Meetings are in good shape, with steady turnout and a varied set of activities. Members from Stavanger visited the World Plenary Meeting and the British Yearly Meeting gatherings. Both of these were huge high points and still brings inspiration back to the local meetings and its attendees.

We're looking forward to further spiritual discernment and activism amidst the challenges of our era, holding both our fellow Friends in Europe and all people in need, in the Light.

Sweden Yearly Meeting

Sweden YM met for Annual meeting in Stockholm during a sunny weekend in May, on the theme “Quaker Spirituality and Nature – Sustainability: our sixth testimony”.

From the epistle “Some truths and insights about our vulnerability, the vulnerability of our social relationships, and of the environment we live in, can cause grief and despair.

Yet we can choose to act with living hope – together with other Quakers and with all organisations and individuals who want to be positive forces and voices. How can we do this in a way that inspires others? If we realise that all people and all creatures are linked together, can we ourselves be links where links are needed?”

During the Annual meeting, there was also a 60th anniversary celebration of Quaker Service Sweden (QSS). Since a few years back, QSS is its own legal entity, and remains seen as part of Sweden YM. QSS currently runs projects in Bangladesh, Burundi, Georgia, Palestine, and Zimbabwe. Projects include work within peace, development, reconciliation, farming, and pre-schooling.

Support for Ukraine is channeled through Friends in Central Europe, and to Gaza through Quaker Service Norway.

Friends in Sweden find that they are indeed a small group, and there is a yearning to follow the Light and impact the world and people’s lives. The dynamics between silence and action is present, and we ask ourselves how we can be and act in the world of today.

One ongoing area is right now evaluating how we can invest in strengthening knowledge about Quakerism, Quaker history, methodology and theology internally and especially among fairly recent members. Also, as we are growing used to the possibilities of connection and communication provided by modern technology, such as digital meeting tools, we are looking into ways of growing in our sense of worship and community. We are exploring the possibilities and drawbacks of hybrid meetings, to be available and welcoming.

Representatives from Sweden YM have taken part in interfaith dialogue initiatives and we are inspired to contribute to and learn from such important meetings.



Switzerland Yearly Meeting

We are 75 Friends and 65 attenders (friends of Friends) on our mailing list. About a third of the Friends are resident in Switzerland (including members of other Yearly Meetings). Temporarily on the list are about 40 enquirers. There are no children currently attending Meeting for Worship.

There are three worship groups and one Monthly Meeting within Switzerland Yearly Meeting (SYM). The Basel group “Dreiländereck” (Three-country corner) holds Meetings for Worship once a month with few people (living in Switzerland, France and Germany) but increasing in number. The small Bern group meets twice a month, as does the larger Zurich group. Geneva holds a weekly Meeting for Worship (usually hybrid); this group includes people from around Geneva, Lausanne and the Riviera, also from France. The official name “Geneva Monthly Meeting” was changed to “Geneva Quarterly Meeting” (GQM) at the end of 2024 because Meeting for Business is now held four times a year in person.

The Zurich group is quite active. The “Deutschschweizer Herbstversammlung” brings together people from the German-speaking part of Switzerland once a year. The “Sonntags-Gespräche” (discussions) after Meetings for Worship on the 4th Sunday of the month, are well received and continue this year with new topics. A couple of new attenders are coming to Meeting, so attendance has increased in 2024.

In Geneva, Meetings for Worship continue to be hybrid with an average of about 12 people attending in person regularly and three-four online. The practice of combining the Quarterly Business Meetings with a shared lunch and a thematic topic for discussion has continued. This structure has increased the attendance. The GQM has been restructuring some of the committees to try to adapt to the current reality, for example, there is now a clerking team of four. There simply are not enough members volunteering for the different committees, so the Spiritual Care Committee (Elders) has been merged with the Friendship and Hospitality Committee (Overseers). These new ways of working are being explored with no final decisions yet taken. This past year there was the usual summer BBQ and the Christmas potluck. A decision was made to have both events be vegetarian with vegan options available.

The annual gathering of Switzerland Yearly Meeting was held 17-20 May, again at Herzberg. The theme was, “Contributing to a better world in the spirit of Ubuntu, I am because we are”. The program focused on the three themes of the upcoming World Plenary Meeting. One of the queries was, “In times of tension, how do we hold each other?”. We also looked at Non-Violent Communication (NVC) and the Alternatives to Violence Programme (AVP) as tools for creating space for peace. One of the highlights of the event was hearing about the Eurovision song contest and seeing small videos of the journey, shared by Nadja Schnetzler, - a co-clerk of SYM, whose child (they) won the competition on behalf of Switzerland. We were all thrilled! »

Another significant gathering was the annual retreat, held in February at Montmirail, close to Neuchatel, which brings together Friends from the different Swiss Meetings. The topic this year was simplicity (with a focus on our digital lives); about 20 people attended.

Geneva Quarterly Meeting has been hosting a spiritual reading group that meets monthly. There are about six regular participants, including Friends who formerly attended the GQM, but who are now participating remotely from other countries. The group has been reading and discussing Quaker pamphlets or the “Quaker Quicks”, which are more contemporary, to learn and share more about our Quaker faith. Some reading has been done using Pendle Hill publications.

