



In & Around the UN

An Update from the Quaker United Nations Office

June 2022

Understanding the work of the UN: A Q&A on the war in Ukraine

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The Secretary-General Visits Irpin, Ukraine.

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Over recent months, the events in Ukraine have prompted many of you to reach out to our office, raising excellent questions to better understand the role of the UN in this current crisis. The messages we've received have led us to think that many Friends probably share similar questions and would welcome more information.

At moments when the world spotlight shines a critical and concerned eye on the UN, it is important to pause and take the time to understand the operations of the institution, the root causes of its short-comings, and the path

to greater success in the future. Quaker work at the UN remains firmly committed to accompanying the UN so that it can fully live into its charge to "save succeeding generations from the scourge of war." The institution has a crucial role to play in the

conflict in Ukraine and in so many other conflicts around the world.

This article shares the three most frequently asked questions that our

office has received from Friends. We hope Friends find it helpful and encourage you to keep the questions coming!

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This article shares the three most frequently asked questions that our office has received from Friends [about the UN's role in Ukraine].

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Letter from the Director



Director, Sarah Clarke (right), with her husband, Kirk Smothers (Head of School at Delaware Valley Friends School), and their teenager, Casey Smothers.
© Zach Bourn

Dear Friends,

I am delighted to share this first letter with you since having the honor of serving as the Director of the Quaker UN Office beginning in November 2021. I come to my new role after focusing on peacebuilding issues in Myanmar, working with a variety of organizations, including the UN. Previously, I served as a Representative and Associate Director at QUNO from 2002 until 2014. While I have lived most of my adult life in the US and Southeast Asia, I

am originally from Canada and am a member of Canadian Yearly Meeting.

This is a crucial moment for the UN and for Quaker witness at this institution. Quakers have had a long, steadfast commitment to support the principles of multilateralism by creating spaces where diverse actors can come together to find peaceful solutions. Over recent months we have seen multilateralism come under immense challenges and pressures. This is a moment when Quakers must sustain our engagement with the UN to ensure that it fulfills its mandate.

We are moving into QUNO's 75th year and I am excited to work with a dynamic team and our partners to build a foundation that will sustain QUNO into the next 75 years. As we navigate life with COVID and find opportunities to continue connecting virtually and reconnecting in person, I look forward to meeting many of you.

Sarah Clarke

We welcome hearing what is on Friends' minds, and we appreciate interest and concern shown by so many.

1. How can we get the UN to do more?

The UN system is expansive and consists of many different parts. At its heart lie the 193 nations, referred to as Member States. UN bodies such as the Security Council (UNSC), the General Assembly (UNGA), the Human Rights Council (HRC), and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) are all composed of Member States. At the same time, the UN Secretariat, agencies, funds, and programs implement the decisions made in the Member State-led bodies.

Recently, much criticism has been leveled at the UN for its perceived failing to take action regarding the war in Ukraine. This is warranted. However, in criticizing the UN it is important to differentiate between different parts of the UN system. For instance, in the current crisis, deadlock within the 15-member UNSC has provoked the greatest frustration and disappointment. The constraints facing this Member State-led body are described in more detail below.

In terms of Ukraine, it is vital to also think about contributions from the wider UN system. UN offices and organizations such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNCHR), the World Food Program (WFP) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) are on the ground in Ukraine and in the bordering countries providing lifesaving humanitarian aid. To date,

UNHCR, WFP, and UNICEF have already reached over 4 million people with a variety of services such as travel assistance, essential items, and healthcare supplies.

There are also ways that UN Member States are using the UN as a forum to apply pressure and send a political message condemning the actions of the Russian Federation. On 7 April, the UNGA voted to suspend Russia from the HRC, with a vote of 93 in favor and 24 against. Also, after the failure of the UNSC to act due to the Russian veto, the UNGA condemned the invasion of Ukraine with a substantial majority on 2 March (see more details below), and on 22 March they demanded humanitarian access for UN agencies.

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2. The UN Security Council is deadlocked because the permanent five (P5) Members are able to veto resolutions they don't like. Why not get rid of the veto?

