

Among Friends

No 138: Spring 2017

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Europe: looking back and looking forward

Dear Friends,

Consideration of what kind of Europe we are shaping for the future is becoming more pressing, as rapid unexpected, and sometimes unwelcome, developments follow one another within our continent and beyond. In the circumstances, therefore, the open letter issued by the Conference of European Churches (CEC), of which we are an “organisation in partnership”, is both timely and engaging – see page 4. The dialogue that CEC has initiated will inform the agenda and programme for its next assembly in 2018. By coincidence, the Europe Section of FWCC will be 80 years old that year. It pre-dates all of the modern European institutions. Topics considered at the first two conferences in 1938 and 1939 were:

- Some forces which challenge Christianity
- The totalitarian state
- Anti-Semitism
- The relationship of Friends to the Ecumenical movement
- The Quaker community, in terms of source of experience, Meeting for Worship, Inward Light and Publishing Truth.
- The failure of the Democratic state
- What is the relationship between Christianity and Democracy?
- The problem of overcoming evil and violence

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Kindertransport – The Arrival - Liverpool St station

Photo: by Wjh31 <http://lifeinmegapixels.com>

- What is our special task today in view of the world conditions?

Looking through the minutes of these meetings there is much that resonates eerily with today's preoccupations. Friends are still seeking to be a prophetic voice in dark times, and engage in practical help for those whose lives have been torn apart by war and violence – see the reports from the conference on Forced Migration, held at Woodbrooke in February 2017.

The opening minute of the third Conference, held in 1946, reads: “Friends knew that across the flaming frontiers, other Friends were living and praying, united with one another in love and, even though their faith was at times sorely tried, they never gave up their belief in the City of God triumphing over destruction”. Let us pray that we will not be tested as these Friends were, that we too may maintain our precious union with one another, and remain steadfast in our own belief in the City of God.

Marisa Johnson, Executive Secretary

Church and Peace Britain and Ireland Conference Birmingham 29th October 2016

Extracts from the keynote address by *Simon Barrow*, Director of Ekklesia, a non-conformist Christian think-tank

When the word “security” is said to me, because of my engagement in peace issues and so on, I think of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction, responsibility to protect, international relations and a whole lot of other things in that area. But actually, if you go on to most search engines, and put in “security” or even “global security”, what you’ll get is cyber-threat, burglary, and terrorism as the three things that come up.

We’re all somehow caught up between the local and the global in terms of our experience of what makes us secure or insecure, but what that translates into is that the pressures upon us might be very very immediate, the threat might be very very immediate, and that will condition our response in a certain direction. But on the other hand we’re trying also, many of us, to look at the bigger picture of a different way, of a different future. And so in a sense, the issue of security is about how we negotiate the competition between those two kinds of pressures and impulses.

And then there’s the seeking of protection from our neighbours, from our culture, from our society, dare I say, in the light of the vote on Brexit, the rise of Donald Trump in America, people are seeking security in ways which might turn out to be very frightening in other senses. So our initial instincts are not necessarily the most reliable ones.

Moving on to say a few things about Christianity as a recipe for insecurity, in the sense of



Simon Barrow

Photo: Barbara Forbes

rejecting some of the false notions of security that seem very commonplace in our culture and I chose this interesting graphic there is the carrying of the Cross, there are the police there, the media are there, there’s a whole apparatus around it. What on earth does this symbol mean in that sense? I talked about the common desire and struggle to avoid shortage. By contrast, what’s at the heart of the Christian Gospel is not hoarding, but sharing – and that’s true of the Jewish faith, and Muslim traditions, and other religious traditions as well. But if we go back into the Hebrew Scriptures, and remember the story of the manna in the desert, what is it? It’s there, it provides food, but as soon as you try to grab hold of it and store it and hoard it, it disappears. Or the Gospel story about the rich fool who builds huge barns and stores everything and then ends up dying and



it's a waste of time.... by contrast, at the heart of the Gospel is the sharing of food.

