

Among Friends

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There's a race to be run...

Dear Friends,

I have a tune in my head, from a hymn by Jabo and Sipho, sang soulfully in Pisac by my former colleague Churchill Malimo: "There's a race I must run, there's a victory to be won, give me power every hour to be true".

When the running bug bit me some five years ago I was already well into my 6th decade. I could not have imagined getting used to running in freezing cold conditions, in the rain, in great heat or squelching mud, through a knee injury or suffering from sciatica. Tackling 5 km seemed daunting at first, but now such a distance presents only the challenge to try and improve my time doing it. 10 km seemed too much at first, now it's my favourite distance. But I drew the line firmly at a half marathon. If only I had discovered running earlier in my life then....

Then my eldest son challenged me to do a half marathon together, and I could not resist. My coach did not think me crazy to even think of it – on the contrary, he encouraged me and gave me a training plan. As the training increased, the pleasure of doing it with my son kept me going. Then in the last week of training my son got a nasty dose of influenza, and became too weak to do the run. Could I do it on my own? There was only one way to find out... I did it, the impossible had been achieved,

because others believed I could do it, I found the resources to take the risk and try.

Trusting in those who show belief in us can be the beginning of undreamed of journeys, the key that unlocks potential and unexpected resources. In community, we are given the gift of such belief, opening the way for one another to reach beyond our assumed limitations.

*Marisa Johnson,
Executive Secretary*



Marisa Photo: Mick Johnson

I am delighted to welcome Michael Eccles as EMES Assistant Secretary, and look forward to working with him. Michael introduces himself on page 4, though he'll be known to many already.

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The Language of Leadings

A reflection on faith, action and concern

Sue Glover Frykman, Sweden Yearly Meeting, reviews **The language of leadings. A reflection on faith, action and concern**, by Jane Pearn. Published by QUAKERbooks in 2017. £8.

This booklet is the result of Jane Pearn's thinking, reflections and learning during her Eva Koch Scholarship work. Jane starts out from the Quaker concept of concern and what it actually means. Some of the questions she explores are what does acting under concern feel like, what are the implications, what does a Meeting do when it tests a concern and is there a difference between supporting a concern and it being laid upon us collectively? She also considers how we use language to communicate deep truths to one another and what kinds of words we use.

In the book Jane explores what a concern, or leading, is in a Quaker context, how we know when it is laid upon us and what the cost of it is. A helpful diagram is provided, with four questions that return us to the centre of waiting in the Light for further guidance. She looks at how we take a concern further by testing to see whether it is for the individual to act upon or the Quaker collective. Different Quaker voices and stories are included in the text to give a broader picture of how concern is viewed and to give examples of concerns that have been worked through and acted on.

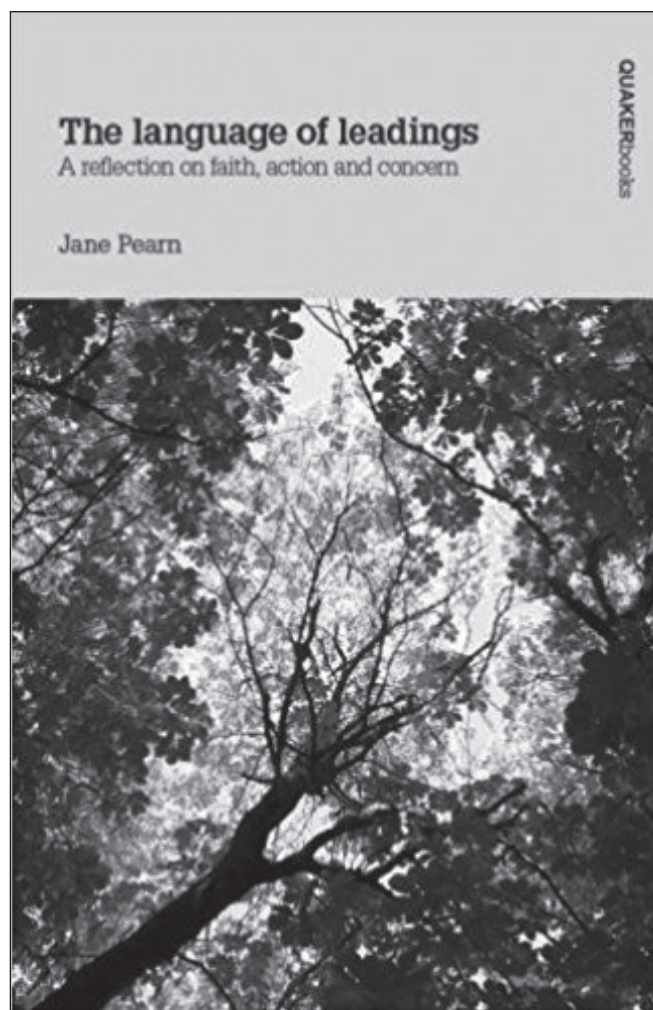
If you have wondered what a Quaker concern is and how it is furthered, then this book is for you. If you already have a sense of this, the book will help to deepen your knowledge.

