

A Letter from Ukraine

Dear Friends,

The thoughts evoking stress for me are: that government leaders of democratically organised countries are speaking with Putin as if he is a strong and clear-thinking leader of a large country; that Russia in the Ukraine is a conflict situation.

Both of these thoughts are illusions. To start with, I agree with and support the position of Friends that we do not take sides in conflicts. The Ukraine, as a country of people, does not have a conflict with the Russian Federation. This is explained as follows....

Moscow has been beset by its totalitarian system of organising public life for a thousand years. Such a system results in human madness/insanity and leads to irrational behaviour, part of which is the military invasion of the Ukraine. In the now 21st century totalitarian systems of organising public life are outdated and Moscow's system is dying – unwillingly. Moscow's system is playing out its death throes thrashing about and grabbing at whatever living thing it can still suck life out of. Historically we are the closest entity at hand. We are not in conflict, but unwilling to prolong the dying totalitarian system.

As for the illusions of many of the world's leaders, it would be helpful for them to take into account the fact that Putin is a product of his culture and country, including its thousand year old totalitarian system of organizing public life. Putin is honestly behaving and thinking exactly as required of the head honcho of a totalitarian system.

Only one person has any value in such a system – everyone else is pulp. The world's leaders must take this view of the world into account when speaking with Putin. Regrettably, he is not able to fathom in democratic terms and, sadly, this is his condition till he dies.

Please share these thoughts with as many Friends and Seekers as possible. Friends are good at cleaning up after military devastation. Part of the cleaning up in the present case is a concerted program of propaganda and teaching about how a democratically organised public life happens. The victims of this totalitarian system will need a whole generation of training and teaching about how democracy works.

I trust Friends and Seekers will be up to the challenge.

In friendship,

*Nadyezhda Ivanovna Spassenko, Ukraine,
15 March 2022*



A child protests against the invasion of Ukraine. Photo: Matti/pexels.

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Working with Ukrainian refugees in Poland

Kasia Kaczmarkiewicz of the All Poland Worship Group, writes:

At this moment many Poles are helping with their work, time and money. I myself am amazed that we can act so spontaneously and in such solidarity. But help will be needed for many months to come. I am aware that the enthusiasm of ordinary people, the volunteers, may soon run out.

As Warsaw Quakers, we are trying to find places and ways to help the Ukrainian refugees. Even though we are just a few. For now, some of us are doing it individually.

I volunteer as an interpreter – but also help with whatever needs to be done at the moment – to the temporary accommodation centre that has received about 250 people from Ukraine, mostly mothers with children, but also elderly people. Some of them stay only for a night or two and then they go further to Europe, USA, Canada. But there are also people who have no idea what to do with themselves.

Yesterday I met Angela, a beautiful 24-year-old Ukrainian girl with four little children. One of them, 4-year-old Vitia, spilled coffee on himself. She froze and the boy panicked that someone would come and take him away. He was screaming hysterically, but at the same time tried to calm down his mum and crying siblings – it looked like this little boy felt responsible for the whole family. Children are terribly traumatised. And it seems that hardly anyone understands that. Even the emergency room doctors were displeased that Angela, as well as the little boy himself, were adamant that they didn't want to go to the hospital and leave the rest of the children on their own since there was no one else who could take care of them.

The staff at the centre have a lot of work to do, and for them it's clear that the mothers are responsible for

taking care of the children, but there doesn't seem to be much understanding of how exhausted and scared these women are. They are trying to look strong and hide their fear.

What will definitely be needed are psychological care and childcare – so far, those have not been facilitated by the authorities and it will probably not be easy, since Poland struggles in those departments even without the influx of refugees. One of the members of our Warsaw group, a psychiatrist, has an idea how we could help pay for some psychological assistance for the

“Children are terribly traumatised. And it seems that hardly anyone understands that.”

refugees and their children.

Another possible form of help is creating a contact base for places where Ukrainian people could go. At least some of the borders are open for them and assistance from someone in those places who could help them with the formalities, assist them with finding accommodation or a job would be helpful. Ukrainians at the centre said they have friends or relatives in various European cities, but often they can't get there on their own. Sometimes simple information and a few days' accommodation is already a help.