One Geneva friend invited GQM Members to her house in Morgins for a fun community weekend on 26-28 April. Together folks enjoyed cooking, hiking and worshipping in a relaxed atmosphere.

The Swiss worship groups continue to be challenged by an absence of children; a few members from Montreux and Lausanne have created a Friendly Families group that meets roughly every two months. The intention is for families to collectively select one of the topics provided by the organisers and explore it with the children through special activities and moments of silence and relaxation. Activities have been offered in the Aikido Dojo in Montreux. Some children who are friends of Friends and adults of different ages have attended. A couple of families joined from Geneva. The attendance continues to be between 5-10, but those who attend have been very pleased with the offer.

This year GQM also returned to the “Mystery Tour”, left as a surprise until the last minute. There was a guided walking tour of Lausanne, with learning about the women who have streets named after them.

The World Plenary Meeting was a highlight in 2024 for SYM. In addition to sending a representative to South Africa, there were also a few Friends attending online. An online workshop was led on “Economic Equity” by SYM as one of the offers from EMES. This was one of the outcomes of a weekend retreat on the same topic held in Morgins earlier in the year.

The two action groups created in 2023, Friendly Economics and Peace not War, continue to meet regularly to consider appropriate actions to take on each topic. Interest and participation in these action groups from Friends outside of Switzerland is welcome.

There are three business meetings a year, the principle one taking place during the Yearly Meeting, which is attended by about 30-40 members and representatives of other Yearly Meetings and Quaker organisations. The two other Business meetings are held in the spring and autumn and are attended by about 10-15 members.

The spring meeting focuses on planning the Yearly Meeting and acceptance of the accounts from the year before. The autumn meeting deals mainly with the budget and nominations for the next year. Friends have been encouraged to attend in person so as to enhance a sense of community. One publication, “Entre Amis”, is no longer produced but “News and Views”, primarily focused on Geneva Friends, continues to be published several times a year. Similar to the multiple languages used at the SYM annual gathering, this publication contains articles in French and English and at times German, reflecting the multilingualism that is both a strength and a challenge for the Quaker community in Switzerland.

Tallinn Worship Group

The past year has been a year of dynamic change for the Tallinn Worship Group, with twists and turns, but also successful challenges and friends without whom many things would have remained unfinished. The group maintained a stable membership. Meetings were mostly online, but there were also in-person meetings.

Conflicts in the world have created suffering and left large numbers of people homeless, with no end in sight. Every step we take towards ending human suffering is a step towards peace.

The year started with a peace roundtable “No to War Financing” in cooperation with left-wing groups and politicians in the parliament. There was talk of delivering humanitarian aid to conflict zones instead of weapons, of accepting war refugees from the Middle East as well as Ukraine and proposing to the government not to legislate a 2% war tax (defence tax). Foreign Minister Margus Tsahkna said that this is a broad defence tax. “Exactly what it will consist of still requires very serious discussion and analysis,” Tsahkna said. Meetings will continue to implement the objectives and to involve more key people.

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On the 17th of May, the Baltic Walk for Peace from Tallinn to Warsaw took place. We helped promote it and find supporters. The campaign raised money to support children in war zones.

The annual Epilapsia summer camp was held again in the gorgeous South-Estonian Kauksi beach. Members came from all over the country, there were workshops and sports games with a carnival. There was also the sad news from the Epilepsy Society’s board that the state is ending its subsidies and this camp will be the last. We decided that the camps must continue and a support group will be set up to find funding.

Marian Liebmann from the UK, a facilitator of art therapy and restorative justice as at a conference in Tallinn. She gave us a practical set of guidelines to improve AVP work processes, such as the techniques, which also included images of reparation artworks made by victims showing empathy towards victims, will also be presented in our next AVP workshops. She has written books such as Art Therapy, Race and Culture, Art Therapy with Physical Conditions, Arts Approaches to Conflict and many other enlightening books.

She has written books such as Art Therapy, Race and Culture, Art Therapy with Physical Conditions, Arts Approaches to Conflict and many other enlightening books.

After a long time, we met a dear friend John Lampen from the UK. We visited the Moreno Psychodrama Centre and the historic toy museum in the old town of Nunne Tower. John gave us permission

to translate and publish his two books in Estonian. We are very grateful to EMES for funding the project.

Laura and I attended the Border Meeting NW 2024 Youth Academy in Walberbergin, Bonn. The three-day meeting brought together both young people and volunteers for games, singing, sharing experiences and workshops with the main theme Europe and Peace. We also explored the historic city of Bonn and the Beethoven house museum.

Language course project started in marginalised groups. Groups were split so that each participant can choose the level of learning that suits them. Part of the learning takes place in the Zoom. Thanks to our supporters, especially our California friends, Nora and Dean.

We took the first steps with the project for conscientious objectors. As political asylum is not granted automatically to Russian citizens, as it is to Ukrainians or nationals of other countries, the process has been slower and more costly. There are plans to do more in this field next year.

