

To Friends Worldwide,

On November 21-22, 2020, the annual gathering of Japan Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends was hosted by Tsuchiura Monthly Meeting. We took as our theme Philippians 1:9-10: "May your love grow ever richer in the power of knowing and discerning, and may you be able to discern what is truly important." Although the meeting was held in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, we were grateful that 30 people (including 12 who participated via Zoom) were able to attend the meeting with God's guidance and grace. This year, we were especially glad to be able to welcome and exchange opinions with members in Osaka and Mito, transcending the geographical distance.

In Panel Discussion I, we considered the use of the former Annex site and the future of the Tokyo Meetinghouse. Views were exchanged on the proposal to relocate the Tokyo Meetinghouse to the campus of Friends Girls School. In response to the proposal, the Executive Committee decided to establish a committee to study the future of the Tokyo Meetinghouse and the land owned by Japan Yearly Meeting.

We also approved the activity report and financial report for 2019, and the activity plan and budget for 2020.

Next, in Panel Discussion II, there were reports from four monthly meetings on the theme of deepening our faith during the pandemic. Tsuchiura Monthly Meeting made a donation to people suffering from the economic effects of the pandemic. We heard how the faces of the children attending Sunday School lit up as they realized that their donations were being used for good. Tokyo Monthly Meeting continues to hold Meeting for Worship face to face and via Zoom. They thought it would be meaningful to provide a place of quiet prayer for those who are anxious and worried, as well as to strengthen their faith by gathering for worship. Osaka Monthly Meeting also holds Meeting for Worship monthly via Zoom, and makes efforts to strengthen their connection with Meetings overseas. We renewed our awareness of the meaning of spending quiet time together in our homes at the same time, even if we do not have Internet access. Mito Monthly Meeting suspended Meeting for Worship temporarily, but when they resumed, they felt again the importance of gathering together to worship, and how it strengthens the connection and faith among the members. Each of the Monthly Meetings is making efforts to continue gathering for worship while trying to prevent the spread of infection.

In the Nitobe Inazo Memorial Lecture, Louisa Hatanaka spoke about her memories of coming to Japan as an English teacher at Friends Girls School, and then interacting with many Friends as the director of the Friends Center, principal of Friends Girls School, and chair of the Board of Trustees.

As the fury of the pandemic is still not over, we pray for the peace of mind and health of Friends and all people around the world.

Machiko Takeda, Clerk
Japan Yearly Meeting
November 22, 2020