

EMEYF Spring Gathering April 10 to April 17, 2017 in Marszewiec/ Poland Meeting for Worship for Business Minutes

Present:

Kirsten Ackermann, Jenny Baines Claire Booth, Rachael Booth, Liam Brighton, Lucas Braun, Wanda Dahme, Peter Doubtfire, María Garcia, Lena Garretson, Miriam Harrold, Esther Köhring, Aleksandr Lipatov and Irina Levina with Valerya and Alesya, Iwona Luszowicz, Renke Meuwese, Laurina Pfeiffer, Silja Pfeiffer, Anastasia Roshchina with Arsenij, Tim Rouse, Dani and Paul Schock with Noah and Ronja, Lisa Specht, Paul Sladen, Emmie Touwen, Martyna Trzcińska, Ben Waltmann, Dan Wolff.

SG 2017/01 Opening minute

We are gathered in Marszewiec, Poland, at a farmstay with many different animals and a lake. We are still expecting more friends to join us later today and are hopeful and expectant of the week ahead. We have received greetings from George Thurley, Annie Womack, Oliver Robertson (QCEA clerk), Dilia Zwart, Heidelberg meeting, Marisa Johnson (EMES Secretary), Marlies Tjallingii (Netherlands YM).

SG 2017/02 Nominations Committee for Spring Gathering

We appoint Claire Booth, Lisa Specht and Lucas Braun to serve as elders for this Spring Gathering 2017. Furthermore, we appoint Lena Garretson, Pete Doubtfire and Emmie Touwen, with Laurina Pfeiffer as elder, as Nominations Committee for SG 2017. As the Epistle committee of the SG 2017 we appoint Lena Garretson, Dan Wolff, Paul Schock and Tim Rouse.

SG 2017/03 EMEYF-QCEA relationship

Wanda Dahme as our QCEA representative gave an overview on the changes and work of the organisation.

The evaluation and successive changes of QCEA of the past years also directly affects EMEYF, especially in the role of our secretary. In the past 30-ish years the programme assistant has additionally held the role of EMEYF secretary with EMEYF paying QCEA for their services. Now QCEA has offered to provide us a secretary for one year at no cost. While we are unclear about the kind of future arrangement we will have concerning the secretary, the relationship itself is regarded as valuable and worth continuing from both sides.

In the meantime Dilia Zwart is beginning her work as PA and EMEYF secretary. We welcome her and would like to offer her the opportunity to get to know Quakerism through EMEYF. At this gathering we will further discern what our needs are. Then we can discern in conversations with QCEA and with input from former secretaries how we can move forward in a good manner for both sides.

SG 2017/04 QCEA and EMEYF (part II)

During our week together, our relationship to QCEA was in the hearts and minds of people and a lot of discussions and sharing happened. As a result of this, the following minute was brought forward by members of EMEYF during our closing session, which we adopt:

“We see that the relationship between QCEA and EMEYF is not put into question by the development regarding the Secretariat. It is important for us to be engaged in QCEA for it is an opportunity to raise our voice in Europe. If QCEA were not to provide a secretary we would then like to look into options to otherwise nurture the relationship. We ask CC to keep the relationship to QCEA and the role of the EMEYF secretary in mind while being in dialogue with QCEA. We would like to support CC in this process, and suggest to consult George Thurley, Esther Köhring, Tim Rouse, Wanda Dahme and Lucas Braun.”

SG 2017/05 Spring Gathering 2018

We have considered factors that are important to our community in choosing a location for Spring Gathering 2018. There is concern amongst EMEYFers about rising nationalism and closing borders in Europe, and we hope that SG can explore this, perhaps through reaching those who are currently „on the edge“, whether geographically or politically, by rediscovering the centre of Europe or by exploring migration and refugee issues. We are also keen to be physically close to local Quaker communities, as well as young Friends. We are mindful of the need for our gatherings to be sustainable, including being somewhere that is accessible by public transport.

We agree to hold Spring Gathering 2018 in Ireland. We feel that this will give us an opportunity to explore our concerns about borders, explore diversity in Quaker faith and to connect with a group of local young friends.

We ask our Gatherings Coordinator to explore connections with young Friends in Russia, and report back to Communications Committee with a view to potentially hold Spring Gathering there in 2019. This may allow us to appoint some members of the planning committee at Annual Meeting 2017.