Jessica Kavinsky, AFSC Birches Fellow from Ohio, started her research on the transition to Estonian in Russian schools in September.

The project is part of the AFSC's Human Rights and Equal opportunities study and will run for a year. The results of the project will hopefully provide the government with an unbiased assessment to avoid cultural discrimination and to find the best solutions for a smooth implementation.

In October, we had the pleasure of hosting Marianne and Lucy from AFSC. During the week, we visited the Ukrainian Cultural Centre, the Moreno Centre, with

parliamentarians and made an interesting trip to Narva, a city in Eastern Estonia where 97% of the population is Russian. In Narva, we visited the Russian kindergarten "Päikesepaiste", where there are 8 groups of children aged 3-6.

The director of the kindergarten explained that in the language immersion classes, children learn Estonian in parallel with Russian through practical activities and prepare for school at the age of 7. Then we visited the Pähklimäe Gymnasium, where the students are Russian-speaking, but from this year they had to start learning Estonian. For many of them this is difficult because there was no transition period. It is also difficult for teachers, because there is no system for how best to do it and many teachers have lost their jobs.

In many families, Estonian is not spoken, so there is no support at home. Despite this, children are eager to learn. Later, we visited the Narva Bridge, the official EU border and we were received by the Mayor of Narva at the city hall.

The situation in Gaza, which is even worse than in Ukraine, has also brought us war refugees from there. Despite pressure from the government, everything was done to inform the public about the situation in Gaza.

A number of peaceful demonstrations took place, but were immediately banned by the police on suspicion of incitement to terrorism.

A screening of the film with Palestinian activists in Estonia is planned at Tallinn University. Hanady, who is the Palestinian/Israeli State Envoy based in Jordan, is willing to share detailed updates on Gaza before the screening. The screening will



take place in the new year, possibly at the end of January.

A record number of enthusiastic young people from all over the world came together in Tallinn for the Taizé European Meeting 28.12-01.01.25 to discover one of Europe's smallest countries, its history, culture, courage and dynamism.

Prayers for peace in Ukraine, the Middle East and the world, singing and conversations deepened the spiritual unity and concern for world peace. The meeting

helped to build the friendships, solidarity and fellowship essential for a world exposed to today's challenges.

Last week in December, a special "Warmth of the Spirit" charity campaign and a party was organised, where children received stationery, books and used computers. The fun was spiced up with a musical performance by Sengurotška.

Thank you to all our friends, partners and supporters. We hope that 2025 will bring peace and that our efforts will bear fruit.

Reports of Work Across the Section

Church and Peace – European Ecumenical Peace Network

Resisting War Today – Preparing Collective Alternatives to Violence

With wars escalating in and around Europe and ever more voices calling for militarisation, security through arms and reintroducing military conscription in countries that had abolished it already, Church and Peace organised a conference that looked for solutions beyond the first impulse to fight back.

Drawing from the vast experience of our members in 16 countries, we know that fighting and arming wars may make profits for a few companies but never provides wins for the people actually living in the countries involved. For this reason, we organised our European conference in Brussels to learn from each other about ways how to de-escalate armed conflicts and demilitarise societies from the bottom up as well as on a more official level. Chair Antje Heider-Rottwilm opened the conference with the words: ‘In the face of the brutality of military violence and the misery of people affected by violence, we can only face the issue with humility. We do this by listening to people who suffer violence and those who try to resist it. And we do this by turning to God with lamentation and supplication for an end to violence and the longing for peace.’

Let’s believe in ourselves as Lukachenko believes in us!

With these words, Belarussian human rights defender Olga Karach reminded us of how the current backlashes against pacifists and peace workers Europe-wide are a sign of the immense impact we have – even if we don’t feel it. It was a powerful public event leading into our three-day conference with over 120 people attending. Amongst many topics, conscientious objection and civil resistance were two that almost everyone found relevant for the current wars in Ukraine, Israel and Palestine or even the wars and conflicts in the Great Lakes region in Africa. Afterwards, one participant said that it was the first time she had felt heard in an international context as an Eastern European.

German Regional Conference on War and Climate

On the first weekend of Advent, over 60 people met in South Germany to learn about the connections and interweaving relations between militarisation and the climate crisis. Starting from a theological analysis grounded in Walter Wink’s concept of Resisting the Powers to Be, learning a lot of facts and numbers about the

environmental damage caused by emissions of big machinery as well as by actual warfare on nature, the participants then had the opportunity to relate to their own emotions, grief and hope by sharing their skills, by attending workshops on activism, on counterworking burnout as well as workshops on deepening their relation to the non-human world with practises by Joanna Macy.

Year of change

During our last Annual General Meeting, we were happy to welcome to the board Martin Tiller, a Baptist from the UK, Anja Vollendorf, a protestant from Germany, and Mike Zipser, a Quaker from Germany. We had to say goodbye to Kees Nieuwerth from the Netherlands, Ruben Sečen from Croatia and Tony Weekes from the UK. We also bid farewell to our former general secretary Lydia Funck, who connected us for over seven years with her expertise, organisational skills and warm attitude. We welcomed Juliane Prüfert as her successor in February. She plunged herself into the network by visiting members in Germany and peace conferences in Lithuania and Spain to make personal contacts with member organisations like several European branches of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the Mennonite Central Committee or Christian communities.

