

Dear Friends Worldwide,

Japan Yearly Meeting held its annual gathering under the autumn sky on November 19th to 20th, 2022, hosted by Tokyo Monthly Meeting. As our theme, we took First Corinthians 3:7: “So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow.” Japan has entered its eighth wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, and while we must remain vigilant, 51 of our 84 members were able to participate: 14 in person, 16 online, and 21 by proxy. Thanks to the Internet, we were able to transcend physical distance and communicate with members of Monthly Meetings at a distance, as we did last year.

In our Meeting for Business, we heard reports of the past year’s activities and the audit of our finances for 2021. For 2022, we determined to continue allocating our normal level of funding to the work of FWCC, even if travel to attend international meetings is limited. We decided to include Friends Center in the agenda of the Planning Committee. And after a period of placing the Peace and Social Justice Committee under the care of the Education Committee, we decided to ask that group to revert to its original status as an independent committee. We concluded by approving our plan for activities and budget in 2023.

In the first of two discussion sessions, we invited Norio Akashi to present an introduction to our newly published *Quaker Handbook: An Ocean of Light that Covers the Darkness*, explaining the impetus for writing it. We then heard the passionate responses of three members to the knowledge gained about the history of Quakerism, faith and practice, and the current status of our Society in Japan. Many members expressed their plans to use the Handbook actively.

After fellowship over dinner, we invited representatives of each Monthly Meeting to present their views on how we maintain connections under pandemic conditions in our second discussion session. Mixed feelings were expressed about both the advantages of using Zoom, including an increase in attendance, and concern that we may become too accustomed to virtual gatherings, tinged with poignant yearning for personal contact.

In the biennial Inazo Nitobe Memorial Lecture held after the Meeting for Business and Worship, we enjoyed a prerecorded lecture by British Friend Chris Lawson (former Secretary of FWCC) entitled “Challenged by Jesus.” He kindly prepared the recording in advance so that we could translate it into Japanese and prepare subtitles, and then joined us online for a live question and answer session.

Ever mindful of the suffering of people in war zones around the world, we continue to ponder what we can do to realize God’s peace on earth.

Machiko Takeda, Clerk
Japan Yearly Meeting
November 20, 2022