SG 2017/06 World Committee of Young Friends

Renke has reported on the work of The World Committee of Young Friends and announced that he will be stepping down from being part of the committee. We ask the Nominations Committee to find a new member at SG 2017 from EMEYF for the committee and will perhaps look into finding additional members at AM 2017.

SG 2017/07 EMEYF website (Recording minute)

Due to technical issues, the website of EMEYF has been temporarily shut down and replaced with the old version. At the moment there are several people responsible for the technical side and the problem is being worked on. However, if anyone feels that they can help and has the knowledge and skills to do so, then please get in touch with CC as soon as possible. (emeyf.org/contact)

SG 2017/08

Young Adult Leadership Programme (Recording minute)

The Young Adult Leadership Programme is a 1 year course from Woodbrooke for Friends aged between 19 and 30. Further information on the programme can be found on the website of Woodbrooke.

EMEYF supports applicants from our midst (see minute EMEYF AM 2016/10) who are interested in applying and applications are now open.

SG 2017/07

Role holder expenses

The meeting heard about the evolution of the Communications Committee (CC) and the way expenses for role holders on the committee are covered. There are three core problems with the current set-up:

- 1) there is business at Spring Gathering but travel to the gathering for role holders is not covered by the expense policy, so CC members apply to the same pot of money as all other attendees,
- 2) there is opportunity for conflicts of interest in the distribution of bursaries, and
- 3) there is no oversight structure between EMEYF meetings. Having no oversight puts a lot of pressure on the committee when discerning the distribution of funds to its own members.

The CC's discomfort with this situation was brought before Spring Gathering in 2015 and the committee was asked to come back with a more concrete proposal.

Coming out of informal consultation with the EMEYF community, four potential solutions were brought forward:

- 1) Amend the expenses policy such that Spring Gathering fees are always covered for role holders.
- 2) Give CC a budget out of the annual budget for Spring Gathering expenses.
- 3) Encourage role holders to apply for bursaries and have an outsider oversee bursary discernment.
- 4) Create more separation between CC and the Trustees, and have non-CC Trustees be involved in bursary discernment.

All of the above options should cost roughly the same (500 to 1000 Euros per year), either allocated as expenses or to the bursary fund.

EMEYF feels strongly about continuing to support our role holders to be at Spring Gathering no matter their financial situation. Reducing the complexity and opportunities for stress when distributing funds is a primary goal. The body has deep trust in CC to handle funds appropriately, but more oversight is key to reducing complexity and stress. Simply allocating money specifically for covering the fees of role holders does not address the stress of figuring out who should receive it. Therefore the meeting agreed that non-CC members should be involved in the bursary discernment, be it a non-CC Trustee, former CC member, or other member of the Quaker community. We ask trustees to budget accordingly for bursaries and ask CC to continue to discern how to fill this role of an objective advisor, bringing a proposal to Annual Meeting

SG 2017/09**Children and Families at EMEYF**

We have heard about concerns to make Spring Gathering fit everyone's needs while not excluding people from coming. We are clear that EMEYF is for all young Friends: those with children, and those without. This can create practical challenges. We trust our planning committees to find solutions within the resources available. We ask our Gatherings Coordinator and planning committees to make it clear in Spring Gathering invitations that children are welcome.

We do not see it as the primary role of EMEYF to run special family gatherings and programmes. Our concern is rather to create a range of spaces at Spring Gatherings to meet our diverse needs: spaces for silence and spaces for noise, spaces for joy, and spaces for sorrow and doubt, spaces where EMEYFers with different family structures can be together and share with each other. Within the age range of 18-35 family planning, children, partners and the joys, difficulties and taboos that come with it are an issue and we want to make sure to address this. There might not be a space for this elsewhere.

We ask our elders, planning committees and our gatherings coordinator to consider ways in which we can uphold these spaces at EMEYF gatherings and bring suggestions to annual meeting 2017, potentially including notes about this issue within the guidance for planning committees.

SG 2017/10**Living Archives Project (LAP)**

Esther Köhring gave us an insightful report (see attachment) about the continuing progress of the LAP and possible ways forward. We are thankful for the work that has been put into it so far and are hopeful for the further developments. Hearing of the rebirth of the old treasure of our history brings us joy. EMEYFers and people connected to EMEYF are invited to come to the Quaker House in Brussels and engage in it themselves. Esther asks to be contacted from time to time in regards to the Project and how it's going.