Additionally, 2024 was the first year for Church and Peace to become umbrella organisation for the German branch of Rethinking Security – an addition that is already strengthening the relation.

Finally, we are looking forward to meeting again in the fall of 2025: Join us for the European conference in Herrnhut, Germany from 24-26 October!



■ Church and Peace

Friends House Moscow

In 2024 we were happy to support Alternatives to Violence Project teams in Moscow and some other cities.

Meditation of Friends is another long-term activity for spiritual seekers in Moscow. The Integrational Centre for Refugee and Migrant Children in Moscow gives support to 100–120 families. I Can Do It project volunteers helped in the socialisation of young people living in psychoneurological residential houses.

The English Club educational programme for former residents of orphanages conducted about 500 English lessons in 2024. The Courtyard Culture project team in Astrakhan, South Russia, are our new partners. The main internal goal of the project is to consolidate creative teenagers and young adults within the project space by implementing and promoting contemporary art and theatre practices.

Outreach was an important part of our work as usual. We were active online spreading the information about Quakers.

The number of participants of the Russian language Quaker groups in Telegram and V Kontakte increases. Facebook is blocked in Russia, but we are still present in this social network. The main online resource centre is the quakers.ru website where you can get new materials about quakerism every week. Regular meetings for worship on Zoom have been held since 2020.

Printing Bob Johnson's book *The Simple Science of Sanity, Certainty, & Peace-of-Mind*, and *Truth of the Heart* by Rex Ambler were two main achievements in our publishing activity. Another important thing for us is finding a new way of distributing paper books about Quakers – via an online marketplace.

Friends Peace Teams – Europe & Middle East

Friends Peace Teams is a volunteer organisation focused on building and strengthening human relationships as a path to justice and peace. We enable people to support each other in healing from trauma and creating just, peaceful communities.

Our work is grounded in Quaker practice, the Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) and other wisdom traditions. Friends Peace Teams – Europe and Middle East (FPT-EME) operates both in areas currently experiencing war (Ukraine and Palestine) and those where war is still a recent memory, and the oppressive consequences are on-going (Chechnya and Iraq-Kurdistan). In all these areas, we support trained professionals helping people deal with the trauma that arises from violence and repression. All of these people are not only helping others living in these situations; they are living in them themselves. One of the most supportive things we can do for them is to create opportunities for them to leave the areas where they are working, for much-needed respite and to spend time together with others doing this work.

Our friends in Ukraine share “We want the hearts of Ukrainians not to become hardened, so we will always and everywhere remind them of the importance of preserving love and faith, justice and peace within everyone. To support and help, we must be strong and fulfilled. Therefore, our psychosocial workshops include elements of AVP, as a reminder that there are always alternatives to war and violence.”

Cultures of Justice and Peace is a series of AVP workshops adapted for justice and peace workers, developed by members of Friends Peace Teams around the world. We work together to learn to discern a consensus of conscience to create loving, conscientious communities. Each year we hold such workshops for justice and peace workers, the next one will be a regional gathering in Armenia in 4th to 11th July 2025. Justice and peace workers from the North Caucasus, Kurdistan, Palestine, Serbia, UK, US and other countries will learn peacebuilding tools and to practice new skills together.

If funds allow, we hope to open the training up to peacebuilders from other regions where FPT is active around the world (Asia West Pacific, Africa Great Lakes, North and South America). We find that regional gatherings of this kind are crucial to building personal relationships, decreasing isolation, strengthening a regional team and connecting to a global network of peacebuilders. Friends interested in this work are welcome to volunteer and to attend our meetings. Please contact Chris Hunter on europa.coordinator@friendspeacetams.org

For more information about our work and ways to support it please visit friendspeacetams.org/europe-and-middle-east

■ Friends Peace Teams, Poland





Northern Friends Peace Board (NFPB) has representatives from Area Meetings across the North of Britain – thus including all of Scotland, Northern England and North Wales.

As in previous years, our members' meetings took place four times during the year, mostly as hybrid /blended events. The meetings are opportunities to learn together from speakers, from one another and from our collective consideration of a range of peace issues. In 2024, areas of focus included Israel and Palestine, nuclear weapons, and engagement with the Scottish Government. After a meeting in Glasgow, some Friends joined local Quakers in a Meeting for Worship at the gates of the Faslane naval base, home of the UK's Trident nuclear-armed submarines.

Our work on raising awareness and wider outreach continued throughout the year, via our website, social media, regular 'Peace Round-up' newsletters and sharing news and information through our members and wider networks. We have valued our connection with the wider international and national community of Friends through the EMES Peace and Service Network and our close links with colleagues working on peace concerns in Britain Yearly Meeting.

