

Dear Friends Worldwide,

The annual gathering of Japan Yearly Meeting, hosted by Tokyo Monthly Meeting, was held from November 20 to 21, 2021. Blessed by a clear blue autumn sky, we took as our theme Ephesians 5:16-17: “Redeem the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.” While the COVID-19 infection rate is lower, caution is yet necessary. Still, thanks to Divine Providence, 58 of our 87 members were able to participate: 19 gathering in person, 17 by Zoom, and 22 deferring to the sense of the meeting. We were glad to see the faces of many who are unable to join in person due to distance, and hear their voices.

Official business focused on approving the activity report and financial report for 2020, and the activity plan and budget for 2021. We also approved the new slate of officers and committee members who are now poised to make a fresh start.

In our first panel discussion, representatives of each monthly meeting shared their experiences with outreach in an era of declining membership. Osaka Monthly Meeting has been responding to requests from attenders for activities such as a study group reading George Fox’s Journal, and long-time members familiar with the work have been stimulated by refreshing new perspectives. Tsuchiura Monthly Meeting endeavors to make their meetinghouse a welcoming space for all who enter, treating each individual with care. In Tokyo, hosting of annual Young Friends activities has been curtailed due to the pandemic, but young adult members have arranged online gatherings on their own initiative. Mito Monthly Meeting has adapted to the given situation by renewing their sense of being chosen by Jesus and renewing their awareness of the value of getting along with mutual respect. We were cautioned not to be overly concerned with numbers but rather to trust that we all have our own direct connection with God, and to look forward in hope, with gratitude for the blessings we are given.

After sweet fellowship at mealtime, we proceeded to discuss the current condition and future of Friends Center and Tokyo Meetinghouse. We confirmed the importance of viewing the future of these two properties in commonality, and will continue to explore responsible plans.

The gathering was followed by a period of open conversation, paying special attention to the voices of young members and attenders.

Conscious of our connection with Friends around the world, we were careful to turn our thoughts beyond local concerns to the troubles and trials of Friends in neighboring countries, and to ponder what is ours to do from where we are. We pray that we may devote our time effectively to doing God’s will, “being not unwise.”

Machiko Takeda, Clerk  
Japan Yearly Meeting  
November 21, 2021