What shall we hand on? Where is the Spirit now leading us? ... we have seen how we have been gathered, guided and ordered for more than three hundred years. We shall want both to keep the rich openings we have inherited and to be open to continuing guidance in changing circumstances. This will only be possible if we heed the promptings of love and truth which we trust as the leadings of God.

Individually and corporately Friends are seeking new ways of expressing our testimonies to equality and social justice, to the building of peace, to truth and integrity in public affairs, and to simplicity in a lifestyle that reflects our renewed understanding of our relationship with all creation.

As we try to respond to new leadings we often cannot discern what will remain important and what will be seen as ephemeral. There will be tensions as we wrestle with our diverse perceptions and convictions, and tensions can be creative. Our hope and our experience is that when we are faithful we shall be rightly led.

Britain Yearly Meeting's Quaker Faith and Practice chapter 29: Leadings



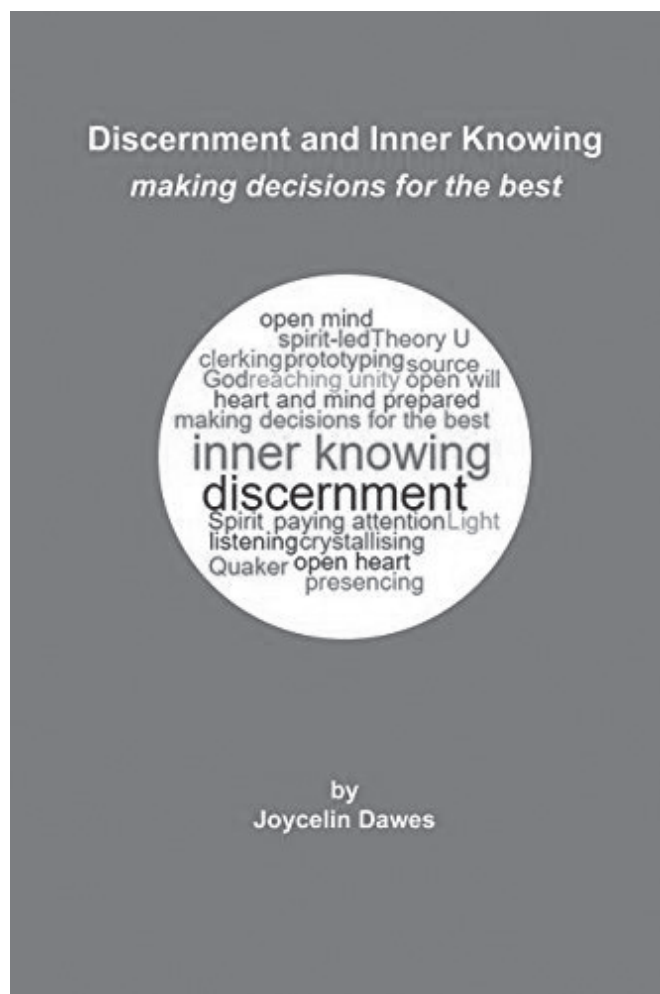
Discernment and Inner Knowing

Making decisions for the best

Sue Glover Frykman, Sweden Yearly Meeting, reviews **Discernment and Inner Knowing. Making decisions for the best**, by Joycelin Dawes. Published by FeedARead.com in 2017. £6.99

This book stems from research undertaken through the Eva Koch Scholarship on the process of discernment and explores this phenomenon through the Quaker practice and spirit-led process of making decisions and Theory U. Joycelin Dawes explains that Theory U “is a contemporary framework for change that draws on presencing – connecting to Source and inner knowing that allows individuals and groups to shift the inner place from which they function and thus make decisions that embody a future possibility they sense might emerge” (p. 3). Joycelin devotes a chapter to explaining Theory U and its process of opening mind, heart and will, which involves going down (suspending, redirecting and letting go), moving across the bottom of the U (connecting to source and inner knowing) and going up (letting come, enacting and embodying), in order to make contact with a deep inner place and listen to the inner knowing that arises from within. A chapter is also devoted to the Quaker discernment practice and the language we use for it. After referring to and exploring different expressions of both practices, Joycelin combines the two by means of ‘a flow of Quaker discernment as a U map’, which visually shows and explains the discernment process in its rich fullness.