The UN was established as a treaty-based body at the end of the Second World War. When it came to the UNSC, it was agreed that powerful nations (those perceived to be the victors of WWII, namely China, France, Russia, the UK, and the US) would hold a permanent seat and be able to veto resolutions that they did not agree with. At the time that the UN Charter was established, this was seen as a

requirement to ensure buy-in and agreement of powerful states.

Since then, numerous initiatives have been undertaken to explore reform of the UNSC. For instance, countries such as Brazil, Germany, India, and Japan have all supported the idea of expanding the number of permanent members. Most recently, Lichtenstein introduced a UNGA resolution that requires P5 members to come to the UNGA to give an explanation when they use their veto in the Council. [The resolution](#) was co-sponsored by 83 UN Member States and adopted on 26 April. It is hoped that the new mechanism will introduce a level of accountability that will discourage use of the veto by P5 members.

In the case of Ukraine, we have also seen use of the "Uniting for Peace" resolution, originally adopted in 1950, as an approach to work around the challenge of the veto. In early March, after a resolution deploring Russia's aggression against Ukraine was introduced by the US and Albania, and was then vetoed by the Russian Federation, members of the UNSC went on to call on the UNGA to take action on Ukraine. This move unfolded under the auspices of the "Uniting for Peace" resolution. Under this resolution, when the veto of P5 members prevents the UNSC from taking action on a matter of international peace and security the situation may be referred to the UNGA. On 27 February, 11 out of 15 UNSC members approved referring the matter to the UNGA. This set a process in motion whereby a resolution was presented that

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demanded Russia undertake an immediate and unconditional withdrawal from Ukraine. The resolution passed on 2 March with 141 out of 193 Member States voting in favor and only five voting against, making a powerful international political statement.

The many failed attempts at UNSC reform reveal that any initiative to eliminate the veto is unlikely to succeed. Being able to use the veto remains a guarantee to powerful countries that the UNSC will not pass agreements that violate their perceived national interests. Without this guarantee, continued participation in the UN by powerful nation states seems unlikely.

However, the recent agreement requiring P5 members to be held accountable in instances when they block initiatives, plus use of the “Uniting for Peace” resolution, both constitute responses and strategies aimed at navigating the challenge of the veto.

3. Doesn't the UN Secretary-General have a mediating role in the current conflict? Why isn't he doing more?

The UN Charter outlines that the Secretary-General (SG) can use their “good offices” to help resolve conflicts through mediation. Over the years, Secretaries-General have had different approaches to this part of their job, often shaped by their own professional and diplomatic backgrounds. António Guterres' background as the UN High Commissioner for Refugees makes



The UN Security Council meets on maintenance of peace and security of Ukraine.
© UN Photo/Manuel Elias

him poised to focus on humanitarian and human rights issues. His role and approach are different from past SGs, who have come into the role with more experience around peacekeeping and political affairs.

Until his trip to Russia and Ukraine in April, António Guterres had not played a mediation role in the conflict, but he had condemned Russia's invasion early on, saying it violated the UN Charter. Russia criticized the SG's response, accusing him of bias and President Putin reportedly turned down several calls from him.

Guterres' April trip started off on a promising note when President Putin “agreed in principle” to one of the SG's proposals on the evacuation of civilians from the Azovstal plant in Mariupol. However, after weeks of calm, Kyiv was shelled on the evening of 28 April, coinciding with the SG's visit, leading some to theorize Russia was sending a

message to the UN's top diplomat.

In a press conference from Kyiv, Guterres stated that his main priority was humanitarian relief, especially evacuation of civilians out of Mariupol. He went on to explain that he is trying to be “boring” in the press and refrain from inflammatory comments to avoid jeopardizing humanitarian efforts.

Like in every conflict, mediation between Russia and Ukraine can only be undertaken by actors who are perceived as neutral by both sides. It is yet to be seen how much trust the SG will be able to build and whether this will allow him to play a greater role. Mediating on questions of humanitarian access may help to build that trust, positioning him to carry out diplomacy on deeper questions of ending the conflict. It is expected that other international actors might step in too, as France and Turkey have in past months. ❖

Our Common Agenda: A UN for the Future

By Kavita Desai

In early 2020, the United Nations began planning for its milestone 75th anniversary. It was a moment of celebration that, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing socio-economic crises, turned into one of reflection. While the UN was born out of WWII to “save succeeding generations from the scourge of war,” and specifically to prevent another world war, the world and the conflicts and challenges it faces have changed dramatically, prompting the question: is the UN fit for the reality and challenges of today, and those of the future?