SG 2017/11**EMES & EMEYF Representative to EMES**

Different experiences of EMEYFers with EMES AM were voiced. Our EMEYF community is a part of the wider EMES community and as different parts of one body we feel the pain of EMES in what we perceive to be difficult times. Specifically we have seen our past two representatives struggle. We would like to uphold them and the whole of EMES in a loving and helpful way. We are aware that it is a challenging role to fill, partly due to the fact that our representative is also a trustee of EMES. In order to support Saskia Kuhlmann at the AM in Bonn we send Wanda Dahme, Lucas Braun and Esther Köhring to support her there in person.

We ask our Elders to get in touch with the EMES Representative once a month for the duration of their service and for CC to stay in touch with EMES in order to keep our relationship strong and healthy.

SG 2017/12 EMEYF Quilt

We have heard from Kirsten Ackermann about the EMEYF Quilt, created at the All Age Gathering 2016. It is intended to be a travelling quilt, going to EMEYF Friends who are in need of warmth and comfort. Each Spring Gathering, we will nominate a young friend to receive the quilt, and hope this will provide a way to reach out to them, and keep in touch with friends who face difficulties. If the Friend with the quilt feels they are able to pass it on between Spring Gatherings, solutions can be found to facilitate this. The cost of sending the quilt will be covered by EMEYF.

SG 2017/13 Nominations Returns

Nominations Committee has brought forward names for us to discern, and we thank them for their careful considerations.

We appoint Rose Almond as EMEYF UK Charitable Committee Treasurer for the duration of three years. We ask Rachael Booth to continue to serve as outgoing UK treasurer alongside Rose, until the 2016 accounts have been submitted and the handover process has been successful.

We appoint Kirsten Ackermann and Taz Cooper as our representatives to the World Committee of Young Friends for a duration of three years. As this is a new role, we would like to hear back from Kirsten and Taz at the next Spring Gathering about their experiences and any needed updates to the role description.

We thank Renke Meuwese, who has represented EMEYF on the committee since it was founded at the World Plenary Meeting in Peru, January 2016.

As our new Gatherings Coordinator we appoint Silja Pfeiffer for the duration of three years. We thank David Mangels, whose handover period in the role of Gatherings Coordinator ends with this SG. We thank Marius Kneip, who was appointed at AM 2016, but had to step down from this role at this time.

We appoint Rachael Booth, Paul Sladen, and Paul Schock to Planning Committee for Spring Gathering 2018 in Ireland. We ask Irish Young Friends to appoint two additional members at their Annual Meeting next week, to serve alongside Rachael, Paul and Paul on the Planning Committee. We encourage the committee to take the opportunity for a face-to-face meeting early in the process.

We thank Annie Womack, whose term as elder ends with this SG, and George Thurley who has served as voluntary EMEYF Secretary until this week, and welcome Dilia Zwart as our new EMEYF Secretary.

SG 2017/14 Epistle

The Epistle of the SG 2017 is attached to these minutes.

Attachments:
Living Archives Project report
Epistle

EMEYF Living Archive Project Report and Suggested Actions (Workplan until AM 2017)

Presented by the LAP Coordinator at and approved by Spring Gathering 2017, Poland

i) Background

After the very enthusiastic and lively start of the project – at AM 2015, at the AAG 2016, and through the work of various EMEYFers involved, especially the three archive workers, and through the set-up of the alumnae and supporter network “Friends of EMEYF” - the project seems to have slowed down.

Especially the AAG was a big success for and also thanks to the LAP: EMEYFers of several generations where scoping through parts of the archives, that had been brought to Bonn, shared stories, memories and queries. This was helpful in putting the history together (naming, identifying, contextualisation), and to bring the project to live. As it was said before, the real treasure we have are the people and stories, not the papers and ringbinders. For a scattered community, this is essential, but it poses specific challenges.

Therefore, AM 2016 appointed a LAP coordinator to access the situation, propose concrete actions and oversee their implementation for the remainder of the project.

ii) Assessment of the situation

After AM 2016, I started an assessment of the work carried out so far, by talking to all those involved and looking through the reports and files produced. The minute of record from the All Age Consultation of the LAP at the AAG was also an important point of reference.