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In the morning next day I go to the temporary accommodation centre again. I look for Angela and Vitia, but they are nowhere to be found. I learn that they have been moved, along with other women and children, to a better, more comfortable home in another city.

This time the centre is quieter, with fewer people in it. Most of them have left, some are packing up and will be taken to another centre in Sopot (a city by the Baltic Sea), another 30-40 people are expected to arrive late in the evening. More volunteer interpreters show up that day, so I go home to print out the tickets for Lidia and her two sons – Ukrainians I've never seen before, but we agree that I will pick them up the next day, early in the morning and take them to the airport. In the evening Lidia (from the hotel) and her husband Yuri (from Ukraine) call and text me to make sure I will do as I announced. The same thing happens at dawn. And I think about how anxious they must be and how they are forced to trust - a complete stranger. Would I be able to do that? I start to get anxious myself too and set up two alarm clocks, so I don't let them down.

At the reception desk of the hotel, there is a crowd of people from Ukraine, who could spend the night here, rest and go further, abroad. I am surprised and happy that this rather expensive hotel has joined in to support the refugees. I meet up with Lidia and the two boys. They carry two huge suitcases. Huge – as if they were going on a holiday. But if this is to be all their possessions...

A few hours later I receive a picture of the three of them smiling. They are safe in Sweden.

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In Poland, there is more and more information about various

forms of assistance and support for people from Ukraine – free travel by public transport and even some cabs, access to healthcare, schools and kindergartens for children, jobs, psychological help.

At the same time, I hear sad news from Russian friends who fled Russia months ago and are now considering travelling further

“I think about how anxious they must be and how they are forced to trust – a complete stranger. Would I be able to do that?”



Mirek Pruchnicki/flickr CC.

because they no longer feel welcome here – some people believe they are complicit! It's hard for me to listen to this because I'm reminded of some novel in which Quakers helped people who were fleeing. Now it seems that half of Europe is doing it. And it's so obvious. I hope we all have enough strength and faith.

In the meantime, Friends, Quakers from Prague, offer places in their houses. Although most

Ukrainians prefer to stay close to the border to make it easier for them to return once it is possible, some will be able to take advantage of that invitation.

*

I keep thinking about Angela and her 4 children, wondering if Vitia's burned belly is healing, and if he is still afraid for his family.

Written in early March 2022.



Mirek Pruchnicki/flickr CC

Ukraine: Why militarism brought us here - and why we need to hold our ground as peace advocates

Saskia Basa, Peace Programme Assistant, QCEA, writes:

Today marks the 12th day of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Since Putin ordered his troops into the country, attacks have intensified, ceasefires are violated, and civilians have been targeted while they try to flee cities under siege. At the time of writing, 1.3 million people have fled Ukrainian territory, with numbers expected to increase up to 7 million displaced, and 18 million requiring humanitarian assistance. Nothing NATO or the EU have done excuses that invasion; nothing we as Quakers say detracts from the outrage we feel at the immorality of this invasion.

This crisis is likely to have profound consequences for peace worldwide and for the EU, changing how it identifies as a political project and how it positions itself at the world stage. For a number of years there was relative consensus that the EU should act as a soft power, exercising influence through appeal, attraction and dialogue. However, it is clear that the crisis in Ukraine has provided an opportunity to fulfil a rapid policy shift towards an EU that enjoys “strategic autonomy”, and exercises hard power through coercion and military might. This is a political choice, but one that did not emerge in a vacuum. It is the culmination of years of corporate lobbying by the arms industry, who have been shaping policy as ‘independent experts’ and granted a seat at the table that has been denied to civil society.

In response to the Ukraine crisis, the EU has decided to finance for the first time the purchase and delivery of lethal weapons through an off-budget instrument ironically named the European Peace Facility. This has been framed as a gesture of solidarity with the Ukrainian



“history teaches us that pouring weapons into unstable and conflict-ridden areas does not bring about de-escalation, stability or peace.”

government, and Ukrainian civilians who have volunteered to take up arms to resist the Russian advance. However, history teaches us that pouring weapons into unstable and conflict-ridden areas does not bring about de-escalation, stability or peace. Instead, it jeopardises diplomatic channels, escalating tensions and deepening hostilities as casualties mount on all sides. In addition, weapons have a long shelf life. It is commonly said that the

Soviet-designed Kalashnikovs (AK-47), such as those that have been sent to Ukraine, have an average lifespan of 20 years and can outlive their users in the battlefield. This means that weapons can change hands multiple times until they no longer fulfil their designated purpose – such as defending a population from invasion.