NFPB works with other groups and organisations; we seek to bring Quaker perspectives into wider networks and to promote amongst Friends opportunities and resources from these networks. We arranged two regional events, drawing on the work of Rethinking Security, and of the Global Campaign on Military Spending, for instance. We also worked with the Network of Christian Peace Organisations in producing briefing materials ahead of the UK General Election in July. In September, the first Week of Action on Peace and Climate Justice took place, and we encouraged Friends to contact their parliamentarians to raise concerns about spending priorities.

During the year we commissioned, and worked to compile and edit, a collection of writings that reflect some Quaker responses to current/recent wars, particularly those in Ukraine and Gaza. These will soon be ready for publication in both printed and electronic format and we hope they will be a valuable resource for Friends. There will be accompanying material on our website nfpb.org.uk and workshop ideas to support engagement with the issues.



■ NFPB Coordinator and Trustees July 2024



Located in Quaker House, Brussels, the Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA) continues to promote Quaker principles of peace, justice, and equality to Europe and its institutions.

The year 2024 brought significant political shifts, including EU elections and changing political landscapes.

We relaunched the **Choose Respect** website to combat hate speech and have been working hard to build relationships with new MEPs. One way we did this was to ask Quakers across Europe to make handmade squares. These were sent to newly elected Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) to remind them that their work should be guided by compassion, integrity, and respect for the people they represent.

We also launched a series of facilitated skill-building events for European Parliament staff and Brussels-based professionals. Topics included dialogue, nonviolent communication, and active listening. We partnered with Young Professionals in Foreign Policy – Brussels, hosting events on topics like women in conflict.

QCEA tackled urgent issues like climate justice during Belgium's EU presidency and contributed to COP29 discussions. We're finalising our upcoming publication, *Addressing Conflicts around the EU Green Deal*, which gives guidance on how

policymakers can incorporate conflict sensitivity into climate and environmental policy. This will launch in January 2025.

With our partners, we lobbied for a more compassionate and just European Pact on Migration. While the agreed pact was not what we hoped for, we continue to promote alternatives to migration through the development of a handbook outlining a positive peace approach to migration, set for release in March 2025.

We advocated for the right to conscientious objection, hosting Belarusian human rights defender Olga Karach. We hosted the first meeting of a group of organisations working on this topic with the EU. We hope we can work together to raise awareness of this issue at the European level.

We welcomed a new Communications and Programme Officer in November. We started preparations for our conference, organised with Quaker Peace and Social Witness, *Faith in Action* in an age of permacrisis, to be held in June 2025.

We are grateful to Quakers in EMES for their continued support.



■ QCEA Staff in 2024

Quaker International Educational Trust (QuIET)

Quaker International Educational Trust is a UK charity that supports Quaker education in the Middle East. It owns and is primarily responsible for Brummana High School (BHS) in Lebanon but also cooperates with Friends United Meeting in the United States that owns and has responsibility for Ramallah Friends School (RFS) in the Occupied West Bank.

2024 has been another incredibly challenging year for Lebanon. Fortunately, Brummana was not targeted during the war between IDF and Hezbollah, and the BHS campus has acted as a safe haven of normality for students and staff. However, Lebanon is small; about half the size of Wales, and Brummana, as the crow flies, is only about 8 miles/13 km from Beirut, so the impact of this terrible conflict has certainly been felt by the school, not least because it has had a detrimental impact on many parents' ability to pay their children's school fees.

After many months with exchanges of fire across the Israeli/Lebanese border, on 23rd September Israel started intense bombardments and a ground invasion in Lebanon, until 27th November when a fragile 60 day ceasefire was signed. Hezbollah targets have been the main focus, but many neighbourhoods and businesses have been devastated, particularly in the south, southern suburbs of Beirut and in the Bekaa. As well as the large number of casualties, there are now well over a million displaced people in the country, many of whom have lost everything.



■ Friends Meeting House, Brummana High School



■ The QuIET Team

Amid all the tragedy and insecurity, BHS, supported by its Quaker ethos, has steadfastly continued its mission to provide a nurturing and secure school life for students. The Quaker values of peace and equality seem especially important at this time, and they are sensitively promoted at BHS.

BHS is a co-educational, non-sectarian school with approximately 1,300 pupils, all of whom are encouraged to develop ways of serving their community. It has been a privilege for QuIET trustees to witness the inspiring way the staff have supported each other in working to mitigate the impact of violence and stress in the world outside, so that student learning and development has continued with very little interruption. Miraculously, the school has also managed to improve some of its facilities and achieve exceptional IGCSE exam results this year.

QuIET trustees were pleased to be able to meet in Brummana in June and to demonstrate their solidarity and support. Helping to maintain a sense of normality, providing moral support and raising funds have all been much appreciated by BHS; just knowing they have supportive Friends abroad is very reassuring.

QuIET continues to facilitate a tangible link between UK Friends and BHS, through Quaker activities and publications, and through the Friends of Brummana High School (FBHS). FBHS met online three times in 2024: members of the BHS community spoke to Friends about BHS/Sidcot School exchanges, what BHS means to its senior students, and how BHS supports the well-being of its community in wartime.