The vision of the Kingdom of God, the realm of God, is of a feast which we will all participate in together. Jesus shares table fellowship with all kind of undesirable people, in order to create new relationships. It's in the sharing of food particularly that we begin to discover a new way of life. So whereas there is a kind of natural desire to avoid shortage, to hoard, to grab for ourselves, the Gospel encourages us to share, not to hoard. Likewise, rather than constraining death, there is a sense in which our faith is about embracing death; not in a pathological sense, but looking at facing the reality of it. And there's an accepting of contingency, rather than a ceaseless struggle to manage it as if somehow the world is controllable - because it's not controllable, in ways that our technological and technocratic society would often lead us to believe; and we discover that in intimate family and personal moments, that it's not controllable. So there's a sense of accepting contingency, and along with that, valuing vulnerability.

We can nurture life, and share life, and create life through birth and other kinds of things, but the kind of radical giving of life that turns on its head and ends the power of death, is something that only God can do. And so, if we are people of faith, that's ultimately where we are putting our trust, our sense of security. The important thing about that is that God is not an object in the world to be compared with other objects. God does not compete with space for us; God doesn't compete with us in any kind of way at all. As human beings, no matter how virtuously we try to live and construct our relationships, there's always a sense in which we are in tension, in competition, in which our attempts to love will be compromised. But precisely because God is not one of us, in that sense, it's idolatry to think of that, God's love is of the overflowing kind which we cannot control but which is simply sheer gratuity. And that is ultimately where a sense of security as a theological orientation is going to come from, and it has a profound effect on the kind of choices we face in life and how we handle issues of security and insecurity.

The Future of Europe – a Christian Perspective

Marisa Johnson, EMES Executive General Secretary writes:

Towards the end of 2016 the Conference of European Churches published an Open Letter on The Future of Europe – see http://www.ceceurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/1GB2016_Doc15-Open-letter-Future-of-Europe.pdf - with the intention of encouraging its member churches, and those, like Quakers, who are organisations in partnership, to consider the important issues that current political and economical developments in our continent will have on the future of European institutions. Responses will form the basis for their next General Assembly, which will take place in 2018.

Quoting from the summary: *In this open letter, CEC returns to the fundamental question of common values and how these are expressed in Europe today. The existence and flourishing of the European Union is central to this discussion, but we will also look beyond its borders. The text elaborates on the overall context of and historical perspectives on European development. It takes into account the achievements of Europe, especially those that go beyond economic cooperation and the common market. These include, support for solidarity mechanisms, free travel under the Schengen agreement, and the student exchange programme Erasmus. At the same time, the text raises concern about the multiple and interrelated crises facing Europe today. The influx of migrants and refugees, violent conflicts and terrorist attacks, economic crises and growing Euroscepticism all threaten the European project and development of common values. By way of response, this open letter elaborates a theological perspective to these issues, including reflection on koinonia (fellowship) and diaconia (service), and encourages churches to make a positive contribution in building a common European home.*

Friends who came together for the Peace & Service Consultation in Kortenbergh in December 2016 held a workshop on this issue, and charged a small group to prepare a draft response on behalf of Quakers in Europe to be circulated widely among Meetings and taken to the next annual meeting of EMES in Bonn for possible endorsement. The Friends who worked on the draft response are Edouard Dommen, Switzerland Yearly Meeting, Andrew Lane of QCEA, Davorka Lovreković, German Yearly Meeting, Seán McCrum, Ireland Yearly

Meeting, Marisa Johnson, EMES Secretary. They also availed themselves of work by Ben Wood, Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations of Britain Yearly Meeting.

Friends will particularly value that the open letter *reaffirms its understanding of the EU as a community of values pursuing human dignity, peace, reconciliation, justice, the rule of law, democracy, the respect for human rights, solidarity and sustainability*, and that it “encourages CEC Member Churches and all Christians in Europe to step up efforts in making such Christian virtues as respect for others, solidarity, diaconia and building up a community more visible in public life.”