Military solutions are in essence a self-fulfilling prophecy: the more we endorse militarism, the more it feels like the only solution. In our responses to this crisis and in all crises to come, we need to make sure we interrupt this inescapable logic, and avert a cycle of violence that can last generations. In our continuing advocacy at QCEA, we will redouble our efforts to promote non-violent and non-military approaches to conflict resolution, calling EU leaders to de-escalate tensions in Ukraine, expand spaces for dialogue, and engage in a peace process that ensures meaningful participation of all parties, including civil society. While our attention has been placed on Ukraine, our solidarity extends to communities worldwide who are suffering from the moral tyranny of war.

Estonian worship launches new poetry collection

The Tallinn Quaker worship group has recently published a new book of poetry:

The Tallinn Quaker worship group has launched a new poetry collection, supported by the FWCC EMES Spiritual Growth Fund. The book of verses, "On being together or unity," was written by Merle Veesalu-Rand in Estonian and was translated into English for this publication.

Merle Veesalu-Rand, of the Tallinn Quaker worship group, explained that the poetry is important because her poetry "talks about ways relations among us can be improved. While acknowledging the differences among us, we need to strive towards harmony in our society by getting to know each other better and recognising each other's strengths and weaknesses." Roland Rand added that "the verses describe eloquently, and in both humorous and serious tone, many constructive and destructive patterns

of behaviour. The book is suitable for everyone who values peaceful relations in society."

The English language translator of the book, Ilvi Jõe-Cannon, said: "Moments ago Vice President Harris finished her speech at the Munich Security Conference that I have been watching on TV. Thinking about her words I thought that the title of Merle Veesalu-Rand's book of poetry that I translated into English was in touch with the present times. I did the translation last November. The title is "On being together or unity". That was the Vice President's message in no uncertain terms and that was the Ukrainian president's message with the Day of Unity that was held in Ukraine on 16 February. Unity has been the theme during this crisis facing us."

The book contains coloured illustrations.



By buying the book, you are also supporting Ukrainian refugees. Please contact info@randdesign.ee to purchase it.



Be who you are,
resolute, for that is how
I recognized you!

A golden relationship is a balanced mixture
of the mystical and realistic in life
If that remains unattainable to many,
then strive toward bronze relationships!

How hard it is to reach the conclusion
that everything in this world that matters
is simple.
No one can make
another happy
if the kingdom of peace
does not already reside within them.
To the one who has, more will be given!

The one who has courage will find love
that is beyond fear.

A Finnish perspective on COP26

Ahti Tolvanen, Helsinki, Finland Yearly Meeting, Helsinki: Post COP26, New Year's Day 2022, writes:

It began on Halloween....

I was pleased to be the only representative, though unofficial, of Finnish Quakers on-site as well as at meetings on the COP Interfaith Liaison Committee. I was also honoured to accept an invitation to attend a vigil, one of a series, during the weeks of COP 26, as a guest of local Friends, which occurred at Glasgow Quaker Meeting House.

Finance

First about finance, because I think it is the key element driving the climate crises. It is not effectively addressed at the COPs and is generally a topic which people avoid or are bored by, which is why it is killing them and us.

On 3 November 2021, banker Mark Carney, the former governor of the Banks of England and Canada, announced new commitments by global financial institutions for over 130 trillion USD in financing to help countries and companies reach net zero. It came like a breath of fresh air to a COP which was starting to seem unpromising.

As Covid 19 restrictions caused long queues, and the absence of many developing country and island state representatives called into question the expectation of “the most accessible of COPs” some might be forgiven for thoughts of flying home early.

In announcing the extensive financing programme of The Glasgow Financial Alliance for Net Zero and affiliates, GFANZ, remarked, aptly citing Greta Thuneberg, the announcement was not just “blah, blah blah”.

A sum as large as 130 trillion is serious money, even if invested over 30 years. Carney pointed out that this would amount to about 2 per

cent of the GDP of the major industrial nations every year until 2050.