The General Assembly in its [UN 75 Declaration](#) tasked the Secretary-General to undertake this assessment and to come up with recommendations to take the UN into the future. The resulting report entitled [Our Common Agenda](#) functions as a “wake-up call” presenting the global community with a choice between a scenario of “breakdown and perpetual crises” or one of “breakthrough and the prospect of a greener, safer, better future.”

The report puts forward 90 recommendations that cover every aspect of the UN’s work and all aspects of life on earth, outer space, and investing in future generations. The proposals are aligned to accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Climate Agreement and build upon existing treaties. The report envisions holding three major Summits over the next few years aimed at setting the UN up for the future by rebuilding public trust and adapting the UN to be capable of tackling the challenges and needs of the 21st century. Our



DSG Amina Mohammed (on screen) addresses the UNGA during an informal thematic consultation as a follow-up to the report of the Secretary-General entitled “Our Common Agenda.” © UN Photo/Evan Schneider

Common Agenda includes several ideas to promote peace and prevent conflict, such as a proposed policy framework called a New Agenda for Peace and the establishment of an Emergency Platform to respond to complex global crises.

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To move the process forward, a number of discussions have taken place in the UN General Assembly. These included a thematic discussion on “Frameworks for a peaceful work,” to which QUNO submitted inputs.

As the world continues to grapple

with the pandemic, the climate emergency, persistent violent conflicts, and new crises like the war in Ukraine, ensuring that the UN is capable and ready to tackle these challenges becomes increasingly urgent. QUNO will closely monitor and remain engaged in the Our Common Agenda processes and will actively engage through its role as co-facilitator of the [Civil Society–United Nations Prevention Platform](#) to support the UN’s work on peace and prevention. During the coming months, it will be imperative that the voices, perspectives, and insights of civil society, especially those at the community level, are included in policy discussions, and in the work of building a strong UN that is able to deliver for all people in the future. ❖

Building Peace in Times of Crisis

By Megan Schmidt

Building peace in times of crisis

A messages document for
policymakers and practitioners

Every day we see that the world is experiencing a growing number of crisis situations. One only needs to look to the impact of migration and displacement, the global climate and environmental crises, the ongoing impact of COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine. Humanitarian need is on the rise, and emergency responses are lasting longer and costing more. These crises need solutions that are sustainable and contribute to building peace, with the needs of people at the center.

Recognizing this, our office has begun programming that explores the theme “peace and crisis” — looking to understand how those carrying out humanitarian efforts and crisis response can better contribute to the long-term work of building peace. This is a new and exciting area of work that

requires us to learn more about UN programming on these issues.

As a first step, staff carried out a learning phase that began last year to better understand the challenges

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and opportunities around these issues within the UN system. Through a “listening exercise” we held over 50 conversations with diplomats, UN colleagues and practitioners to listen and learn from their experience supporting peace efforts in crisis situations. These conversations allowed

us to hear firsthand from those leading UN responses in complex environments. Colleagues shared more about how crisis response can contribute to peace and how they think peace tools can support the global efforts by humanitarians. For example, UN colleagues shared their experience developing and carrying out projects in the Sahel region of Africa in partnership with communities and local leaders. This inclusive, people-centered peace approach allowed UN staff to learn from those affected by crisis, and for projects to be more sustainable by being grounded in the local context. We greatly valued the openness that participants brought to our conversations, sharing their insights in frank and honest ways that allowed us to learn more than we anticipated.

After we finished our “listening exercise” we analyzed the rich body of information gathered from our research and conversations. We identified messages that emerged as “six key shifts” that are needed to help policy makers and practitioners connect peace work with crisis response. QUNO then released the publication, [*Building Peace in Times of Crisis*](#), which captures our learning, and the challenges and opportunities that were shared. We hope that this publication will be a tool for colleagues as they grapple with policy and program development contributing to peace in complex crises. Moving forward we will continue to use the learning from our “listening exercise” and our publication to ground the development of our work in this area. ❖

QUNO Launches a Youth Listening Exercise

By Cecile Adrian

Since the new millennium, the “Youth, Peace and Security” or YPS agenda has been gaining traction at the UN. Member States and UN agencies are shifting away from a securitized approach to YPS to an inclusive approach. QUNO has identified this promising shift as an opportunity to advance people-centered and sustainable peace and is launching a Youth Listening Exercise.