There is much common ground between Friends’ attitudes and the analysis offered in the open letter, and there is also scope to offer more of our own theological and ethical insights to fellow Christians from our own history and experience. It is in this spirit that the draft response has been framed. It is true that *different opinions exist on specific policy questions and on how to organise ourselves in Europe. Also on bigger issues such as to stay in or leave the European Union or the Council of Europe, Christians find themselves on different sides of the divide*. We experience this within our own Quaker communities in different countries in Europe. However, we believe that no compromise can be made on issues of *respect for human dignity, peace, justice, freedom, tolerance, participation, solidarity, and sustainability*.

The draft response, which is available from emes@fwccemes.org, draws from the Quaker Peace Declaration of 1660/1 and the writings of William Penn, who proposed a Diet (Assembly) of Representatives of European States already in 1713-16, and gives examples of Quaker witness on issues such as gender equality, anti-slavery, social reform, conscientious objection to war, and through initiatives such as the establishment of Quaker “houses” at times of particular tension in places like Geneva, Berlin, Belfast, Brussels, Moscow, and initiatives such as the Kindertransport.

It is hoped that Friends will take the opportunity to share the open letter and the draft Quaker response to foster dialogue on these very important issues within Yearly Meetings, and through ecumenical engagement, to help communities find what Love and Truth require of them in these troubled times.

UN level initiatives on refugees and migrants: new Quaker United Nations Office briefing for Friends

How should the international community of States respond to large movements of refugees and migrants? The current attempt at the UN level to grapple with this question is the focus of a new briefing for Friends by the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO).

An inherently transnational issue such as migration deserves coherent, collective responses by nation States. Yet faced with new and complex migration challenges, the international community has struggled in its response, often failing to protect people on the move. Under pressure to improve, on 19th September 2016, UN Member States met at a high-level summit in New York and set a new agenda for 'addressing large scale movements of refugees and migrants', under what is known as the New York Declaration. Signed by heads of State, the text of this political statement includes important commitments for action by governments, and it sets in motion a series of processes towards new frameworks (Global Compacts), on migrants and refugees. QUNO's briefing for Friends examines the Declaration and the Compact processes, describing how we are actively engaged in this work, as well as ways that Quakers around the world can engage with, and benefit from these UN level initiatives.

The New York Declaration and its follow-up processes offer real opportunities: to create a more positive narrative around migration and policies which reflect this, to improve responses to refugee emergencies and ultimately, to improve treatment of refugees and migrants on the ground. Yet in the face of rising nationalism, damaging xenophobic rhetoric and policies which violate migrants' human rights, there is no guarantee that the Compacts,

ultimately decided by States, will be people-centred and protection based. We must be vigilant in ensuring that it is not only State's narrow view of their own interests which define the outcomes. As such, QUNO is working hard to ensure that the processes are fully grounded in existing human rights law and principles, and that the voices of civil society are heard throughout.

We all have a say in how this agenda progresses and Friends have can play their part in making sure that this opportunity is not lost. We saw an important connection to Friends working on refugee and migrant issues on the ground when we took part in the Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network conference in the UK in February. At the conference, Friends provided information from their work on the UK's most pressing refugee and migrant issues, which we are using to feed into our dialogues with States here in Geneva. Friends also committed to asking their elected representatives to raise the commitments under the New York Declaration with the UK Government, thereby improving awareness and scrutiny of the UN agenda in UK national policy.

It is this kind of awareness and engagement that will help determine whether governments act responsibly and change their practice for the better. Success will ultimately depend on us: as concerned individuals, as civil society organisations, and as members of the human family.

The briefing, including ways you can engage, can be found online at: <http://www.quno.org/timeline/2017/2/new-briefing-friends-opportunities-and-challenges-protection-refugees-and-migrants>



Adding to the tree of activities Friends are taking on refugees and migrants issues