He did not mention however, if this would end the mounting financing streams from private banks to fossil fuel burning energy industries which includes 3.8 trillion in investments by 60 major banks just since the Paris COP in 2015.

Added to that are the continued investments and incentives of governments around the world for the burning and extraction of more fossil fuels, including China, USA, Canada, Poland, Russia, Norway, Saudi Arabia and Australia, to name a few.

Over thirty years the GFANZ investment flows might roughly amount to 4.5 trillion USD yearly which is about what is now being invested yearly into fossil fuels.

As all major industrialised countries are envisioning economic growth rates which are conventionally expected to come in at 2 % or better, most of the GFANZ investments would seem to be flowing into new growth rather than replacing industries releasing greenhouse gases.

In fact, the importance of new growth was specifically highlighted by Carney in his announcement speech.

This will get us to a world economy which will have roughly doubled in just over 30 years, even if the population remains the same. The grim consequences of such growth were detailed by Professor Luiz Marquez of Sao Paolo, in a side event by the Association for Ecological Economics which I was involved in convening. A growing global economy, even fuelled by alternative energy, can still be a highly destructive entity, just like the



Presenting the bill for the Climate Crisis
Ahti Tolvanen

aircraft carrier powered by green energy.

The projected growth is what one would expect as far as conventional economic thinking goes. Politicians and bankers who do not support growth are hard to find. Growth is the only answer they have for all the debt that has been accumulating on their books since before the last economic crisis and building back from covid has only added to it.

Conclusion

We need a way to transfer all that debt onto the blue side of the balance sheet as preserved natural and human capital. If we can't do that we will be dealing with a multiple environmental catastrophe much beyond the climate crisis.

Afterthoughts

I wrote the above soon after my arrival in Glasgow during the second week of the conference. Then came the dramatic closing days of the COP 26.

The most dramatic moment was perhaps as COP President Alok

Sharma broke down in tears when the Indian delegate insisted on amending wording in his proposal from "phase out" coal to "phase down coal".

The Indian representative argued that climate change was due to excessive consumption by developed countries and that India needed fossil fuels to develop. He was surely thinking of the millions in his country still struggling to rise out of poverty, as were the representatives of China and South Africa who backed him.

To aid developing countries adjust and develop non-fossil energy a proposal was made to create a Green Fund to which \$100 billion annually would be donated by developed countries. This had been on the COP books since Copenhagen, but has remained unfunded and was moved for finalization to the next COP in Egypt in 2022.

Drafting was finally completed on the parts of Article 6 of the Paris Treaty which would allow companies and governments in developed countries to obtain emission credits for investing in emission-cutting projects in poorer countries. Jonathan Crook of Carbon Market Watch told me he was worried that opportunities for double counting were not all eliminated in the new wording. Nor were the flawed "zombie" credits created under the Kyoto COP. Much seems to rest on the composition of the proposed supervisory body to prevent Article 6 from becoming the leak which NGOs feared would sink the Paris Agreement once profit-seeking traders moved in.

I expected Brazil to be more active in watering down Article 6. I wondered if I had played a small part in this when I took the opportunity to leak a new and damning report on destruction of the Amazon. A stranger left a copy on the table I was working at outside the press room. He disappeared before I saw that the report was marked for

release two days hence. I immediately sent it out to my mailing list along with an item on Scientists Warning, a think tank which first started sounding the alarm on the climate crises to decades ago.

Main Achievement

Perhaps the main achievement for which Glasgow will be remembered is the finalization of a set of global rules to standardize emissions reporting to provide credibility and comparability to reporting of cuts at the national level. This is essential to make the COP process work; the impact remains to be seen.

Personal Reflections

As another COP ended, one again naturally reflects on whether there was any significance to one's attendance there. Were the daily nose swabs and the weekly deep throat samples worthwhile?

There is no way to really know for sure if a shared document, a question to a minister or one's part in a side event means much. But clearly a COP without NGO involvement and citizen engagement would be an altogether different affair. That engagement is what drives any progress and moves the talks out of looming impasses. Perhaps more could have been accomplished in Glasgow were it not for the Covid motivated limitations on observers and difficult live access to plenaries and working groups.