This is a somewhat scholarly account of discernment and decision-making. Nevertheless, it explains a concept that we Quakers readily use, perhaps without really knowing what it can mean.



Because Friends have relied so heavily on direct divine guidance, discernment has been central. Quakers have regarded leadings as individual, Spirit-led expressions of their testimonies, which are the corporate witness to their distinctive ethical principles. Early Friends described a process of attentiveness and awareness, open yet keenly alert to the possibility of self-deception. Contemporary practices include the clearness committee for individual decisions and, in groups decisions in Meeting for Business, the search for the ‘sense of the meeting’ that indicates unity with God and one another. Practices of discernment have responded to wider social influences, from liberal Protestantism and Evangelicalism in the English-speaking world, to understandings of self and community in Latin America and East Africa.

From an abstract of Michael Birkel’s article on Leadings and Discernment in the Oxford Book of Quaker Studies

Introduction from Michael Eccles

Greetings from your new Assistant Secretary! I started my job with EMES on the 12th March 2018, however I have been involved with Friends around the world for a long time.

Prior to starting this job, I was the Young Adult Programmes Co-ordinator at Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre in Birmingham, Britain. In this role, along with colleagues, I set up the annual Young Adult Leadership Programme which Woodbrooke has now run since 2012. I also co-ordinated the courses that Woodbrooke runs for clerks of Quaker meetings and this included instigating online courses in this area, which now includes running an annual course for clerks around the world (with Sue Glover Frykman and Oliver Robertson as co-tutors) – see page 9.

Alongside my three days a week working for EMES, I will be continuing at Woodbrooke as the QPSW (Quaker Peace & Social Witness) Tutor, running preparation sessions for the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine & Israel and the one year Quaker workers in Britain, Geneva and Brussels.

Before working at Woodbrooke I worked in the international development, relief and peacebuilding fields, I spent the longest time at Islamic Relief where, for five years, I oversaw projects in Eastern Europe (the Balkans & North Caucasus), Palestine and Indonesia.

I am a member of Cotteridge Quaker Meeting in Britain Yearly Meeting. My meeting is fairly large, with usually around 35-45 people there on a Sunday morning including a number of children. I attend with my wife and two daughters (aged 5 and 8).

My parents met at an international Quaker gathering (the World Conference of Friends in Greensboro, North Carolina in 1967) so the world family of Friends has always been in my blood. I have vague memories of attending an EMES family gathering in Waterford in Ireland in the mid-1980s, but perhaps one of the most important Quaker events of my life was the 1989 Quaker Youth Pilgrimage. About 30 of us spent a month living in community travelling down the west coast of the USA from Seattle to San Francisco – we visited Friends' groups, stayed in Quaker meeting



Michael Eccles Photo: *Michael Eccles*

houses, Friends' homes and even a Quaker school. Since then I have attended a number of international Friends events organised by FWCC; I met many of you at the recent World Plenary Meeting in Peru in 2016.

I have worshipped with Friends in a number of different countries; I was part of a Woodbrooke on the road team that travelled to Kenya last November – we met with Friends from several yearly meetings in western Kenya. Earlier in my life, I lived in Russia on two occasions in the late 1990s/early 2000s – this gave me the opportunity to be a part of Moscow meeting, which I greatly enjoyed. Thanks to my time in Russia, I speak Russian, although it is currently a bit rusty – I look forward to making more use of it!

I was very excited to see this role with EMES advertised back in the autumn of 2017 and felt that it would be a perfect opportunity for me to build on my experience at Woodbrooke – in particular with Young Adult Friends – and to find new challenges in my working life. I feel like I've jumped in with both feet and am grateful to Marisa for all her support and guidance so far.

Yearly Meeting archives in the Centre Quaker International, Paris

Judith Roads, France YM and Britain YM, writes:

What does your Yearly Meeting do with its historical archives? Are all the documents and artefacts beautifully stored and catalogued (as they are for example at Friends House in London)? This is a genuine question not a rhetorical one. I've recently embarked on a quest to discover what exactly is stored at the Centre in Paris (the CQI). There are many, many boxes and ring binders filling the shelves. Some Friends know about some of what's there and I'm aware of this, but till the start of last year nobody seemed to know what the total holdings consisted of. I discovered all this a few months ago when I was appointed to serve on the Bureau of the CQI, so I decided to find out. More stupid than it sounds as, although I am a member of France Yearly Meeting, I don't live in France but in London. Good news for the owners of Eurostar though.