Forced Migration conference

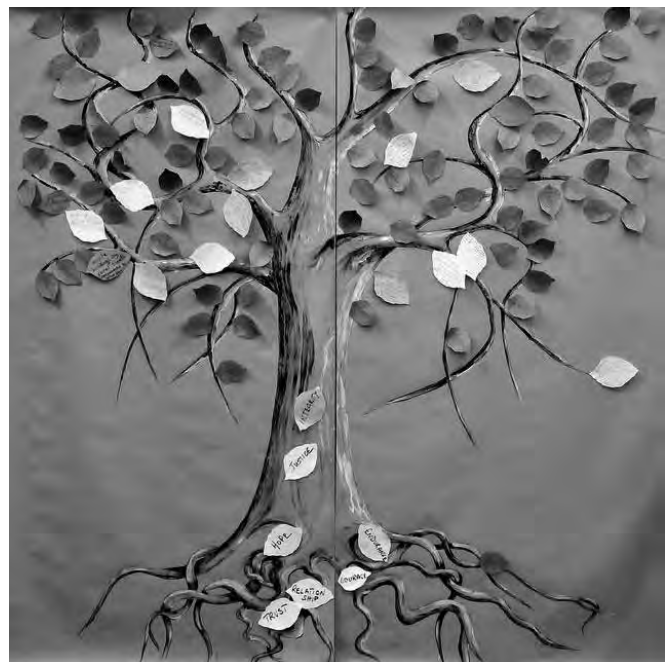
Catherine Henderson, Hereford and Brussels Meetings, writes:

Forced Migration: how can Quakers respond? was the theme of the conference jointly organised by Quaker Asylum and Refugees Network (QARN), Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA), Quaker Peace and Social Witness - Britain Yearly Meeting (QPSW) and Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, which took place over the first weekend of February at Woodbrooke in Birmingham. Friends came from Meetings across the UK, including Scotland and Wales, from Ireland, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Italy and Switzerland.

We wanted an international conference because forced migration is an international issue, one which has historically involved Quakers in work which is grounded in our faith and our testimonies. In the UK Tim Gee has recently been appointed by QPSW as forced migration programme developer, while across Europe we are beginning to grow a support network of Friends working with refugees and asylum seekers.

Last summer a joint survey by QARN and QCEA gathered information from Friends across 14 countries about their involvement with refugees and asylum seekers, and this has formed the basis of a booklet, *Quaker Faith in Action*, compiled by Kate McNally, forced migration project coordinator at QCEA, which she presented at the opening of the conference. Kate has recently set up *Quaker Refugee Hub* on Facebook as a forum for discussion for Friends across Europe, and it is hoped there will be regular articles in QCEA's publication *Around Europe*, so please do consider writing of your experiences working with refugees, and contributing to the Hub.

The two keynote speakers were Andrew Lane from QCEA, who explored the underlying causes of forced migration and the political responses across Europe, and Gina Clayton, who focused on UK immigration and asylum law, and the 'hostile environment'. Twelve workshops picked up on these themes and included Rethinking Security, led by Diana Francis who convenes the Ammerdown Group; Environmental Disaster, led by Alex Randall of the Climate and Migration Coalition; Safe Passage, led by Sheila Mosley



The tree of current actions Friends are taking on refugee and migrant issues

of QARN and Renke Meuwese of Help Refugees, Calais; Quaker work at the United Nations, led by Laurel Townhead and Catherine Baker from Quaker United Nations Organisation (QUNO); and Pragmatic Engagement of the Spirit, with Charles Tauber of the Coalition for Work with Psychotrauma and Peace, which took place via Skype. Other workshops explored specific aspects of the UK asylum system, and there was a performance of a new play by Journeymen Theatre, commissioned by QARN and based on the story of a Chechen asylum seeker, *The Bundle*.

One of the things many of us are interested in is the experience of asylum seekers, and those supporting them, under different European governments. Not only can we share ideas, but campaign together on issues affecting us all. We also share a concern for the rise of nationalism and increasing hostility towards migrants in the media. These are things we can address together: by the end of the weekend our thoughts and reflections were expressed as leaves 'growing' on a tree. Many of us have come away with new ideas and new hope. We are not being unrealistic: there really are many wonderful examples of people and organisations working together with refugees to build a culture of welcome.