The lack of significant announcements to cut emissions further by leading emitters like China, or coal and oil exports by Australia and Norway, was disappointing. At this stage of the crisis such signal announcements are overdue. An announcement by Prime Minister Trudeau on implementation of emission taxes on the fossil fuels industry was overshadowed, immediately after COP 26, by mass arrests of aboriginal protesters opposing a pipeline on the Pacific coast.

The potential significance of faith groups

As the vast majority of the world's people identify with one faith or another, faith groups are a powerful latent force for change if they can find a voice. Loss and Damage reparations for destructive climate events was a key issue raised by faith groups, with special concern expressed for the growing plight of small island states threatened by rising seas. Unfortunately the wealthy states, including the USA, were not willing to move ahead on this.

It seems the time has come for faith groups who wish to remain relevant in face of the historic threat humanity faces in the bio-crisis at hand to discover their roots in as communities with a vision for a better world outside the mainstream. As communities committed to lifestyles seeking higher values beyond material affluence. The historic struggles against the slave trade and for religious freedom, for instance; both seemed to face insurmountable odds in their day. We are in a similar seemingly hopeless situation now as the bio-crisis deepens. The new crisis seems overwhelming but by strengthening our communities we can begin to build up a groundswell of actions and become the force for change that will secure a liveable future for everyone's grandchildren. What cause can be more important to take on now? Win or lose, it will give meaning to our lives as never before.

I owe a special debt of gratitude to Glasgow Friends, Kate and Tom Philbrick, who hosted me in their home during my first visit to Scotland. My thanks also to Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice for help in many ways.

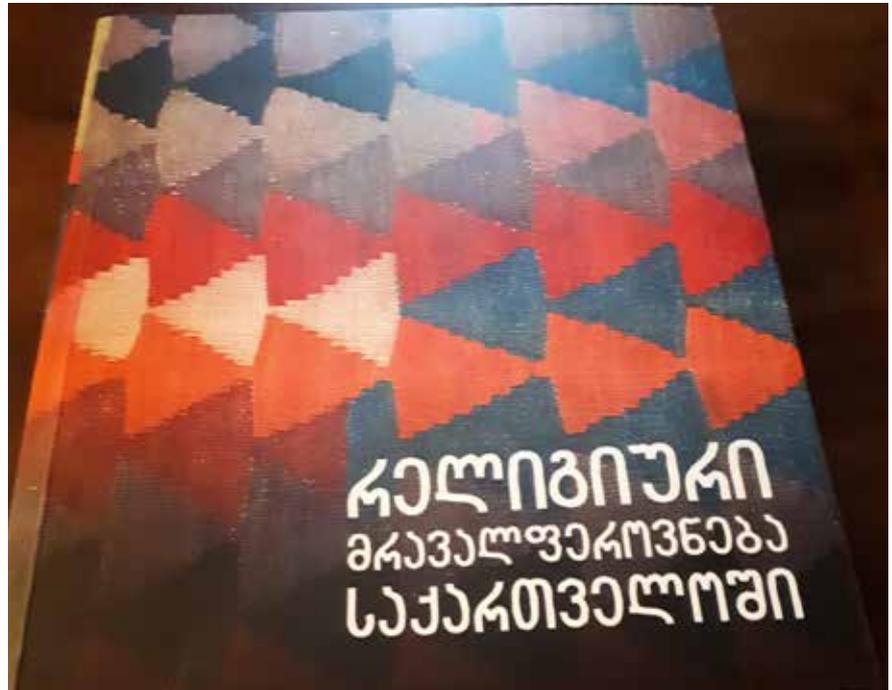
Quakers make an appearance in Georgian encyclopedia on religions

Georgia Friends Worship Group, write:

In 2021, the Centre for Religious Tolerance in Georgia published an encyclopedia on religions. That is a fairly big book of 598 pages. The encyclopedia was published under the name “Variety of Religions in Georgia”. The encyclopedia is written by the theologian, David Tinikashvili, based on the materials, which were presented to him by different religions in Georgia. It has many beautiful illustrations, a vocabulary of different religious words and describes most of the religions, which have their churches, branches, or communities in the country.