Several exhausting visits later and the ingesting of more dust and pollution drifting in from the rue Vaugirard than I would have liked, I reckon I now have a pretty good idea of what is there. After a quick overview of the various shelves and cupboards, I created some categories for the types of material I thought covered the collection. Based on those, I have made a provisional list cataloguing the main holdings of minute books and journals, plus historical financial papers and correspondence dating back to the 1930s. The printed book library is for other Friends to tackle, however – there is enough already in the archives to occupy me for a few visits more.

We – that is, Friends in the Paris area - are beginning to uncover some treasures: many photographs, a reel-to-reel tape (not yet viewed), wartime memories and records that, although known to specialist researchers, have not really been easily available to general interest

visitors. Mostly this is because it all needs major work to conserve and store the items better.

So I come back to my question: has your country's collection (or collections) already received such treatment? Have you perhaps transferred your archives to an approved (non-Quaker) place of deposit? Do you have advice for us in France? Would it ever be possible – or desirable - to combine lists of Quaker holdings across EMES Europe? What about long-established and newer worship groups – are you beginning to store your archived minutes and other material? Can experts in Britain YM and Ireland YM offer guidance beyond the help we have already received? Does anyone know of funding that can be accessed? And finally, does anyone want to come over to Paris to see what is stored there? Friendly visitors are always welcome if you let the Centre know beforehand.



A 'Work-In-Progress' snapshot Photo: Judith Roads

Sanctuary Everywhere

A conference in Brussels organised by QCEA (Quaker Council for European Affairs) and QPSW (Quaker Peace and Social Witness) on 1st to 3rd December 2017

Toni Hämäläinen and *Jane Rose*, Finland YM, attended the conference and write:

We bring much back with us after an intense time together with over 100 Friends (sprinkled with a few non-Friends) from around Europe. All were concerned and/or working in some connection with the issue of migration and refugees in the world. There was much input; in the form of keynote addresses, panel presentations and background history of Friends' post-war work in Europe. We were also offered a choice of workshops comprising a mixture of presentation and discussion. The programme allowed adequate time to mix and mingle and informally talk with other participants, and on Saturday evening there were about twelve 5-minute slots for people to share a glimpse of what they are doing within this broad field. We also worshipped and worship-shared as a whole conference.

If you ask what the essence is of what we are bringing back with us - it is this: there is the big picture and the small picture. There are people who are working at micro-level/ grassroots and people who work at structural, lobbying and political level. But we need both, and both fit into the Whole. If one 'cog in the wheel' is missing - then the whole structure works less effectively. We need each other, and we need more than Quakers. It was said quite strongly that others are also working in this field and we needs must engage with them. We think this is even more true for a small widely-spread Quaker community like Finland Yearly Meeting.

We were reminded that we live in the here and now, the end times and we are building the Kingdom on earth now - not at some future date. We were also reminded to reflect on history and how quickly a situation can change. A concrete example was given of how the situation for the Jews in Germany changed rapidly in just 20 years between 1918 and 1938. We were encouraged to continue to think about our arguments for why the death penalty is never necessary and not to be complacent that once something is achieved, it is so for all time. We are an integral part of the arc of history. We need to develop a counter-narrative to populism and remember that situations can go backward

as well as forward.

QCEA and QUNO are working in our name: the team of young, energetic and knowledgeable people representing us is truly impressive. They cannot do so without money. We are certainly asked to remember them in our budget. Quiet diplomacy and off the record dinners to bring diplomats together work, and can be especially effective. We were shown a short video clip of a QCEA workshop bringing together young Croatian and Serbian people leading to greater understanding.

We are asked to consider how we should model the change we wish to see. Are we being 'patterns and examples'? The steps we need to take are individual, corporate and global. Are our meetings always open to all? What are our stories? And from the final Sunday meeting for worship, we bring 3 pieces of ministry:

1. As well as creating cities of sanctuary we can think about being people of sanctuary and what this means.
2. It is easy to feel overwhelmed by the negative, the tragic and the terrible which is the focus of most of our official daily news. But everywhere good, kind and wonderful things are taking place which do not make headline news. Such as a recent situation where 5 Muslim women and a Quaker woman were planting garlic and tulip bulbs in a community garden ready for next year, kneeling together with hands in the earth.
3. The bird of Hope

Is the bird which sings in the darkness before dawn.