The YPS agenda emerged in response to growing concern about the “youth bulge” of the new millennium in the Global South. This “youth bulge” refers to the growth in the number of children and young adults, who now make up the majority of population in countries throughout the world. Unfortunately, initial work by scholars and policy makers focused on young people as threats, asserting that a large youth population would inherently be a threat to peace and stability. Time and time again, this led to more militarized responses to young people that were grounded in racist, ageist and gendered assumptions. Later research proved that young people did not pose an inherent threat and, in fact were making invaluable contributions to peace.

Thanks to the work of civil society and youth leaders, the narrative around young people is shifting at the UN, and young people and their activism are increasingly valued. In 2015,



Security Council Meets on Situation in Mali. © UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

the UN Security Council (UNSC) passed resolution 2250, which recognized young people’s contributions to peace and recommended wider youth inclusion in decision-making at the national, regional, and international

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levels. Other UN bodies have followed suit with policies and programs focused on youth. The Economic and Social Council now hosts an annual youth forum and the Secretary-General appointed Jayathma Wickramanayake as his Special Envoy on Youth in 2017. Implementation of resolution

2250 is still far away, though, and many large obstacles to meaningful youth inclusion remain including tokenization, elitism, and human rights violations of young activists.

It is in this context that QUNO is launching our Youth Listening Exercise. We are partnering with our sister organization, the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), to connect with young people in their programs and listen to their concerns to discern key messages that will guide our initiatives around the

UN’s YPS agenda. We hope our efforts will help accelerate the positive momentum around youth inclusion at the UN and contribute to bridging the demands of young people at the grassroots level with policy and decision makers at the UN. ❖



Laurel Townhead, Representative for Human Rights and Refugees, moderates the first session of the multi-stakeholder hearing.

Members of the human family have always migrated and will always migrate. Four years after the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) was negotiated, governments gathered in New York to review progress. The GCM brings together practical migration governance actions with a strong foundation in binding international human rights law. As the most comprehensive multilateral agreement on governance of migration the GCM is an important framework to guide governments' policies and practices.

QUNO Geneva works for migration justice, which is grounded in human rights and puts the dignity of migrants at the centre. We see a promise in the GCM to take a people-centred and human rights-based approach to migration policy and to work together towards this. The International Migration Review Forum (IMRF) (17-20 May)

was the first time all States reflected together on their progress on this promise and on continuing and new challenges.

QUNO Geneva worked towards an IMRF prioritizing the following goals:

- Set the tone and shape an ambitious global agenda for using the GCM to reduce the human cost of migration governance.
- Incentivize human rights-based national implementation of the GCM in a sustainable way.
- Expand space for migrants in policy development and review, including by centring migrants and making a compelling case for their participation at all levels.

We prepared briefing papers on what the IMRF is, why we think it matters and how to engage, and on some of our priority issues: meaningful migrant participation; racism and migration governance; and preventing and addressing

situations of vulnerability. We encouraged pledges and engaged proactively with the development of a negotiated Progress Declaration. And we have been part of the roller-coaster ride of trying to assess whether this event would take place in person and how to plan appropriately.

On 16 May, our Human Rights and Refugees Representative moderated the first part of the multi-stakeholder hearing which gave space to a wide array of non-governmental stakeholders, and crucially migrants themselves, to share their experiences and perspectives and to start the week with the realities of progress and challenges. Having the opportunity to come together in person, especially after the disruption and damage of COVID, gave space for the alchemy of multilateralism to bring new light, energy and collaboration to delivering on the promise of the GCM. ❖