Conference Minute

<http://www.qarn.org.uk/homepage/>

QCEA-QARN report on forced migration

<http://www.qcea.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/QCEA-QARN-report-on-forced-migration.pdf>

Quaker Refugee Hub

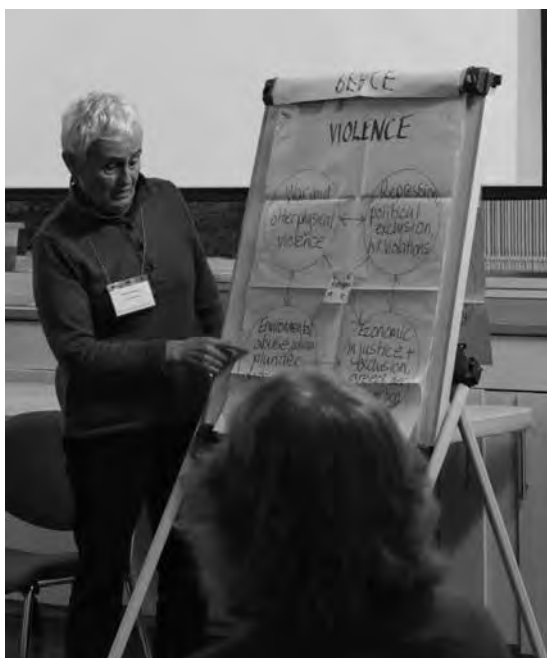
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/897579823675699/>



*Renke Meuwese,
Netherlands YM*



Gina Clayton and Andrew Lane



Diana Francis, Britain Yearly Meeting



All photos by Kate McNally

Diverse community, common action

Andrew Lane, QCEA Director, writes:

European Friends are a community of different shapes and sizes. In January, QCEA published research on the current work of Friends to respond to increasing forced migration into Europe. Unsurprisingly, it found that Friends across Europe have been quietly working in many different ways in their local communities.

Examples of work by European Quakers includes trauma support, language teaching and making welcoming signs for shops. Kate McNally would still like to hear from Friends who are actively supporting people seeking asylum in Europe. We are able to connect Friends who might be able to work together or learn from each other.

As Friends, we speak from experience. This is no different for QCEA, and hearing the experience of Quakers across Europe is especially important if we are to provide a Quaker voice at the European-level.

Building walls higher and higher

The human rights standards developed in Europe since the holocaust have helped to ensure that peace and human dignity have been increasingly respected over the last 70 years. To avoid being held to account for failing to meet these standards for asylum seekers in Europe, governments are coercing neighbouring countries into preventing people from travelling on to Europe. This includes:

- direct payments (particularly in exchange for accepting returning failed asylum seekers),
- manipulation of trade agreements, and
- new conditions for the receipt of development aid.

Notable examples include the EU-Turkey deal and EU funding for the Libyan coast guard. In January, some governments argued that Europe should only accept asylum applications from reception centres outside of Europe.

Most recently, we have heard that some governments are privately talking about challenging the principle of 'non-refoulement'. This is the principle that people seeking asylum should not be forcibly returned to a country where they are liable to be subjected to



Forced Migration conference at Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre in Birmingham. Photo: Quaker Asylum & Refugee Network (QARN)

persecution. We will be monitoring this closely in the coming weeks and will keep you informed.

A community led to act

The scale of the current challenge feels overwhelming. I took great encouragement from last month's Forced Migration conference at the Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre. On the first evening Kate McNally presented her research on the work of individual Friends. Over the course of the weekend I heard many more examples of small actions that are making a difference.

This is not to say that local action is sufficient. We must develop ways to work together across our diverse European Quaker community to influence European and global political processes. This is where our Quaker offices, QCEA and QUNO, are essential.

The Letter of James was written to encourage patient perseverance during difficult times, and inspire people to turn their faith into action. James 3:5 reminds us how transformational change can come from small actions, "The tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark".

To read the report on Friends work on Forced Migration, visit QCEA.org

If you are supporting people seeking asylum in Europe, please let us know what you are doing by emailing kate.mcnally@qcea.org

News from Woodbrooke

Throughout the year, Woodbrooke will welcome participants on one or more of the 156 courses and retreats on offer. Whilst the majority of this will be run onsite in our centre in Birmingham, others will run online or at the historic Swarthmoor Hall.