The aim of this exercise was to not only describe where we are now, but to identify obstacles to overcome and propose solutions for these as well as a workplan for myself (as there is no job description for this new role).

The current situation shows that the Brussels based materials (15 ringbinders) have been indexed (various levels of depth), sorted and preserved from falling apart. Scanning and sorting of the material has started with about 100 documents from various areas being scanned, plus all the issues of Willy and Penn. In the process of doing this, the three archive workers also started an overview in excel to present a chronology of events, gatherings, names (e.g. those serving as clerks and secretaries), which served as basis for the first presentation of LAP materials at the AAG.

Also, the materials from the Internet age (starting when the Brussels based materials ends) has been mostly sorted, though through the lack of a digital infrastructure for the project, it is kept on individual harddiscs so far, not accessible or linked up with the rest of the LAP material. For the same reasons, scoring of more material from former clerks etc. has not started (though the contact has been established and those Friends will be able to deliver as soon as we can process).

Due to not having a secretary, there have been no calls for archive workers since the AAG, something that needs to be changed with high priority. As a result of this, our spending for 2016 was lower than expected – which gives us more possibilities for 2017! (Note: A financial report of AAG 2016 is still to be written when the EMEYF accounts for 2016 have been consolidated).

The community involvement at AM and especially at the AAG showed that the

community is still enthusiastic and committed. It should be mentioned that the spreading of stories has been used as a tool to enrich and deepen EMEYF gatherings, fostering conversations about what it means to be Young Friends in Europe and the Middle East for the current generation of EMEYFers and what EMEYF means to us.

The link-up with former EMEYFers through the AAG and LAP works really well. This includes the set-up of the support network Friends of EMEYF, coordinated by the Fundraising Treasurer.

There is a lack of opportunities for people (current and former EMEYFers) to engage with the project outside of Gatherings (need to develop the digital infrastructure and other community involvement for a).

iii) Identification of problems to overcome

Based on the assessment, I identify three areas in which we need to overcome obstacles intensify our effort. These are

- a) clarifying the Brussels situation and encourage EMEYFers working with the archives at Brussels in a more effective and creative way
- b) developing a digital infrastructure quickly, to scan and source material following scan-, mark- and naming-conventions and making it accessible for non Brussels based archive workplan
- c) fostering community engagement especially in between gatherings to make it a truly community building project

iv) Suggestion of workplan for the remainder of 2017 (3x3 actions)

To overcome the obstacles, I suggest the following steps to be carried out until AM.

A) Archive workers

What we need:

A lot of Archive workers, who scope the material from different perspectives, bringing it to life through their own spirit – but who also keep in mind digitizing and sorting for the bigger sake. It would be ideal if these people would stay engaged with the project, hand on knowledge and connect with other EMEYFers through it.

Note: Apart from the reinstatement of the secretariat 4/2017, two Brussels based EMEYFers and two Brussels based Friends of EMEYF are willing to also welcome and support archive workers.

Proposed actions:

1. To send out a call for Archive Workers who want to visit Brussels between May and end of the year, at least one full day each, expenses paid, accommodation at QH Brussels. Ensure this work is carried out both by current and former EMEYFers, and from different countries, and to encourage intergenerational team-ups.
2. To provide each of these Archive Workers with a specific scanning task (and with naming conventions) for about 0.5 to 1 days, and to work with them on a specific task to be researched (reflecting their interest and own background). Examples both of assigned and developed tasks to be provided with the call.

3. To arrange a monthly jour fixe via skype, to which former and future archive workers, CC members, and interested EMEYFers are invited; and to make minutes, reports etc. of these publicly available.

B) Digital infrastructure

What we need:

A password-protected structure that allows storing, sorting, tagging of scanned material; ideally also to comment and "link". At a later point maybe also to make parts of this public as a digital museum.

Proposed actions:

1. To set up a group of interested EMEYFers, and to reallocate some LAP funds to this task, to be used for a face-to-face meeting of this group and/or spending for software/licences/service providers. Suggestion: 1500 Euros (instead of 300+300). This might be delayed as sorting out the situation with the main EMEYF website have priority and we should not compete about resources and volunteers.
2. To use Nextcloud (intranet solution used by German YM) for file management, until we find a better solution. The files will be password protected, interested EMEYFers can get access.
3. As a start, to use this platform for the photo management of SG 2017, therefore contracting immediately after SG.