The encyclopedia gives an information of “old” religions in Georgia like Orthodox church, Catholic Church, Islam and its directions, which have their branches in Georgia, Hebrew religion and many other religions, which have been in the country for centuries and for not too long as well. Many pages devoted to the “Orthodox Church”, but that is probably since it is the state religion in the country and has the biggest number of the members. Though, it should be emphasised, that many centuries back Christianity had completely replaced “Zoroastrianism” – the state religion in the ancient country old Georgia – “Kartli kingdom”. For the first time this kind of book was published in Georgia in 2006. Fifteen years later it was revised and republished, having some new materials on different Religious organisations in Georgia. Both the “Old” and “New” encyclopedias have materials about Quakers.

The Clerk of Georgian Friends had kindly represented some new materials to the author of the book. In result there are 6 pages with



Cover of the Georgian religious encyclopedia



Part of the feature on Quakers

illustrations about Quakerism in the encyclopedia. The chapter about “Quakerism” in the book describes the history of Quakerism, faith and practice, social service, organisational structure and history of Friends in Georgia. It also includes interviews with the current and

former clerks.

This book gives a possibility to Georgian Friends to spread the information about the Quakers beliefs to the people of Georgia.

Lesson learned from a blended Assemblée Annuelle

Seymour Hosking, a member of Quakers en France, writes:

Quakers in France ran their Assemblée Annuelle as a hybrid (blended) event in autumn 2021. Before the 2021 Assemblée Annuelle, we received good advice from the Swiss Quakers, who had run their AA as a blended meeting, and whose article was published in *Among Friends* in 2021.

- The following is what we did, based on advice we received, plus recommendations for the future.
- We had a tablet on a tripod to show the room, and an external camera/microphone connected to a laptop to show a different angle.
- We also used a table microphone. There was a travelling microphone which might have been more useful for e.g. Meeting for Worship.
- The original idea was that speakers in the room would appear on the tablet camera, but this was found impractical so we used the external camera for this. However we should really have had two external cameras: one for any “top table” people, and one for room speakers.
- There should probably be separate laptops connected to the two external cameras, and another selecting what appears on the room screen.
- One person controlled which camera and/or microphone should be live. This role is quite onerous so the person doing this work should have no other tasks allotted.
- This means a lot of bandwidth! We had many bandwidth issues – every 5 minutes or so the people on Zoom would lose contact with us. (How they stayed patient, I do not know.)
- Speakers had to go up to the front to be shown on the external camera, and they used the room microphone. It had been assumed they would be OK with the camera microphone or even the laptop microphone, and that might have been fine in a smaller room.
- We had a person online controlling Zoom participants, recording sessions etc. They also ended up engaging with the online people when the room people were doing things they could not engage in.
- Don't forget to do sound checks (both in the room and on Zoom).

Dutch Quakers welcome refugees

Plans for Netherlands Yearly Meeting, which was due to take place on 10-12 June 2022 at a conference centre in Helvoirt in the south of the country, have been put on hold after the venue opened its doors to Ukrainian refugees.

Peter Spreij, clerk of Netherlands Yearly Meeting said: “Although the loss of the venue is disappointing to Dutch Friends, we are happy that the venue managers were able to offer its space as a refuge for Ukrainians seeking sanctuary. There is clearly an urgent need for accommodation and it is good that the conference centre were able to open their doors to refugees.”

Around 25,000 Ukrainians are estimated to have arrived in The Netherlands in the past few weeks with new initiatives starting up to

link hosts with those needing somewhere to stay. For Marlies and Sytse Tjallingii, who are active in language teaching in their town, this has meant coming into contact with Ukrainian refugees. “I have taught Dutch to Ukrainian women for the last few weeks,” explains Marlies, who is also a trainer, coach and mediator.

Marlies and Sytse have long been part of TakeCareBnB, a scheme hosting refugees. Marlies says that it is very rewarding to have refugee guests in the house. “At the moment we have our seventh guest, from Syria.” Marlies says that there are ways to come together: “Learning the language is very important. We do a cooperative word game every day before going to bed, which is a lot of fun and has us laughing

together.”

Marlies says that in her experience it is good for hosts and those living with them to talk about values and customs every day. “It is important to think about what space do you have in your house where a guest can live and also what space do you have in your heart. Talk about important things while living together: small things like sorting rubbish, using heating, saving energy, water, plastic and soap use.”

