

EMEYF Spring Gathering, April 4-11, 2015, Ureki/Georgia Meeting for Worship for Business – Minutes

Present: Alexandr Lipatov, Anett Riboczi, Annie Womack, Ellie Harding, Emily Jesson-Smith, Emmie Touwen, Esther Köhring, Felix Shiukashvili, George Thurley, Hannah-Mary Peat, Jenny McCarthy, Kirsten Ackermann, Laurina Pfeiffer, Lisa Specht, M. E., Paul Sladen, Peter Doubtfire, Renke Meuwese, Rhiannon Rees, Saskia Kuhlmann, Silja Pfeiffer, Tamara Gorbenko, Tim Hall Farthing, Tim Rouse, Yulia Dvorestskaya.

EMEYF SG 2015/1 Opening minute

From the 4th of April 2015, 25 young friends gathered at the Black Sea coast in Ureki, Georgia. We came together in silence as part of a larger community, to look back on what we have experienced in the last year and approach another year of EMEYFs work. After a day of heavy rain and a welcome day of sunshine, we feel ready to open the meeting for worship for business.

EMEYF SG 2015/2 Greetings

We received greetings from Halimah Austin, Jesus Espinoza, Kristin Skarsholt, Dorina Shahaj, Hannah Slater, Elizabeth Backhouse, Wanda Dahme, Gesa Jessen, Tobias Buchmann, Georg Adelman, Sarah Dyble, Mieke van Opheusden, and Andrew Lane. Also, QCEA and EMES send their greetings. We will think of them as they think of us.

EMEYF SG 2015/3 Appointment of additional Elders for this gathering

We have heard about the responsibilities and the joys of the role of Elder, as well as that we can all be Elders and support to each other from our EMEYF Elders. We ask Saskia Kuhlmann and Peter Doubtfire to serve as additional Elders for the duration of Spring Gathering, to add their individual gifts to the team.

EMEYF SG 2015/4 Nomination of Nominations Committee

During this week, we are trying to appoint a Fundraising Treasurer and Young Friends to organise gatherings in 2016 (as specified during the week). To help us organising this task and consider the names that we as a community will bring forward, we are forming a nominations committee.

We ask Emmie Touwen, Tim Hall Farthing, Paul Sladen, and Annie Womack (as Elder) to serve and will provide them with names, support and hot drinks.

EMEYF SG 2015/5 Epistle Committee

We are looking forward to the rest of the Gathering, which we are expecting to be full of social, cultural and spiritual experiences worth to share with a wider community. We trust Kirsten Ackermann, Felix Shiukashvili, Lisa Specht, Tamara Gorbenko and Hannah-Mary Peat to produce an epistle that speaks about what happened to us during this Gathering and what we have to say.

EMEYF SG 2015/6 Looking back at 2014 Gatherings

Spring Gathering 2014 took us to a place where we knew no Quakers and were welcomed into people's homes and lives, in a stunning lakeside view. The frustration of trying without success to attend by one of our Georgian Friends was transformed into a positive plan to bring Spring Gathering 2015 to Georgia.

At both Spring Gathering and Annual Meeting 2014 we met without a clerk. The responsibilities for the content of the business meetings was therefore more strongly shared by the meeting as a whole, which gave a strong communal spirit to the meetings for business.

EMEYF SG 2015/7 Presentation of EMEYF Annual Report 2014

EMEYF secretary George Thurley presented the Annual Report 2014, which was based on the ideas Annual Meeting 2014 brought forward to revitalize the style of the report. It contains contributions from many EMEYFers and was edited and formatted by George with many pictures. We thank George and the people who contributed stories and pictures for their work.

EMEYF SG 2015/8 EMEYF All Age Gathering in the Summer of 2016

The idea of an All Age Gathering to celebrate EMEYF's 30(ish)st birthday in 2016 with current, former and future EMEYFers dates back a few years. There have been ideas and enthusiasm, a date was set, a venue provisionally booked and a support circle formed.

We would like to see this event happening, especially as an opportunity to share with and learn from former generations of EMEYFers.

We realise that we don't have a clear image of the nature of this event, even though some of us have vivid childhood memories of All Age Gatherings. To develop a clear understanding of how we would like this event to be will help us not to get lost in practical questions at this point.

Nonetheless, we are aware that it is now our turn to take over responsibility for this to happen, if we want it to happen, that we need to commit. We have the experience that EMEYF is able to pull off a second big event if we are led to do this, and support from a wider Quaker Community is available.

We are confident that if we are able to set up a core organising group, this can happen – and it would be challenging, but wonderful.

We envision a programme with different options, workshops and speakers, not an Open House. There is also wish to have spaces for current EMEYFers to meet within the all age event. Such an organising group would need to consist of more Friends than our Spring Gathering Planning Committee usually do, we are aiming at 8 Planning Committee members.

We ask nominations committee to bring forward the names of at least 4 Friends who are able and willing to be part of such a core group and will reconsider the need of additional nominations at nominations return.