We were meeting in the '*Chant d'Oiseau Centre*'. Chant d'oiseau means birdsong.

We took away many papers and leaflets, one of which was a small, moving publication called: Hear Our Voices: undocumented children and young people share their stories. We would like to finish this report by quoting the last verse of an anonymous poem called 'Weight in Gold'

*And if dreams were worth their weight in gold
And resilience and courage cashed like cheques
Then young migrants would be in a class of their own.*

Border Meeting North West Europe 2018

Testimony of Equality: where do we as individuals stand? Despite cruel persecution, early Friends were stubbornly determined to demonstrate that in God's sight, all persons are equal. This belief resulted in Friends through the years having contributed significantly to the creation of a more just society. Where do we stand today? Our speaker Stefan Mann will describe his own experiences, in both personal and professional life, of hierarchy, privilege and discrimination. We shall then hear accounts of personal reactions to discrimination, and take a look at different aspects of inequality. And together we will reflect on ways in which we can recognise and respond to inequality both in our own personal lives and in the world at large.

The border meeting will be held in the Jugendakademie in Bornheim-Walberberg from Sept. 7 to 9, 2018. It is easily reached by tram from Cologne or Bonn central station. The price is 110 € per person. Children, and adults younger than 27 years of age are free. A special programme for children is planned.

Further information under <https://bordermeeting2018.blogspot.de/> . Please register via the link to the registration form given there. You can contact us by e-mail at border.meeting@gmail.com or phone Peter at +49 172 46 507 76.

Please note that registration has to end on June 13, 2018.

EMES Small Grants (Spiritual Growth) Fund Update

Sue Glover Frykman, EMES Clerk, writes:

This is a follow-up article to that which was published in Among Friends No. 136 (<http://www.fwccemes.org/news/among-friends-issue-136>) and gives you an idea of the projects that have received support from the Small Grants Fund (SGF) since then. In actual fact, the SGF is changing its name to the Spiritual Growth Fund (same initials!) to better reflect its aims and purpose – which are to strengthen Quakers' shared identity, strengthen Quaker connections and bring Quaker values to the wider community. In brief, the events and activities that have been funded since the summer of 2016 are:

- The translation of *Advices and Queries* into Polish by the Quaker group in Bialystok, Poland. In this context, it should be noted that any publications translated as part of the SGF will be made more widely available on the EMES Information Resource Forum at <http://moodle.woodbrooke.org.uk/course/view.php?id=215>
- Stop Fuelling War (*Cessez d'Alimenter la Guerre*). Here, Quakers from France, Germany, Belgium and The Netherlands are involved in organising a peace witness at the Eurosatory Arms Fair in Paris in June 2018.
- Central European Gathering's documentation, history and future project/online platform project.
- Travel costs support for Central European Gathering Friends serving in a role.
- Friends House Moscow's "Meditation of friends 2".

- Prague Meeting's 'Feuerstein's Mediated Learning Experience' (MLE) project as a means of transmitting Quaker values to children.

- Ramallah Friends Meeting's (RFM) project "Building for the Future of Ramallah Friends Meeting", which also includes plans for how the Amari Play Centre could be brought back under the care of the Meeting and for resumed ties with Brummana Friends Meeting in Lebanon, with the near future goal of reinstating a Middle East Yearly Meeting.

- The translation and publication of Ben Pink Dandelion's booklet "Living the Quaker Way" by the Tallinn Meeting Group.

Europe and Middle East Young Friends (EMEYF) have also reported on the progress of the Living Archives Project (LAP). The archive has now been roughly sorted and basic archival care executed (putting the material into ring binders, adding index cards etc.). The next step is to scan the contents and create a digital infrastructure. The archives are described as a treasure, and the project is developing tools so that the archive can be used for the benefit of EMEYF and Quakers in Europe and the Middle East.

The closing dates for applications for grants from SGF are 30th June and 31st December each year. Application guidelines and an application form can be downloaded from the EMES website at <http://www.fwccemes.org/emes/emes-smallgrants-fund-sgf>

Quaker Voluntary Action

Volunteering to meet the challenges of our time

Quaker Voluntary Action provides practical opportunities to put faith into action. Our working retreats are open to Quakers as well as to those who wish to learn more about the Quaker way. Our events contain a balance of practical work with reflection, free time, fellowship and fun.