Our extended programmes, such as *Equipping for Ministry*, *Soul of Leadership*, *Young Adult Leadership Programme* and our post-graduate courses are open to Friends throughout EMES. Special funding is available for anyone who is interested in joining in.

We appreciate that financial restraints and time commitments make it difficult to travel to Woodbrooke. One solution is for Friends to consider participating in one of the courses in our online programme. This year we are offering 21 affordable and convenient online courses and retreats, including webinars on early Quakers, or *Quaker roles courses*. Look out for the 6 week retreat 'European Quaker voices' run by Julia Ryberg, and 'Being a Quaker Clerk: an online course for clerks around the world', co-tutored by Michael Eccles, Oliver Robertson and Sue Glover Frykman. Our *Postgraduate Certificate in Quaker Studies* and *MA in Quakerism in the Modern World* are also distance courses held entirely online.

Last year, over 8,500 people participated in the free three week online course on early Quakers we ran in association with the University of Lancaster. The second run will begin again on May 22nd. Registration is now open. Friends can join the course at: <https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/quakers>

Our two year *Equipping for Ministry programme* supports Friends who wish to explore what it means to be a



Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre Photo: Woodbrooke

Quaker today, and encourages them to discover their personal callings. The *Young Adult Leadership Programme* helps 18-30 year olds strengthen their knowledge of the Quaker faith and history, and develop their life skills. Those interested in developing their inner resources for service in leadership roles may be interested in our 18 month *Soul of Leadership programme*.

As well as this invitation for you to come to Woodbrooke, there are also plenty of opportunities for us to visit you. Our travelling teaching service, *Woodbrooke on the Road*, can be tailored to meet the particular learning and spiritual needs of your Meeting. We offer a range of specialised and accessible workshops covering Quaker history, theology and testimony. We can also help you explore the building blocks of what it means to be a living and faithful worshipping community.

If you are interested in joining us in any of these events, we would like to remind you that *special funding is available* so that you can take advantage of what we have to offer.

For those of you wanting to extend your involvement with Woodbrooke, you might want to consider serving as one of our *Friends in Residence*. These are Friends who stay with us for a few weeks at a time and who nurture our daily worshipping life, welcome visitors and support residents out of office hours. You can also volunteer to help our newly appointed Garden Manager in maintaining and improving our 10 acres of gardens and grounds by serving as a *Gardening Friend*.

For more information about any aspect of Woodbrooke's learning programme please call +44(0)121 472 5171, email enquiries@woodbrooke.org.uk or visit www.woodbrooke.org.uk



Marisa Johnson

Photo: Woodbrooke

Centre Quaker de Congénies Programme 2017

2017 Artist Retreats in the South of France, between the Cévennes Mountains & the Mediterranean Sea. *Friday 28 April to Monday 8 May* and *Friday 22 September to Monday 2 October*

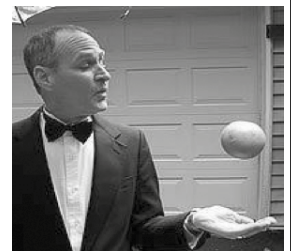
- 6-10 days of creating and camaraderie.
- Transportation to interesting venues to paint, draw, photograph: but the peaceful garden and surrounding village may be sufficient inspiration.
- There will be a facilitator from Saturday evening to Friday morning. The other 4 days are optional for continuing projects or sightseeing.
- Facilitator: Kate Hale, Quaker, art teacher, advisor & community artist in a broad range of media.
- Open format: Each according to choice: work collectively or separately.
- Maximum of ten interested amateur or professional artists

The program cost will be 695€ (560€ for shared occupancy) & includes 6 nights' accommodation, all meals & transportation to local painting spots. The optional days are 90€ (65€ shared) per day & include accommodation, transportation, breakfast and dinner.