Quaker Service Norway

Quaker Service Norway (QSN) is an independent organisation with its own board, consisting of nine members, who all work voluntarily. QSN has no employees. QSN is closely connected to Kvekersamfunnet (The Religious Society of Friends, Norway) and often holds its annual meeting at the same time and place as the annual meeting of the Quakers in Norway.

QSN works for and with people living in conflict areas. Together with grassroots organisations, we try to build peace and strengthen dignity and equality. QSN supports projects in Burundi, Rwanda and DR Congo, as well as in Gaza.

Kindergartens in Gaza

After QSN lost its main funder, NORAD, in 2021 we had to reduce our support to fewer projects. However with the support of many Quaker organisations and private donors it has been possible to continue supporting its main project, Palestinian Early Childhood Education Programme (PECEP), who provide preschool education for 5 year-olds in 12 refugee camps in Gaza and peacebuilding projects in Rwanda, Burundi, and DR Congo.

Everything changed for our partner, PECEP, in Gaza and the kindergartens in the 12 refugee camps when the

bombardment of Gaza begin after the horrific attack by Hamas in Israel on 7th October. Many kindergartens have been completely, or partially, destroyed and the children and their families, PECEP employees have fled from the bombing. Now, there is no safe place in Gaza, and many thousands Palestinians have been killed and maimed and many are missing. We have been able to keep in touch with our partners, but it is difficult due to unstable internet connections and lack of electricity.

We have been able to send financial support to the kindergarten employees, to help them buy food for their families. Food and water is scarce and is now very expensive. They do not receive wages as the kindergartens are closed.

We have also been able to support several Open Days for about 400 children in refugee camps in Rafah and Khan Younis.

We are in the process of organising a trauma healing project with PECEP and the Palestinian Red Crescent and possibly with the Gaza Community Mental Health Program who we are worked with before. This project will hold a series of seminars to large and small groups of mothers on how they can deal with their trauma and the trauma their children are suffering. QSN has not been

able to visit Gaza since the war, but we are lucky to have the support of Firas Ramlawi who has been able to work closely with PECEP on our behalf.

Peace building projects in Africa

QSN continue to support peacebuilding projects in Burundi, Rwanda and DR Congo.

In Burundi QSN continues to support Friends Women Association (FWA) and “Action on Gender-Based Violence” project. Volunteers are trained to support women vulnerable to gender based violence and to run trauma healing workshops for victims of violence.

In Rwanda QSN continues to support Friends Peace House (FPH) and Help Increase The Peace Project (HIPP). FPH runs Alternative to Violence Projects (AVP) in prisons and communities and HIPP run peace clubs and peace building workshops among youth.

In 2024 QSN also supported initiatives in DR Congo with the organisation CPGRBC. Before the M23-war CPGRBC had 350 solidarity groups each with 20 members. The situation in the area has deteriorated and QSN is now in the process sending emergency assistance to CPGRBC.

Quaker Service Sweden

During the Annual meeting for Sweden YM in May, we also celebrated the 60th anniversary of Quaker Service Sweden (QSS).

Since a few years back, QSS is its own legal entity, but remains seen as part of Sweden YM. QSS currently runs projects in Bangladesh, Burundi, Georgia, and Zimbabwe. Projects include work within peace, development, reconciliation,

farming, and pre-schooling. Support for Ukraine is channeled through Friends in Central Europe, and to Gaza through Quaker Service Norway.

New for this year is a series of thematic evenings online when the different projects are presented from different angles and when donors have had a chance to ask questions. We hope to continue this new approach this coming year.



Quaker United Nations Office Geneva

We thank Friends in Europe and the Middle East for their inspiration and support to our work at the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO), Geneva. We are also grateful to EMES Friend Saskia Kuhlmann for her dedication as FWCC EMES representative to our governance body.

QUNO upholds a Quaker commitment to peace and justice through the United Nations and related multilateral institutions. We uphold the rights and dignity of all people, maintaining an international Quaker presence during this time of increasing geo-political tension and militarism. Through advocacy, expert publications and quiet diplomacy work, we focus on transforming root causes drive conflicting, injustice and planetary crises.

Following the departure of Director, Nozizwe Madlala Routledge last year, we have an interim leadership arrangement while our governance committee decides on a longer term structure. We currently run four inter-connected programmes grounded in peace and justice, and the call to cherish creation and each other.

In our work on climate change, we advocate for urgent, effective and rights-based global action to address inter-related planetary crises. This year marked our 11th year of quiet diplomacy meetings at the UN climate change negotiations, creating a safe, off-the-record space for a diverse group of climate negotiators to discuss sensitive issues. At the Intergovernmental Panel on

Climate Change (IPCC) climate science meetings, we are expert reviews and make interventions in Plenaries, and are called the “ethical voice in the room”. We prepare briefing papers and webinars to connect international processes with diplomats as well as communities.

In our work on Peace and Disarmament, we raise awareness of the human-rights impacts of arms transfers. QUNO is recognised as an important actor in this cross-cutting area of business, human rights and arms control. Our work seeks to ensure that the profound suffering, destruction and loss of life caused by arms transfers is addressed, including by advocating for norms and standards and transparency in business conduct to be applied to those engaging in arms transfers.