Host a QVA working retreat

We are always open to proposals for new projects! Does your Meeting House or Centre needs some volunteer effort to help with a practical project? This could be a site for a working retreat. Please note, it doesn't need to be a Quaker project

Write to hannah@qva.org.uk with your ideas!

Our work in the future

This year, we are also looking at our work, and asking what we might do in the future. We would love to have your views - whether you have been on many QVA working retreats, or none at all!

You will find the *survey* here: tiny.cc/qva Please take a few minutes to complete the survey by the middle of April, if you can!

Join a working retreat this year

LANCUT, POLAND: 21-28 July

We'll stay on a small ecofarm in Rakszawa in the beautiful south east of Poland. The farm is run with the goal of promoting wellbeing and community-based, sustainable traditions.

THE PALES, UK: 3-6 August

Summer in Powys! Join QVA's first working retreat at the oldest Quaker Meeting House in continuous use in Wales. Now being renovated and opened to the public, work will be in the organic vegetable garden or 17th-century Quaker burial ground.

SWARTHMOOR HALL, UK: 10-14 September

Enjoy autumn in Swarthmoor's beautiful grounds. Project work will be in the gardens and grounds, or in the historic house.

ISRAEL-PALESTINE: 15-26 October

A study tour and encounter programme in and around Ramallah, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv supporting community activities including the olive harvest, planned in collaboration with Ramallah Friends Meeting. A unique opportunity to learn about the region.

For more info and to apply visit www.qva.org.uk, or email hannah@qva.org.uk

News from Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre

The snow has subsided and the spring flowers are finding their way. Hello and warm greetings from Woodbrooke!

The first few months have been busy; the new intake for our Equipping for Ministry programme arrived in January and their first residential is coming up soon. Friends have received training through our roles courses taught on the road to Friends where they are, online and onsite at Woodbrooke.

Our 2018 programme sees a number of new developments; a partnership with **Quaker Council for European Affairs** led to an event for Friends to learn about *William Penn and his vision for Europe* as well as think about the European structures today. Another new course on *Metaphysical Poets* looked at the work of John Donne, Andrew Marvell and George Herbert. Online courses have included 'Politics - finding your way'; 'A Quaker response to animal suffering' and 'The Mother of Quakerism – the life and writings of Margaret Fell'.

So what is on the horizon?

We would particularly like to highlight 'Hope in Troubled Times (8-10 June)' we will be hearing from Paul Rogers; a leading expert in global security and exploring how we can be hopeful amidst a daily intake of stories of suffering, division and conflict and live out the change we want to see in the world. This course links closely to the theme of the EMES annual meeting. For more information see www.woodbrooke.org.uk/hope

We continue to offer workshops to meetings throughout Europe through our Woodbrooke-on-the-Road programme. We have a number of courses ready-made or can develop something particular to meet your needs. See www.woodbrooke.org.uk/wotr for more information or please get in touch.

Courses at Woodbrooke

Living at the edge, Living as a Quaker 23 – 25 April

Our Quaker faith often pushes us to hold unpopular positions, to live on the edge of acceptability.' How do we remain faithful and authentic in the everyday? 'in the world but not of it.'

www.woodbrooke.org.uk/living-at-the-edge



WOODBROOKE

MEET • STAY • LEARN

Discernment in Everyday Life 22 - 24 May

Reflect on and experience types of individual and corporate discernment, and explore ways of testing our personal leadings.

www.woodbrooke.org.uk/discernment-in-everyday

Sharing our Stories 25 - 27 May

Providing a safe, welcoming space for LGBT+ Friends to share and celebrating diverse gender identity and sexual orientation.

www.woodbrooke.org.uk/sharing-our-stories

Online Courses

Eldership and Oversight 2 April – 13 May

For those serving in eldership and oversight roles

www.woodbrooke.org.uk/eldership-and-oversight-2

Leadership Amongst Friends 23 April - 13 May

Looking across our programmed and unprogrammed Quaker traditions at questions of leading and building a participatory community.

www.woodbrooke.org.uk/leadership-amongst-friends

Being a Quaker Clerk: an online course for clerks around the world 7 May - 17 June

An opportunity to consider the clerk's role and look at differing styles of clerking around the Quaker world.

www.woodbrooke.org.uk/being-a-quaker-clerk-an-online-course-for-clerks-around-the-world

Let your Life Preach: 7 May – 3 June

Exploring the roots of our Quaker tradition to see how this helps us today in hearing and responding to the call to act. www.woodbrooke.org.uk/let-your-life

The **Catchpool Fund** exists to enable Friends and meetings from Europe (excluding Britain Yearly Meeting) to participate in Woodbrooke learning. It offers financial support for courses at Woodbrooke, online courses and for meetings having an 'On-The-Road' workshop. It can also help with travel costs. For more information see www.woodbrooke.org.uk/catchpool

We look forward to welcoming you soon to Woodbrooke learning – onsite, online or where you are through our on-the-road programme.

