

## **EMEYF Spring Gathering 2014 (Macedonia), Epistle**

**“Go with the flow. There is a different sense of time in Macedonia.”**

From the 12th of April to the 19th of April 2014 we came together in Lagadin, Macedonia, for our Spring Gathering. The decision to go to Macedonia was a bit scary and the organizing committee faced many challenges to make this gathering happen. We were not aware of any Quakers here and none of us had ever been to the country before. But we managed.

Since we are all strangers in Macedonia, we were all put in the same position from where we then started to explore.

This gathering felt active, buzzing. We overcame our worries of going to an unknown country and not being able to plan every detail. Sometimes it was difficult to pinpoint what was happening, but we could sense that a lot was going on.

Some of us came to the gathering feeling we must overcome borders and tear them down. Then we worked on our theme „Borders within and without“ in workshops and discovered other aspects. Borders keep us together. We have them for structure, but must remember that they need to be permeable. Impassable borders tear and keep communities apart.

Misha from Georgia could not get a visa to come to Spring Gathering. This felt very significant to our gathering. It even was eyeopening for some of us, because many young Friends never experienced an impassable border.

After Annual Meeting in November, EMEYF was without a clerk. This was difficult, especially for the members of the Communications Committee. To our surprise, this situation led to a very different experience in meeting for worship for business and in the end resulted in a very high engagement of the whole group into the process. We have faith that what needs to be done will be done. Three Friends volunteered to record minutes during our business meetings and they were surprised they could actually do it.

Next Spring Gathering will be held in Georgia. Georgian Friends have been prevented from participating in our community for many years. We are glad to accept their invitation to get to know them and their country.

Our youngest participant was Peter, who turned one at our gathering. We appreciated sharing our time with him. We held him close and entertained him with music. This way we also got to experience this Spring Gathering through his eyes. We sincerely hope to meet Peter again next year to celebrate his second birthday with him!

**We move forward in hope and live adventurously.**