

Quakers in Ireland

NEWS AND EVENTS

IRISH “FRIENDS OF BRUMMANA”

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Thanks to all the Friends in Ireland Yearly Meeting who have supported the students and the school at Brummana near Beirut through our Bursary Appeal.

As Friends will know, the collapse of the Lebanese economy, following on from the country's long political problems and the terrible explosion at the port, have left the school, its teachers, the 1250 students and their families in a terrible position, at the same time as Covid has hit. Teachers' salaries are worth very little, and many are struggling to feed their families. It is really hard to imagine the size of the crisis. For the school, essentials such as text books and computers are impossibly expensive, since they have to be paid for foreign currency, and it is difficult even to get petrol for teachers to get too and from school.



(https://quakersireland.files.wordpress.com/2021/11/img_5803.jpg)

Against this frightening situation, David Gray, the Principal, his team of teachers and the Lebanese Board of Governors are doing an incredible job. The school keeps running well, producing great results, and the students are absolutely delighted to be back on campus, learning together. For them, it is a haven in which they can have a childhood that is being stolen from them. As David Gray says, “Education is key, and perhaps the last hope for Lebanon's long-term future. If our schools collapse the country has no future.”

Many Old Scholars have rallied to support the school, but the school is now digging into its hard-earned reserves to cover deficits of the last two years, \$500,000 in 2020 and \$750,000 in 2021, and to pay staff a living wage.

At the same time, we in The Quaker International Educational Trust (QuIET) are seeking to get as much support as possible for bursaries, to help keep the finances going. And we know that this is going to have to continue for a long time. Lebanon's grave problems will take years to address.

We in QuIET, and the school, have now launched the "Friends of Brummana", to Quakers and others interested in the future of the school, and supporting the progressive younger generation in the Lebanon. Recently over 20 Quakers, through Zoom, held an inaugural meeting. Each "Friend of Brummana" will use their time to address local Meetings and research other sources of funding, to ensure that this Quaker school survives.

Would you like to join this group, joining the online meetings, hearing who is happening in Brummana, meeting teachers and students on line, and seeing how you can support the school? If so, please email me at willdahaire@aim.com (<mailto:willdahaire@aim.com>) and I will link you in.

In doing so you would be in a long tradition of Irish Friends. In 1869 as the school started to develop, four Quakers visited Beirut to see how they could support. Two of these were for Ireland – Richard Allen and Charles Wakefield. Further, three of the school's Principal, Robert Davidson, John Henry Turtle and Kenneth Clay – who together led the school from 1932 to 1947 – came from Ireland, all with very strong links to Friends School Lisburn. And as a Jane Richardson, a Moyallon Quaker, wrote, during her visit in 1887, the people of Brummana "like the Irish, are kind-hearted, generous...; very clannish among themselves, but always hospitable to strangers."

It is so important that we continue and deepen this relationship, at this terrible time. As David Gray recently said, "BHS is a school which celebrates freedom of thought and expression and lays the ground rules of any happy, prosperous society. It must continue to do so and to send out its students in the future as leaders of countries and professions as it has done in the past."

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(https://quakersireland.files.wordpress.com/2021/11/img_5121.jpg)