Is gene-editing humans playing God?

Jackie Leach Scully, Switzerland Yearly Meeting, writes:

In February this year, the Council of European Churches (cec) held a workshop in Paris on the topic of gene editing. I was privileged to attend as the representative of Britain Yearly Meeting and of FWCC. It was particularly appropriate for me to be there, as a longstanding member of Britain Yearly Meeting but also as a former member (and clerk) of Switzerland Yearly Meeting, who enjoyed many FWCC-EMES events as SYM's representative. But in addition, in my professional life I am a bioethicist – that is, I research the ethical and societal implications of biological sciences and medicine – and my current work is heavily focused on human gene editing.

'Gene editing' is the emerging technological capability to alter the genetic makeup of an organism in a controlled way. (It's often referred to as genome editing. The difference is largely a technical one: the genome of a human being is the collective of many thousands of genes.) In many ways, this isn't a new concept. We've been talking, worrying, and making science fiction films about genetic manipulation for decades now. Bioethicists and theologians alike have been pondering the moral implications since the early 1970s.

However, although our knowledge of genetics opened the possibility of changing the genetic makeup of humans and other organisms at will, in practice it was very difficult indeed to achieve. We could modify genes, but the modifications were only rarely successful and often quite random. This made the process too unpredictable for practical purposes, and certainly too unsafe for use in humans.

This all changed a few years ago with the appearance of a new technology, known as CRISPR-Cas9, that for the first time allowed scientists to control genetic modifications very precisely. Many people are concerned about the moral permissibility of using gene editing to cause permanent changes to the genetic makeup of human beings.

The benefits are very clear. At present, for example, we can diagnose an increasing number of genetic conditions before birth, but there is rarely any treatment to offer. Diagnosis leads only to the ethically

and emotionally difficult decision of whether to terminate the pregnancy, or not. With gene editing, it becomes feasible to identify and then to repair the 'faulty' gene. If done early enough, altering what is called the germline of an organism, this would mean eradicating the condition not just from that individual but also from all of her or his descendants.

But of course, the possibilities also open up an ethical – and often spiritual – minefield. Do we have the right to interfere in such a fundamental part of human identity? Are we in fact "playing God"? – and is there a spiritual bar to doing so? If gene editing enables us to choose the kind of people we want, who in practice will have the power to do so? Although eradicating devastating genetic diseases may seem an obviously good thing, there are people with disabilities and chronic diseases who disagree, who say their quality of life is fine, and that gene editing is nothing less than eugenics. What about the status of the embryo – many of which will be needed for the research leading to effective gene editing interventions? And what about modifications that go beyond therapy, and try to enhance our existing human capabilities?

The workshop drew representatives from across Europe from many different faith traditions, and speakers who held diverse positions on the permissibility of gene editing and particularly on the moral status of the embryo. Interestingly, though, there was a strong sense of common values (for example, about the importance of caring for the vulnerable in society) even if the theological rationales differed. For Quakers, these ecumenical gatherings are always both illuminating and puzzling. We see what we share with other faith traditions, but also realize that instead of focusing as other churches do on a theological framework around our decisions, we look more to the spiritual basis of the process of decision making, wanting to be sure that it is consistent with our testimonies.

I came away from the conference convinced of many things. One is that the technical advances in this field mean that these issues will not go away any time soon. Another is that we share much common ground of values with other churches across Europe, and further afield. And finally, that our distinctive Quaker witness is both important and much valued in these debates.

Where Memories Go: why dementia changes everything

Jane Rose, Finland Yearly Meeting, reviews **Where Memories Go: why dementia changes everything** by Sally Magnusson

2015 edition: ISBN 978-1-444-75181-9

This book is Sally Magnusson's quite incredible account of her mother Mamie's journey with dementia until her death, or as Magnusson writes, her passing.

'What follows are my words for my mother, words to recover a life forgotten.' After meeting many people 'struggling to balance a great love with the overwhelming demands of looking after a person with dementia, at home, or elsewhere...I think then that our story matters. Not because it is ours, but because it could be anybody's'.

As well as being a personal memoir of an amazing mother and the love she inspires in her children right until the end, despite the huge challenges of her condition as disease takes over, this book also looks at the wider picture: medical services, diagnosis, treatment of the elderly, as well as the challenge of providing services for people with dementia in the UK.