EMEYF SG 2015/9 Spring Gathering 2016

We are concerned about the personnel resources to create two simultaneous planning committees and the possibility of people to attend multiple large events in one year. Having no Spring Gathering would also allow Young Friends to attend other events that are organized around Easter, which usually clash with Spring Gathering, and might shift the focus of the EMEYF community to the Annual Meetings. In 2016 we will devote our

energy and resources to the All Age Gathering in the Summer and we therefore will not organize a Spring Gathering.

EMEYF SG 2015/10 Trustees Report

We hear a report from the trustees of their work in the past year. The accounts for 2012, 2013 and 2014 have been consolidated and published. EMEYF at the moment still has good financial reserves, but since the grants that have been available earlier have ceased to exist we are looking for new funding opportunities.

EMEYF SG 2015/11 Communications Committee Report

In addition to semi regular Skype Meetings, Communications Committee met in person, February 2015, in Brussels. Meetings in person continue to be really important to facilitate communication and work within Communications Committee. Doing work together was effective and satisfying.

Since Annual Meeting 2014, Communications Committee focused on finalising the new style Annual Report. In addition, a fundraising letter has been written and distributed.

Communications Committee also accompanied Georg Adelman in his work, who is working on designing a new website for EMEYF, based on the ideas and discernment from various EMEYF meetings before. The website will be beta tested from now on.

EMEYF SG 2015/12 Ex-EMEYFers Support – Communitybuilding

Annual Meeting 2014 asked Communications Committee to look into ways in which ex-EMEYFers could support EMEYF financially (see EMEYF AM 2014/05). Communications Committee now suggests to work on this from a perspective of community building (see EMEYF CC 2015/08).

We would like to create a form in which people's past and present experiences of EMEYF can be shared. We can use the new website to build a living archive, and link it up with the all-age gathering. We ask Communications Committee to continue working on this.

EMEYF SG 2015/13 Woodbrooke YALP

Woodbrooke Young Adult Leadership Programme (YALP) is explicitly inviting Young Quakers from the European mainland to attend. EMEYFers report about their personal experiences to us.

The year-long programme combines learning about Quakerism with spiritual and personal exploration. It consists of both residential periods in Woodbrooke and around the UK, as well as online communication within the year group of about 10 people. Participants also produce a piece of creative or reflective work. Some participants in YALP have been sponsored by Young Friends General Meeting (YFGM) and other Quaker groups like Area Meetings. The participants then also bring their new skills and knowledge back into their communities.

EMEYF will continue to make Young European Quakers aware of this programme and the possibilities of receiving funding for it. To encourage and support, EMEYF will start to sponsor participants from European mainland for part of the costs of the programme and support them in applying for other funding. Although we have been explicitly invited to encourage YAFs from the mainland, naturally, our spiritual support and the offer to support funding applications at different Quaker bodies applies to British and Irish EMEYFers as well.

We hope the participants who we sponsor will continue to be actively involved in EMEYF,

so that their experience also returns into the wider community. We will offer all EMEYFers participating in the YALP spiritual support, before, during and after the actual course.

Given our current financial situation, we are not able to cover the full cost of a mainland European participant. We therefore allocate up to 250 Euros to financially support one participant of the 2015/16 course. We will reassess our possibilities at the 2016 gathering.

EMEYF SG 2015/14 Roleholder Expenses Policy

As part of an overall review of Communications Committee, it has been suggested that EMEYF write a policy setting out what expenses role-holders can claim. This information is currently spread amongst a number of documents, and recent structural changes mean that what is written does not always reflect current practice. Furthermore, what expenses can be claimed for some roles is not explicitly written anywhere. This has meant that bursaries have sometimes been used where expenses might be more appropriate.

We recognize that the current situation leaves Communications Committee in a difficult position, where they are sometimes having to make decisions about their own bursaries. We agree that a written document is needed to provide clear guidance when these situations arise. We ask that Trustees draft an expenses policy, with input from Jenny McCarthy, Ellie Harding, Emily Jesson-Smith, and Saskia Kuhlmann to aid impartiality. We ask that this draft policy be brought to Annual Meeting 2015 for discernment. Suggestions for this policy include covering travel expenses for role-holders at spring gathering, but not the attendance cost, and ring-fencing part of the bursary budget for role-holders.

We are aware that EMEYF's financial future is currently unclear, and are keen that non-role-holding members do not become excluded by over-prioritising bursaries for role-holding members. Consideration will need to be taken that a full Communications Committee does not necessarily need to attend every Spring Gathering.

EMEYF SG 2015/15 EMEYF to EMES EC Representative Report

After intentionally not having appointed an EMEYF to EMES Executive Committee Representative for a year, as part of our reconsideration of the role and our relationship with EMES, Spring Gathering 2014 has appointed a representative again. Paul Sladen reported about his arrival at EMES. He noted that the relationship between our Quaker bodies is blossoming. We recognize that EMES values EMEYF Spring Gathering as equivalent to a Yearly Meeting Gathering in making sure EMES is represented there, and we are glad to see how the role develops as representation in both directions.