C) Community Engagement

What we need:

Keeping the community (EMEYF and Friends of EMEYF) engaged in the project, to provide new content and keep it alive.

Proposed actions:

1. To make calls for other, non Brussels based tasks: eg. researching Friends House Library;
collecting stories from former EMEYFers at Yearly Meetings; sorting through the photo archive/sourcing more pictures.
2. To provide content for a bimonthly Email about LAP to both email lists – closer work with the Fundraising Coordinator in getting Friends of EMEYF engaged
3. To work with the new Gathering Coordinator on using the EMEYF AM 2017 in Brussels for the LAP, e.g. by a workshop before/afterwards.

Spring Gathering 2017 - Epistle

To all Friends everywhere,

Thirty-three Young Friends, including five children, gathered in Marszewiec, Poland, from 10–17 April 2017, to experience fellowship, consider business, and explore together our theme of sustainability.

Our journeys from nine European countries to an agrotourism farm near Poznań have involved plane, train, bus, car, boat, tram, bike and foot, and have helped us begin to consider what it means to be sustainable – as a community, as beings within the natural world, and in our human relationships.

You're welcome to join us;
regardless of whether
we speak the same language,
love brings us together.

This year's Spring Gathering community was large and as we came together in the first days we found an overarching sense of seeking – and finding – a spiritual community. We have had a good time sharing silence, emotions, and actions, and we looked after ourselves and our community by joining hands in the kitchen, by sharing spiritual warmth, and by bridging language and other barriers through patience, enthusiasm, and song.

Sing with me, play with me, doodle or talk.
I'll give you a hug and we'll go for a walk.

Although we did not manage to reach out to young Friends in Poland as much as we had hoped, we were able to connect to our surroundings through trips to the local markets, through games of hide and seek and cycling on the farm grounds, and through a day spent exploring Poznań. We sought to be a creative community; finding solutions, adapting to change, and accommodating our differing needs as they arose, as well as creating art together, sharing songs and playing games.

To be aware enough to tell
just how you are, and what's not well;
our silence gives us space to grow;
what will come up, you never know.

In responding to the World Plenary meeting in Peru we asked what sustainability means to us and thought about what concrete things EMEYF can do to be a sustainable Quaker community. We struggled with this, as our diversity brought to mind how varied the preconditions and possibilities can be when seeking sustainability, and how living in sustainable ways can look quite different in different circumstances. Beyond EMEYF, as individuals and as members of other communities, we have a range of roles to fulfil and a range of challenges to face. The tension between these different aspects has led us to continue questioning what practical steps we can take, individually and collectively. How can we interact with people? How can we sustain our structures and our community? How do we use resources?

Sustainability is relevant to our lives; it is political, social, and economic, it is important in our personal relationships, and we face the global challenge of working towards environmental sustainability. We have tried to make sure that sustainability is reflected in how we do things, now and in the future – testing ideas and solutions within our community. This included cooking vegetarian and vegan meals, buying local vegetables when possible, as well as reusing cups, planting trees, and upcycling our milk and juice cartons.

The theme was present throughout the gathering, including in our Meetings for Worship to consider business, which touched upon questions of sustaining our community. This meant challenging ourselves – both in the decisions that we made, and in the process we went through while making them. We found strength in the understanding that, in some matters, “every generation has to ask the same questions for themselves”.

Business takes up large parts of our time;
intense but rewarding;
obstacles to climb.
We struggle in making our problems quite clear,
discerning the answers we need now and here.

Throughout our struggles in business, and the difficulty in maintaining a balance between work, play, the outside world, and sleep, we made sure to ask how our friends were feeling, being ready to give them a hug and offer support. The range of weather at the gathering reflected the range of emotions, with the week including sun, hail, wind, rain and rainbows.

Our workshops and discussions allowed us to try new things for our daily lives that can help us develop as humans. We cannot yet know whether this gathering will have the impact that we hope for. It may have an effect beyond our community, but

like a pebble thrown into a lake,
we cannot see the ripples we make.

This week’s experience of living in a loving and purposeful community has drawn us closer together, even during difficult times. We leave, closer in the Light, and with new and strengthened friendships.