

Central European Yearly Meeting (CEYM) held in Terezin, Czechia, 5 -8 June 2025

Terezin carries the memory of great suffering as Theresienstadt during the Nazi occupation but is also a testament to the endurance of the human spirit. I had mixed feelings about this location having visited the town several times always feeling the pain in its history. Today it has returned in the main, to a small town in Czechia, but its history not forgotten.

This year numbers in person were considerably reduced with more Friends joining online. This did have the added element of moments of deep and enriching conversations. Hearing how Friends throughout Europe are faring in these days of uncertainty, searching for hope, peace and spiritual fulfilment.

Britain Yearly Meeting, European and Middle East Section of Quakers (EMES) and Quaker United Nations Office in Brussels (QUNO) were represented. They participated fully with valuable Quaker knowledge and guidance in Quaker Business process. CEYM is a young Yearly Meeting and benefitted from their presence.

The main issue centred on the question of Membership which was discerned in depth at the Business Meeting exploring ways in which to welcome and accompany those new to the Quaker way. Seventeen Friends were welcomed into membership some having dual membership with their original Meetings. It was a joy to witness their deep sense of belonging and the love and care they showed for one another.

EMES and CEYM Friends had made a Pastoral visit to Kyiv, Ukraine with the hope to strengthen their links. They had had several meetings and worshipped together with the view of building these links and offering support which is so needed at this time.

There was free time to explore both the towns of Terezin and Litomerice and visiting the several museums dedicated to the Holocaust. The evening of Quaker songs was a heartfelt success. Young people and children joined in during the weekend reminding us of the life and future of their Quaker Meetings.

The session on “What Terezin Means to Me” was deeply expressed and linked to today's situation in both Gaza (the BYM statement on Gaza was referred to) and Ukraine. Friends recognised the present uncertainty in our world and explored how Quakers can approach and personally deal with these concerns. Supporting one another and reaching out to refugees and asylum seekers in our individual Meetings and Communities.

This being my fifth attendance has deepened my links but I would welcome another Friend to consider attending the 2026 CEYM to be held in Poznan, Poland.

Busa Cochrane-Muir
St Andrews Meeting

There follows a photograph of those meeting for CEYM this year, and the Epistle sent out:



The Epistle from the Central European Yearly Meeting 5-8 June 2025 Terezín, Czechia

To Friends everywhere,

Ahoj, Witajcie, Welcome!

We send you greetings of love and hope from the gathering of the Central European Yearly Meeting, held in Terezín (Theresienstadt), Czechia, both in person and online, from the 5th to the 8th of June 2025.

We met in times that are heavy with uncertainty for Europe and the world. The place where we met - Terezín - carries the memory of great suffering but also is a testament to the endurance of the human spirit.

In this atmosphere, we gathered not in despair, but in search of hope, peace and spiritual fulfilment. This is still a young Yearly Meeting - and we rejoice in its growth. We welcomed our first 17 Friends into membership this year. This brought a sense of new energy and excitement. With this joy also came a need to explore together how we welcome and accompany those who are new to the Quaker way. What makes someone a Friend? How do we faithfully discern membership in ways that are open and rooted in our tradition?

We turned to early Friends for wisdom, including the example of Margaret Fell, who spoke of the inward experience that makes one a Quaker - not outward signs, but the transformation that comes from hearing and following the voice of the Living Spirit. Her words helped guide our reflections, and we were deeply grateful for the voices of Friends who shared their experience and questions with openness and insight.

We also asked: What helps someone stay after their first Quaker meeting? This led us into conversations about welcome, about clarity of identity, and about how we live our testimonies in ways that are visible and invitational. We continue to seek ways to introduce newcomers to the essence of Quakerism: its stillness, its trust in the inward Light, its commitment to peace, justice, and equality.

The presence of families and young people brought joy and depth to our gathering. Children playing and young people engaging with curiosity reminded us of the life and future of our meetings. We watched a film about a pianist who lived in the Terezín ghetto. We were moved by the testimony of those who sought to preserve dignity and joy through music even in the darkest of times. We had the opportunity to visit sites of the ghetto memorial and then had time for deep sharing, during which our minds and hearts inevitably turned to the current situation in Gaza and the wider Middle East. We prayerfully uphold the leadership in the region and the world.

Russian aggression against Ukraine and persecution of conscientious objectors in both countries is a great darkness, requiring a great labour of love to overcome.

We were pleased to hear a report about the pastoral visit of EMES and CEYM to Ukraine and growing interest in Quakerism in the country. We hope to build closer spiritual relations and with time welcome new Ukrainian members.

Throughout our time together, there was a quiet strength in our worship, deep sharing in our discernment, and moments of Spirit-led ministry that held us together across languages and backgrounds.

We leave Terezín with a renewed sense of responsibility: to live faithfully as Friends in our countries and communities, and to be signs of hope wherever we are.

In Friendship and the Light,

Liz Coling and Paweł Milka

Clerks, Central European Yearly Meeting