In our work on Sustainable and Just Economic Systems, we address the systemic drivers of plastic pollution, including harmful subsidies. In 2024, we convened a high-level meeting at the Rockefeller Foundation’s Bellagio Centre, gathering diplomats and technical experts to analyse the estimated \$45 billion in annual subsidies for primary plastic production. These insights informed two pivotal reports under our “Plastic Money” initiative, which have shaped international discussions at the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) on a legally binding treaty to end plastic pollution.

In our work on Human Rights and Refugees, we see a rise in militarisation, increase of conscription and mobilization

including in Europe and the Middle East. We use the UN human rights system to support people persecuted and prosecuted for their rejection of militarism and specific military actions, and work for the recognition of the right to conscientious objection to military service. We seek an end to border violence for migrants and refugees and work for new recommendations from the UN secretary General on missing migrants and humanitarian assistance. Against a backdrop of dehumanisation of non-citizens, we seek a seat at the table for migrants in UN discussions about them. We hosted an inclusive dialogue bringing migrant community leaders to Geneva to exchange with diplomats and UN staff on

how to make more space for their direct expertise and experiences to shape policy and practice.

In all this work, we support the next generation of changemakers with paid programme assistant positions, where they engage directly with diplomats, UN staff and other civil society organisations. Each year we hold a Summer School for around 25 young people from around the world to learn about values-based international efforts at the UN and related intergovernmental organisations. Bursary support helps enable diversity in the group and we are delighted to welcome young Friends from EMES!



■ QUNO Activities Throughout the Year

United Palestine Appeal/Ramallah Friends Meeting

The Youth Empowerment (YE) Project in the West Bank, headquartered in the Ramallah Friends Meeting, and implemented with the support of Friends of Ramallah Friends Meeting is in its third year of operation. The YE Project staff engage enthusiastic young people ready to bring their talents to their communities.

One particular initiative describes how essential this work is. Through a Leadership Training program, our youth were given mentors to help them develop their business acumen, and the funds to implement them. One of those projects is Hope Horizon.

Lead by two sisters, Amal and Shatha Khader, Hope Horizon supports children with autism in Jenin Governorate by working with the children directly and raising awareness among their caregivers and the local community using a multi-pronged approach including in-person workshops, and access to online resources.

Inspiration for the project came from a very personal experience. 24-year-old Amal explains how: “For years, we had neighbors my parents knew well. We always assumed they had two children. One day, we found out they also had twins with disabilities. Their mother, once a teacher, had left her job to care for them but lacked proper support. The heartbreaking part was that they spent their lives hidden away at home. I kept thinking—if this is happening in my own neighborhood, how many other children are out there who are completely invisible to society?”

The sisters’ vastly different academic backgrounds became an asset. “Shatha is a medical student, and I’m a computer engineer—our fields rarely overlap. But during Hope Horizon, I found myself diving into medical research, and she helped me understand critical information. Likewise, when we developed a digital platform for parents and caregivers of children with autism, she became more familiar with the technological side of things. Our individual strengths complemented each other, making the initiative even stronger.”

Determined to address the gap in autism awareness and support, Amal and her sister officially launched Hope Horizon with UPA’s support on World Autism Day, April 2nd. Throughout Autism Awareness Month and beyond, the sisters assembled a team of volunteers to engage children with autism in skill-building activities, interactive games, and developmental exercises. “One of the most emotional moments was seeing a child, who struggled with balance, stand on his own for the first time,” Amal says, crediting the enthusiasm and persistence of the volunteers.

Raising consciousness was just as significant for the sisters, and they had to be creative about it. “Some parents were hesitant—even embarrassed—to attend the awareness sessions. We realised we had to approach it differently, so we scheduled the sessions alongside parent-teacher conferences, making it easier for them to attend. Once they did, they found so much value in it.” A turning point came when Dr. Dana, one of the specialists brought on for this initiative, shared her own parenting experiences which led “other parents to start opening up, share their challenges, and support one another.”

This level of accomplishment in a new program might seem enough to many, but not to Amal and her sister. Amal also saw an opportunity to use technology to support families. She developed a digital platform designed to connect parents with specialists and provide resources to help them navigate life with a child who has autism. “The goal was to bridge the gap between parents and the support they need. We included educational articles, podcasts, and even entertainment for parents, because they often feel isolated. We wanted to give them a space where they could find both guidance and a sense of community.”

Amal and Shatha Khader next added a summer camp where children living with and without disabilities could participate in arts, sports, health, and gardening activities. “At first, some children didn’t know how to interact with their peers who had autism. But by the end, they had formed genuine bonds. The older kids even started looking after the younger ones, ensuring they were included.” For parents, this experience was just as meaningful. “We got lots of positive feedback from the children’s parents,” Amal says. “Many of them would accompany their children, especially those with autism, and they would express immense happiness when they saw their children playing, smiling, and being included,” she recalls.