The role music plays in Mamie's life is central and through the book we see how this becomes pivotal in helping her cope when all she has been is falling away. Magnusson also explains how personally put together music CDs may help many suffering with dementia keep their connection with their own life memories.

The details of everyday life are suffused with smaller and larger examples of love in action. A reflective, caring, and honest, as well as humorous, narrative, guides the reader on compulsively to the last breath of Mamie and beyond: 'You take a breath, a tiny, shivery gulp of a thing. Then the flap of flowery pyjama against your neck is still' ... 'I slip to the window and open it wide. I'm not sure why, except that this is what people used to do in the days before anyone told them not to be silly, that souls don't fly away. Your soul, that wonderful essence of you that dementia could not destroy, has always liked to fly.'

The Unwomanly Face of War

Jane Rose, Finland Yearly Meeting, reviews **The Unwomanly Face of War** by Svetlana Alexievich, translated by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky Penguin Books 2017 ISBN: 978-0-141-98352-3

This is a book I could only read in short sections; it makes challenging, yet compelling reading as we follow the author's journey in collecting a women's perspective of war itself, from the inside. Alexievich writes: 'I'm sorry for those who will read this book and for those who won't...' Many of these women were underage when they were propelled into the war. As a reader, as a Quaker, as a woman I am moved beyond measure to hear their voices.

Alexievich's impetus for writing the book began when she realised that she grew up surrounded by women who had fought in the Second World War, but their stories were absent from the official narratives. The question of death surrounded her: '[death] became the main mystery of life for me.'

Alexievich searched for an adequate way to express the unexpressed narrative of what she was sensing around her, and eventually came across a novel 'composed from the voices of life itself'. This gave her the key to collecting material and beginning her epic work. This work would be different, it would be an account of women's history of war, which had been entirely eclipsed by the masculine 'heroic', version which focused on battles, advances, commands, victories... men writing about men. To carry out her self-imposed task Alexievich spent years finding and interviewing women who were prepared to talk about their experiences in the 'great Victory'.

'I listen when they speak...I listen when they are silent...Both words and silence are the text for me.'

The canvas of this book is epic, but it is composed of a patchwork of women's voices from every perspective talking about the details, the terrible and heart-warming details, which make up life, their life, as protagonists in the awful machine of war. There is no judgement, only compassionate linking and reflecting by the author. Almost every person we meet has a name and a title (sniper, radio operator, medical assistant, baker), their words are received with love and compassion and they are left to speak directly to the reader.

Diary Dates 2018

More dates for 2018 are available on the website: www.fwccemes.org. Please send items for inclusion in the diary to emes@fwccemes.org.

25 March - 2 April 2018: EMEYF Spring Gathering, Moyallon, Northern Ireland

6-8 April 2018: German-speaking border gathering in Maria Lindenberg, St. Peter (Hochschwarzwald)

12-15 April 2018: Central European Gathering, Budapest

26-29 April 2018: QUIP Conference: Writing at the Edge, to be held at Glenthorne. www.quakerquip.com

27-29 April 2018: Finland Yearly Meeting, Ilkko Centre near Tampere

4-7 May 2018: Britain Yearly Meeting, London ym@quaker.org.uk

5-6 May 2018: Denmark Yearly Meeting

10-13 May 2018: Sweden Yearly Meeting, Svartbäcken, kvakargarden@kvakare.se

10-13 May 2018: Belgium & Luxembourg Yearly Meeting, quakerclerk@gmail.com

18-21 May 2018: Switzerland Yearly Meeting, Herzberg symclerk@swiss-quakers.ch

25-27 May 2018: Netherlands Yearly Meeting, Bennekom, secretariaat@dequakers.nl

11-15 June 2018: No to Eurosatory, Paris noneurosatory2@gmail.com

21-24 June 2018: EMES Annual Meeting and 80th Anniversary, Bergen, Norway emes@fwccemes.org

18-22 July 2018: Ireland Yearly Meeting, Limerick office@quakers-in-ireland.ie

16-18 November 2018: Peace and Service Consultation, Quaker House, Bad Pyrmont, Germany

Woodbrooke on-line Meeting for Worship

A regular opportunity to join in a virtual Meeting for Worship on Wednesdays at 9.30am and Fridays at 1pm Greenwich Mean Time November till March, Wednesdays at 9.30am and Fridays at 1pm on 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 <https://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/about/online-mfw/>

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