Music Week at the Centre Quaker de Congénies in the South of France located in a lovely valley between the Cévennes Mountains & the Mediterranean Sea *Saturday 20 to Sunday 28 May 2017*

Lift your spirits with a musical adventure at Maison Quaker. Experience or talent not necessary--just a willingness to sing, play, learn or listen. Using familiar (and sometimes unfamiliar) folk-songs, spirituals, and popular music of the 20th century, Jeff Dershin, entertainer and educator, will lead us on a fun-filled five day encounter with music. Instrumentalists are encouraged to bring their instruments, singers their voices, and listeners their ears for an exploration of why music has the power to be simultaneously playful, happy, sad, angry, complaining, and inspiring. Prepare for a unique experience of musical sharing along with a bit of sight-seeing in the South of France. The program cost will be 595€ (465€ for shared occupancy) and includes musical fun with Jeff Dershin, 5 nights' accommodation, meals, (all but one lunch) and some sight-seeing transportation. The optional days are 77€ (52€ shared) per day and includes accommodation, breakfast and dinner.



A Couples Enrichment Retreat at the Centre Quaker de Congénies, in the South of France *2-4 June* or: Coming from a Distance? Enhance the weekend with singing and sightseeing by extending your visit to 1-5 June. Email for more information on the program options.

What is a Couples Enrichment Workshop? It is an opportunity for a couple to focus on their relationship, enhance communication skills, and deepen their appreciation of each other. A couples enrichment program is not therapy, but a way to make good relationships even better.

Facilitators for this program will be Gretta and Jacob Stone, from Montpelier, Vermont, in the USA. They have been leading couple enrichment programs throughout the United States for the past twenty-two years, under the auspices of Friends General Conference and Friends Couple Enrichment.(friendscoupleenrichment.org). This program at Congénies is part of a European trip in celebration of their fiftieth wedding anniversary in July 2017. Cost: weekend retreat: 265 euros per couple, includes 2 nights accommodation, all meals. Extended stay: 555 euros per couple, includes additional 2 nights accommodation (total 4),



Contact Resident Friends Judy or Dave at:

Centre Quaker de Congénies

<http://www.maison-quaker-congenies.org/> 11 avenue des Quakers, 30111 Congénies

Centre.quaker.congenies@gmail.com +33 (0)4 66 71 46 41

Quaker Voluntary Action 2017 Working Retreats

Practical engagement, with elements of study, reflection and fellowship

'Let your lives speak'



- Olive picking in Palestine -

"A tremendous opportunity to work together and learn about a very complex situation... We met some astonishing people and were made so welcome."

Faith in Action

QVA offers adventurous opportunities for volunteering that combine meaningful practical engagement with learning, spiritual encounter

and reflection. The Working Retreat programme encourages an active witness to our testimony to sustainability and peace. In partnership with Quaker Meetings, Centres and other organisations, we seek to deepen this commitment. Through companionship, nurture and stewardship, people and places can flourish.

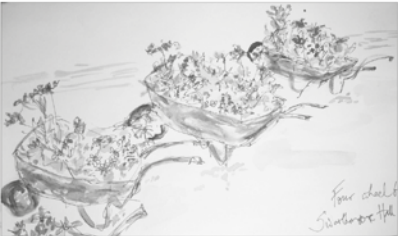
Faith & Freedom: The Way of Prayer

Our 2017 theme focuses on prayer – individually and in unity with others. Whatever form our faith may take, we are free to pray in a way that is true for us.

Drawing on inspirational texts, other resources and our own story, we can share what we have discovered so far on our journeys. There will be opportunities to explore our joys, challenges, dilemmas and hopes, through prayer.

For enquiries about a specific working retreat refer to the bookings information overleaf

For general information contact: mail@qva.org.uk
07530 844611 f: Qva Coordinator www.qva.org.uk