For Marlies and Sytse an unexpected outcome of hosting refugees is a wider sense of family. “It feels like we have more children, mainly sons,” explains Marlies. “But when their wives come, we also have daughters. We were asked to witness a marriage of one of our guests. That was a great honour.”



News from Woodbrooke

As spring approaches, we would like to give you an update about Woodbrooke. We are keen to continue our focus on online learning, but we are also looking forward to delivering some of our learning in person too.

We are preparing new courses, to be offered from May through to September focusing as ever on the important issues facing Friends. Crises of ecology, peace, justice and equality remain high on our minds as we hope to offer chances to explore this with others and strengthen spiritual grounding. We've also continued to adapt our 'Woodbrooke Where You Are' workshops for Quaker communities so both the format and content matches the challenges of the pandemic and the possibilities as some groups can gather in-person.

At the Woodbrooke Centre in Birmingham we are heartened that many of our local customers are using the Centre for day events and meetings, and we know how important it is to many people, far beyond just the Quaker community. We have also seen good uptake of our self-catering flat.

We are encouraged that Quaker meetings and organisations have already booked at the Woodbrooke Centre, and still have some weekends available. We can offer tailored teaching for these events from one of our experienced team of tutors to enhance your time together.

The Woodbrooke Centre and the Woodbrooke learning programme have often been thought of as one in the same, but the pandemic has changed Woodbrooke and we find ourselves at a crossroads.

As anyone who has responsibility for property knows, there are always choices to be made that are right for the long term and not just for the immediate future: it's about stewardship.

Responding to Ecological Crisis

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Trustees are therefore taking time to consider Woodbrooke as a place and explore its purpose and how it fulfils our ministry. They will be working closely with staff, partners and neighbours, such as the Bournville Village Trust, as well as Friends, to discern a way forward. This isn't an easy task and we ask for your support and upholding as we work on this over the coming months to look at all possibilities.

We are so grateful for all the support and encouragement Woodbrooke receives from Friends across the world.

Please continue to take advantage of the wealth of opportunities Woodbrooke offers and do not hesitate to be in touch to share your thoughts.

Sandra Berry
Director of Woodbrooke

News from FWCC EMES

Preparations under way for annual meeting

The FWCC EMES annual meeting is set to take place from 20-23 May 2022 with over 30 people booked to take part at the venue in Paris and around 20 online (at time of writing in mid-March). The theme, From Crisis to Connection: working creatively to heal our fractured world also includes the Bible quote: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect." Romans 12:2 (NRSV). Speakers at the annual meeting will come from organisations such as Stop Fuelling War and the Quaker United Nations Office in Geneva.

Communication and Programme Officer

FWCC EMES is seeking a part-time (4 days per week) Communication & Programme Officer to work alongside our Executive Secretary to help us deliver our workplan to Friends in our Section.

We are seeking a competent organiser to help us manage our work, with a good knowledge of Quaker traditions and processes and able to work on their own initiative. Some travel and weekend work will be necessary and a good knowledge of communications technology is required. Excellent verbal and written communication in English is essential and proficiency in a second language desirable. Deadline 13 April 2022.

Treasurer handover

Peter Spreij (Netherlands Yearly Meeting) has begun work as the new Treasurer of FWCC EMES. He took over from Penny Heymans (Norway Yearly Meeting) whose service in the role finished at the end of 2021. Penny has been

working on the accounts for 2021 and will present them at our annual meeting in May.

Invasion of Ukraine

Since the invasion of Ukraine by Russia in February this year, hundreds of people have attended extra meetings for worship held by FWCC EMES, friends of Friends House Moscow and the worship group in Ukraine. FWCC EMES has supported the worship group in Ukraine with the purchase of a Zoom licence and our Executive Secretary, Michael Eccles, has been in regular contact with Friends in the region.

Quaker in Europe course

In March, a new run of the Quaker in Europe course began in English with 27 participants – the maximum allowed in the course. Having been in danger of being cancelled due to a lack of participants, FWCC EMES representatives from around the Section rallied around, spreading the word about the course. Quakers in France ran the course in French in the autumn of 2021 with over 40 participants taking part. Anyone interested in translating and adapting the course into another language should contact michael@fwccemes.org for more information.