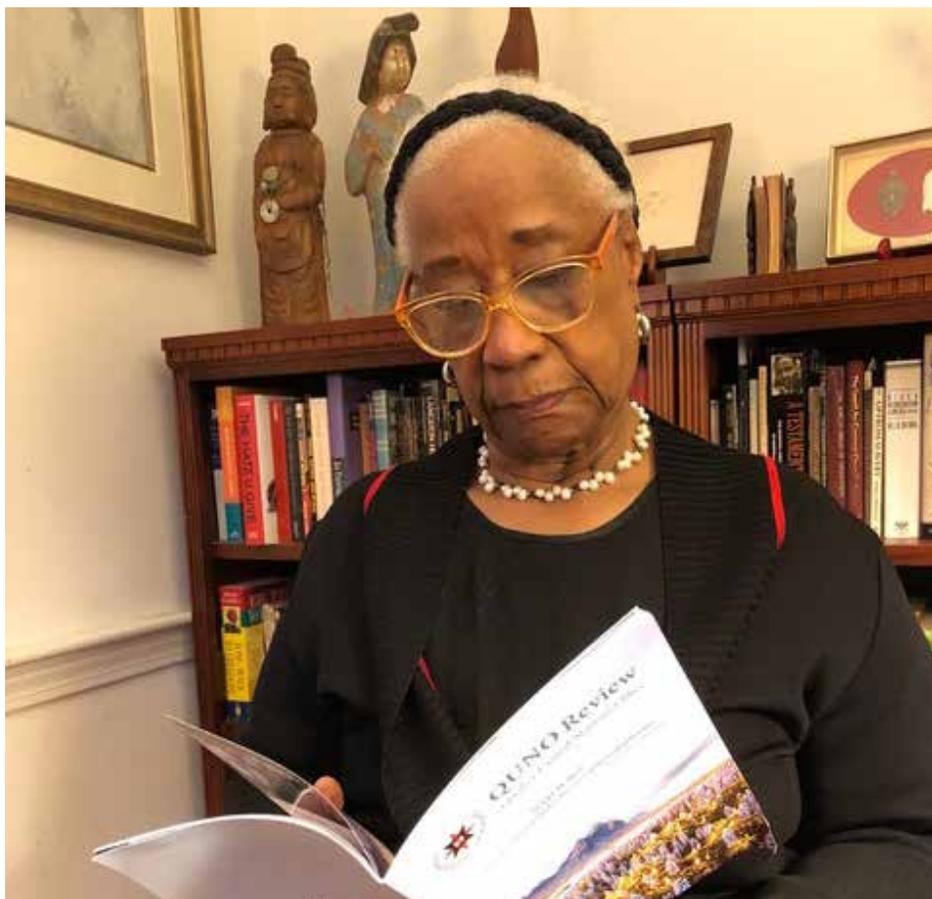
Committee Spotlight: Carolyne Lamar Jordan

By Timothy Koch

QUNO is governed by a Committee of Friends appointed by the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) and Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC). We're excited to spotlight the insights and experiences of a Committee member with each newsletter. In this edition, we are delighted to share reflections from Carolyne Lamar Jordan. Carolyne has been a Quaker since 1967 and has worked with AFSC in many capacities, including serving as a board member and on the finance committee. Carolyne and her husband, Larry, live in Cape Cod and are members of the West Falmouth Meeting.

During my time as a Programme Assistant (PA) with QUNO, one of the great opportunities I have is to participate in and learn from the QUNO Committee meetings that take place throughout the year. This has helped me gain a deeper sense of how a Quaker organization is governed and to form bonds with the various Committee Members that support QUNO and Friends more broadly. Carolyne Jordan is one such person. I recently had the pleasure to speak with and learn from her on how her Quaker beliefs affect her daily life and what Quakers and the UN can do more to promote and bring peace around the world.

One immediate thing that stands out about Carolyne is the vast and committed service she has undertaken over the course of her life. When asking her about how Quakerism affects her daily life, it became clear that this is inseparable from her life story and how she became a Quaker. As someone who experienced and actively fought against discrimination, her story is vital to tell. Carolyne first became associated with the Quakers during her experience as an original member of the Tennessee sit-ins to integrate the lunch counters. As she put it, "Quakers sat with them." This Quaker support translated into a lifelong connection, and Carolyne has found that all actions throughout her life have been guided by the Quaker



Carolyne at home, reading QUNO's Program Review.

testimony of integrity.