BAMFORD May 9-14 (Tue-Sun: 5 days) 12 places £150 Quaker Community gardening for sustainability Sowing seeds & planting out Walking & cycling in stunning Peak District Facilitators: Linda Southwick & Zee Zee Heine Bookings: mail@quakercommunity.org.uk	ESTONIA June 26-July 7 (Mon-Fri: 12 days) 10 places £320 Social care activities at family refuge Reparation, brick-laying, decorating, carpentry Enjoy national song & dance festival in Tallinn Facilitators: Jasmine Piercy & Alex Gorbenko Bookings: jasmine@qva.org.uk	POLAND July 17-24 (Mon-Mon: 7 days) 12 places £160 Farm coop training young adults with disabilities Clear land, chop wood, create attractive areas Music-making, games & swimming at the lake Facilitators: Alex Gorbenko & Jasmine Piercy Bookings: jasmine@qva.org.uk
 QVA 2017 QUAKER VOLUNTARY ACTION www.qva.org.uk f: Qva Coordinator	 -Wheelbarrows at Swarthmoor-	QVA WORKING RETREATS Opportunities for practical engagement with elements of study, reflection & fellowship <i>'Let your lives speak'</i> Theme for 2017: Faith & Freedom: the Way of Prayer
SWARTHMOOR Sept 4-9 (Mon-Sat: 5 days) 10 places £185 Gardening & study tour at Swarthmoor Hall Connect with Quaker 1652 history Visit Brigflatts, Firbank Fell, Quaker Tapestry Facilitators: Linda Southwick & tbc Bookings: info@swarthmoorhall.co.uk	SLOVENIA Sept 16-23 (Sat-Sat: 7 days) 12 places £280 Sustainability study tour & hands on permaculture Ljubljana's 'Green Capital of Europe 2016' successes Bicycling, bathing & a bus run on sunshine Facilitators: Jasmine Piercy & tbc Bookings: jasmine@qva.org.uk	RAMALLAH Oct 9-20 (Mon-Fri: 12 days) 12 places £520 Challenging study tour & encounter programme Supporting the annual olive harvest Israel & Palestine situation in a Quaker context Facilitators: Michele Gerard & David Grundy Bookings: micha41@hotmail.co.uk

Diary Dates 2017

More dates for 2017 are available on the website: www.fwccemes.org. Please send items for inclusion in the diary to Marisa Johnson at emes@fwccemes.org.

16-19 March 2017: FWCC Section of the Americas Meeting americas@fwccamericas.org

29 March – 2 April 2017: FWCC Africa Section Triennial Meeting, Rwanda

10-17 April 2017: Europe & Middle East Young Friends' Spring Gathering in the village of Marszewiec, near Poznan, Poland. emeyf@qcea.org

20-23 April 2017: Ireland Yearly Meeting office@quakers-in-ireland.ie

21-23 April 2017: Quaker Grenztreffen CH-D German speaking, Lindenberg, Schwarzwald GrenztreffenCHD@quaeker.org

4-7 May 2017: FWCC-EMES Annual Meeting of Representatives, Bonn-Venusberg emes@fwccemes.org

12-14 May 2017: Belgium & Luxembourg Yearly Meeting in Flanders quakerclerk@gmail.com

18-21 May 2017: Central European Gathering in Brno, Czech Republic, <http://www.fwccemes.org/calendar/central-european-gathering-2017>

19-21 May 2017: Netherlands Yearly Meeting in Bennekom, secretariaat@dequakers.nl

2-5 June 2017: Switzerland Yearly Meeting symclerk@swiss-quakers.ch

29 June – 2 July 2017: Nordic Friends Gathering, Nordic Folk High School, Kungälv, Sweden kveker@kveker.org

29 July 5 August 2017: Britain Yearly Meeting Gathering, Warwick University, Coventry, UK, ym@quaker.org.uk

1-3 September 2017: Border Meeting, Maison Notre-Dame du Chant-d'Oiseau, Avenue des Franciscains, 3A, B-1150 Brussels, Belgium daniel_flynn39@yahoo.com

Woodbrooke on-line Meeting for Worship

A regular opportunity to join in a virtual Meeting for Worship on Wednesdays at 9:30am Greenwich Mean Time and Fridays, 1pm Greenwich Mean Time November till March, 1pm British Summer Time April till October. Martin Layton will be running a Meeting for Worship using Adobe Connect, an online meeting space accessible on any browser. All you have to do is go to <https://woodbrooke.adobeconnect.com/quiet-room/> to take part. See <http://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/news.php/559/join-us-for-meeting-for-worship-every-wednesday-and-friday>

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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