Quakers in Africa working for peace

Friends in Kenya are working on peacework ahead of the 2022 national elections. The work, being carried out under the auspices of FWCC Africa Section and American Friends Service Committee Africa Region. Those organisations are engaging with local Quaker led peacebuilding initiatives and activities include conducting civic education and promoting preaching of peace and reconciliation themes.

Loving Earth Project in Northern Ireland

Quakers from Ireland Yearly Meeting have been instrumental in enabling the panels from the Loving Earth Project to go on tour in Northern Ireland during March and April at Belfast, Craigavon and Derry/Londonderry. As well as displaying the panels, Friends are hosting workshops and conversations on the theme. In Belfast the activities are part of the programme for the Imagine! Festival, Belfast's Festival of Ideas and Politics.

If you are interested in having the exhibition to display near you, please contact lovingearthproject@gmail.com to register your interest. Please also state who would be the local contact points from within your Quaker community.



A panel from the Loving Earth Project. Image courtesy of the Loving Earth Project

Among Friends is the newsletter of Europe and Middle East Section of Friends World Committee for Consultation. We want Among Friends to reflect the diversity of Quaker life and experience across the Section and welcome articles, photos and news of forthcoming events.

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Account Name: FWCC-Europe & Middle East Section

IBAN: BE33 9672 0215 6046

SWIFT/BIC: TRWIBEB1XXX

Sterling account:

Bank name: CAF Bank

Bank address: 25 Kings Hill Avenue, Kings Hill, West Malling, Kent. ME19 4JQ UK

Account Name: FWCC EMES

IBAN: GB73CAFBA0524000025578

SWIFT/BIC: CAFBGB21XXX

Account Number: 00025578

Sort Code: 40-52-40

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

Scottish Charity number: SC 036528

Diary Dates 2022

More dates for 2014 are available on the website: www.fwccemes.org. Please send items for inclusion in the diary to emes@fwccemes.org.

1 - 3 April 2022: Border Meeting (German speaking), Sankt Peter, Germany kevinschiefer@gmx.de
d.vosseler@bluewin.ch

9 - 12 April 2022: British Junior Yearly Meeting, Northamptonshire
michael@fwccemes.org

20 - 23 May 2022: EMES Annual Meeting, Paris & Online michael@fwccemes.org

27 - 30 May 2022: Britain Yearly Meeting, London ym@quaker.org.uk

2 - 5 June 2022: Central European Gathering, Prague

3 - 6 June 2022: Switzerland Yearly Meeting, Herzberg symclerk@swiss-quakers.ch

8 - 16 June 2022: European and Middle East Young Friends Summer Gathering, Bad Pyrmont

10 - 12 June 2022: Netherlands Yearly Meeting, secretariaat@quakers.nu

17 - 19 June 2022: Belgium & Luxembourg Yearly Meeting, quakerclerk@gmail.com

30 June - 3 July 2022 Nordic Yearly Meeting, Kungälv, Sweden au@kvakare.se

11 - 14 August 2022: Ireland Yearly Meeting, Belfast office@quakers.ie

26 - 28 August 2022: Italian Friends Gathering, Borgo Basino evan@borgobasino.org

9 - 11 September 2022: Border Meeting, Strasbourg, France border.meeting@gmail.com

2 October 2022: World Quaker Day www.worldquakerday.org/

13 - 16 October 2022: German Yearly Meeting, Bonn

28 - 30 October 2022: France Yearly Meeting, Sète admin@quakersen-france.org

Woodbrooke & EMES offer several weekly online Meetings for Worship. Please check the Woodbrooke website for the latest information:

www.woodbrooke.org.uk/worship

EMES now runs regular online events: Peace & Service Network

Monthly online gatherings for people involved in peace and service work in the EME Section are held on the second Thursday of each month. For information about details and times please see: fwccemes.org/emes/peace-and-service-consultation. Contact jez@fwccemes.org for more information.

EMES Youthgroup

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

We also hold monthly gatherings for **EMES Representatives and Roleholders** in the first week of each month. In January and July we run online gatherings for International Members in the Section. Contact michael@fwccemes.org for more information about both of these events.

Deadline for Among Friends 154: 1 July 2022