Hope Horizon also built strong connections with community leaders and officials. Amal shared that in this regard, the support the team received from UPA’s Regional Operations Manager, Rula, played an instrumental role in the initiative’s success. “Rula helped us secure necessary approvals and guided our outreach efforts, ensuring we can engage with local partners to expand Hope Horizon’s reach.”

Over the course of design and development, the team of volunteers formed deep friendships with one another. “These are people I would have never met if it weren’t for this initiative, but became important to me,” Amal says. “I got to know that one of our volunteers has twin daughters with cerebral palsy. A few days ago, she called me to tell me that one of them had taken her first steps. We stayed in touch beyond the initiative, and moments like these remind me why this work is so important,” she says, noting the importance of strong bonds created in building community.

None of this came easily. The team faced significant challenges and delays due to the repeated Israeli incursions into Jenin, days of mourning, and unexpected closures—forcing them to constantly adapt their plans. They were undaunted. “We had to shift schedules and navigate obstacles, but we refused to let setbacks deter us.”

Reflecting on her journey, Amal says, “Through Hope Horizon, I truly feel like I’ve been able to serve Palestine and create something meaningful. UPA opened the doors for us—they listened to our ideas and encouraged us. I want to do everything I can to help Palestine keep growing.”

These youth are the future of Palestine, and we are so proud to facilitate their ascent into a bright tomorrow.



WOODBROOKE UPDATE

2024 has been a year of growth, connection, and learning at Woodbrooke, bringing together Friends from across the global Quaker community.

Our World Quaker Voices course, in partnership with FWCC, fostered mutual understanding of Quaker traditions, with a Spanish-language version planned for 2025. We also offered Being a Quaker Clerk: A Course for Friends from Around the World and sessions on Global Perspectives on Conscientious Objection. Additionally, we continued providing workshops for Quaker communities with Ben Pink Dandelion leading sessions on Dynamic Quakerism: Constancy and Change for Central European Yearly Meeting. We are always ready to support meetings and groups throughout the section by offering learning for them.

Over the year, we have seen 4,530 bookings from 2,390 individuals across 45 countries, including many from within EMES. Of these, 1,502 were engaging with Woodbrooke learning for the first time. We have delivered 248 courses, workshops, and sessions, including programmes designed to support Quaker communities worldwide. Our Centre for Research in Quaker Studies also celebrated the success of 10 postgraduate students completing their studies.

Our online worship offerings continued to thrive. In partnership with EMES, we held regular online Meetings for Worship alongside worship spaces for Young Adults, Quaker Parents, and Educators. Over the year, we hosted more than 600 worship sessions, with Friends joining over 15,000 times from around the world.

This year, we have also been involved in significant events and collaborations. In June, Woodbrooke co-hosted a major Quaker Studies Conference at Lancaster University with the Quaker Studies Research Association and the Conference of Quaker Historians and Archivists. The event showcased the latest scholarship, featuring

the George Richardson Lecture by Nigel Smith, who explored the dynamic period of Quaker activity from the mid- 1650s to the early 1700s.

In July we joined Quakers across the world in marking the 400 th anniversary of George Fox's birth. As part of this, we showcased our ongoing yearlong programme of courses and sessions exploring Fox's legacy. At the end of the month, we were present at Britain Yearly Meeting, engaging with Friends about our work and the future of Woodbrooke. The weekend also featured Ben Jarman delivering the Swarthmore Lecture, reflecting on society's response to serious crimes and the Quaker role in penal reform.

We also welcomed a number of new programme coordinators join the team, including Elize Sakamoto (Quaker Service and Roles), Lily Chadwick (Quaker History), Ben Wood (Applied Theology and Biblical Studies), Ella Asheri (Racial and Social Justice – Interim), and Wendy Hampton (Quaker Communities). Their expertise and fresh perspectives will help shape our work in the year ahead.

Our partnership with EMES has continued to develop. We recently revised Quaker in Europe, our collaborative online course that explores the Quaker way from a Europe-wide perspective. The course brings together participants from across the continent to study, reflect, and support one another in engaging with key themes of Quakerism. In 2025, we have planned versions of this course in both French and English and are now working to develop a Russian-language course, The Quaker Way.

For information about current courses and workshops as well as our research and other work please visit our website.

[woodbrooke.org.uk](https://www.woodbrooke.org.uk)



Bank account & how to contribute to FWCC-EMES

The work of FWCC-EMES depends on contributions from the Yearly Meetings in the Section and from individual donations. Contributions for the general work can be made using the bank details below.

For payments in Euro please use these account details

EMES account at Wise

Account Name: FWCC-Europe & Middle East Section

IBAN: BE33 9672 0215 6046

SWIFT/BIC: TRWIBEB1XXX

For payments in Sterling please use these account details

EMES account at CAF Bank

Account Name: FWCC-EMES

IBAN: GB03 CAFB 4052 4000 0255 78

SWIFT/BIC: CAFBGB21XXX

Sort Code: 405240

Account Number: 00025578



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for Consultation
EUROPE & MIDDLE EAST SECTION