We also discussed some of the challenges facing the world today, and how Quakers and their testimonies could better support the UN. As Carolyne reflected on this, she shared that, "goodness has to beat out the evil, but it has to be done systematically and gently." This requires people to become organized, work hard, and make incremental steps to overcome the challenges of today and the future. Connected to

this is information dissemination. Carolyne mentioned how vital it is for QUNO and Quakers worldwide to share information and come together with likeminded people. We both shared the belief that the UN hasn't been respected in recent years and is coming out of dark times. Now more than ever, the exchange of ideas to support building and sustaining peace, or "cross-fertilization" as she put it, between Quakers and the UN is more important than ever. ❖

Over a Decade of Service: Farewell to Andrew Tomlinson



Staff bid farewell to Andrew (second from left) during lunch at Quaker House..

In November 2021, our office bid farewell to Andrew Tomlinson as he retired from his role as Director, a position he held for fourteen years.

During his time with QUNO, Andrew was a thought leader within the global peacebuilding community. Through his leadership, QUNO's Quaker approach to quiet diplomacy supported UN officials and diplomats as they carried out their peace efforts through policy development at UN Headquarters and program implementation throughout the world. This was most notable in his work to support the inclusion of the "Peace Goal" – Sustainable Development Goal 16 on Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies – in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Using Quaker House to provide a quiet and trusted environment for off the record dialogue, Andrew led the multi-year effort to work with colleagues at the UN and within the diplomatic

community to make the case for peace in the 2030 Agenda.

Beyond his impact at the UN, Andrew was a supportive and trusted leader and colleague to staff. His kindness and sense of humor helped

create the wonderful environment that is QUNO, carrying this forward even during difficult times like the COVID-19 pandemic. We wish Andrew joy and happiness in his retirement! ❖



Andrew speaks before the UN Peacebuilding Commission.

Staff Comings and Goings

By Cecile Adrian



From left to right — Drew McKenna; Sarah Clarke; Anissa New-Walker; Tim Koch.

Our office has experienced great change in recent months, including the joy of welcoming new staff and the sadness of bidding farewell to colleagues. We welcomed three new staff members since our last Newsletter – Sarah Clarke, QUNO’s new Director (joined November 2021); Tim Koch, Programme Assistant (joined December 2021); and Anissa New-Walker, Development and Outreach Associate (joined March 2022).

Sarah Clarke previously served as Quaker Representative at QUNO from 2002 – 2014, before undertaking work with a variety of peacebuilding actors in Myanmar, including the UN. In her work, Sarah brings a passion for building inclusive dialogue between stakeholders and strengthening engagement between non-state actors and international policy makers. She holds a Master’s degree in international political economy from the London School of Economics. Sarah is originally from

Canada and is a member of Ottawa Monthly Meeting. While working in New York, she resides with her family in Philadelphia.

Tim joined QUNO after serving as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Ethiopia, and previously worked with the United Nations Development Program and the United Nations Joint Program on HIV/AIDS. Tim is excited to continue to promote peaceful, just, and inclusive societies while working with QUNO. A born and raised New Yorker, in his free time Tim enjoys learning about new cultures through people, music, and food, as well as experiencing the natural world around him through hiking, snowboarding, and boating.

Anissa comes to QUNO after several years of working for faith-based social justice organizations. She has created marketing and fundraising strategies for United Methodist Women, United Methodist’s General Commission on Religion and Race and Stony Point Center

— a Presbyterian retreat center. She is a New York Yearly Meeting member-at-large who frequents Ujima Friends Meeting and Pendle Hill online Meetings. Anissa lives in the Lower Hudson Valley of New York, where she loves to spend her free time hiking and creating illustrations in watercolor and ink.

In addition to the joy of welcoming these new colleagues, QUNO said goodbye to Drew McKenna, our Office Coordinator since 2019. Drew joined QUNO after serving as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Uganda. Exhibiting a deep love of spreadsheets and databases, Drew was known for enthusiastically tracking and organizing finance, communications, contacts and other pieces. COVID and other transitions in 2021 brought a lot of new and unexpected challenges that really helped Drew grow in his role. Staff will miss him and thank him for his dedication to QUNO while with the office. ❖