EMEYF SG 2015/16 EMES Small Grants Funds

We hear from our EMES Representative about the upcoming launch of the Small Grants Funds (SGF), run by EMES, using funds from the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust (JRCT). EMES will manage these funds to support projects of Friends in mainland Europe and Ireland. This opens up possibilities for EMEYF to apply for funding.

EMEYF SG 2015/17 EMES Annual Meeting 2015

EMES Annual Meeting 2015 will take place in Woodbrooke, exploring the Pilgrimage on Peace and Social Justice – "Pilgrims' Progress – from Kabarak to Cusco (via Busan and

Birmingham!)". EMES would like to see more Young Friends attending. We appreciate EMES recommends to the Yearly Meetings in the Section to consider Younger Friends when appointing EMES representatives, and we hear the invitation to additional Young Friends to attend. The event offers, apart from meeting Friends from all over the section and the programme itself, a chance to experience Woodbrooke, and to meet International Representatives from the other sections. There might be the option to meet with other younger participants before the gathering, and we hear the invitation from YFGMers to meet up, as well.

We are excited to hear that at least three people present during this session will attend, and we hope for more.

EMEYF SG 2015/18 Funding for EMES AM attendance – Herzberg Funds

In 2011, the joint EMES EMEYF Gathering in Switzerland produced a lot of fundraising, which was not completely used for bursaries by the time. The leftover money has been hold by EMES since then.

EMES has now decided to use their share of the Herzberg funds to fund the attendance of isolated Friends at EMES Annual Meeting 2015. EMES Executive Committee also decided that the EMEYF share of the Herzberg funds, if not used for a similar approach, will be transferred to EMEYF's accounts in the end of the year 2015. EMES suggests EMEYF will use their share of the Herzberg funds to fund the attendance of Young Friends at the EMES Annual Meeting 2015.

We feel that the EMES Annual Meeting 2015 is an important event, that offers unique opportunities especially for YF from outside Britain. We therefore want to spend our share of the Herzberg funds on sending Young Friends to EMES Annual Meeting and support them, where necessary.

We ask Young Friends who want to attend EMES Annual Meeting to contact EMEYF Communications Committee as soon as possible, including an indication of the amount needed, and EMEYF Communications Committee to allocate the funding. Other possible sources of funding include the Catchpool Fund at Woodbrooke and the John Warder Funds. This information will be shared via the EMEYF list.

EMEYF SG 2015/19 FWCC International Representatives Plenary Meeting

In January 2016, the FWCC International Representatives Plenary Meeting (IRM; formerly known as Triennial) will take place in Cusco, Peru. We hear that FWCC encourages not only Young Friends to apply for Open Places, but also requires of Yearly Meetings that 25% of their representatives to be under 35 years old. We hope that this policy of FWCC will result in a big group of Young Friends attending as representatives. The experience of the World Conference 2012 showed that possibilities for informal meet-up and linking between Young Friends from all over the world within the frame in the event can enhance their experiences and encourage Young Friends to take an more active part in the event. We ask Communications Committee to contact FWCC and inquire whether possibilities for meetings of Young Friends within the IRM have been explored. EMEYF offers to facilitate the link-up of Young Friends in preparation of the meeting.

EMEYF SG 2015/20 Nominations Return

Nominations Committee have brought forward the name of Emmie Touwen for the role of Fundraising Treasurer. We appoint Emmie Touwen to this position for up to three years and look forward to the opportunities this role may bring.

For the All Age Gathering we heard the following report from the Nominations Committee:

There is no shortage of people who have enthusiasm and qualities that would be very useful in this planning committee. However, we feel that the talents of many people would be better suited at a later date. At this stage, we need a strong and stable core planning group, to build and maintain the momentum. EMEYF has accepted that it is our turn to take a lead in driving this forward. There is a specialist support circle that this planning group will have to coordinate.

In order to give this core planning group a stronger starting point, we had the idea of appointing two co-clerks, to, for example, set the date of their first meeting. However, we feel it is important that the planning group have as much autonomy as they wish, in organising themselves as well as finding additional members. Communications Committee will help in any way requested.

We nominate Kirsten Ackermann, Peter Doubtfire, Jenny McCarthy and Silja Pfeiffer for this planning committee. Gatherings coordinator David Mangels will assist them.

We appoint Jenny McCarthy, Peter Doubtfire, Silja Pfeiffer and Kirsten Ackermann for the All Age Gathering 2016 Planning Committee. We feel that this group of people will be a strong and enthusiastic core team to begin the process of planning this event. EMEYF will support the Planning Committee to add additional people further down the line to support this team in the capacity they feel necessary. We look forward to hearing of their progress.

EMEYF SG 2015/21 Reading of Epistle

Epistle Committee has read an epistle, attached to these minutes, capturing the spirit of this spring gathering and the varied experiences we have had across the week. We accept this epistle and agree to forward it to Friends across the Europe and Middle East Section.

EMEYF SG 2015/22 Closing Minute

We have reached the end of our gathering together, having grown as a community over the past week. At first our cultural differences seemed strange, but we have found different ways of looking at things refreshing, and have bonded together, each playing our part. We are grateful for the opportunity to nurture our spiritual well-being and leave Ureki with joy in our hearts.