

The tragic events in Japan have affected the lives of Japanese Friends. The meetinghouse for Mito Monthly Meeting and the Shoyuu Kindergarten (translated as Little Friends' Kindergarten) were heavily damaged by the earthquake and declared off-limits by the Fire Department due to the loss of structural integrity. Mito is located about 80 miles northeast of Tokyo, on the coast, and about 80 miles south of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant. Three of the remaining four meetinghouses in Japan (Tokyo, Tsuchiura and Shimozuma) were also damaged. Osaka Meeting was the only one to escape any physical damage.

Friends established a presence in Japan in 1886. Mitsuo Otsu, a 78-year-old Friend from Mito Monthly Meeting, fondly remembers Edith Sharpless, a missionary from Philadelphia Yearly Meeting who lived in Japan from 1910 to 1943. Edith founded the Shoyuu Kindergarten in Mito and devoted many years of her life to young children. Hiromi Niwa Doherty, an attender at Purchase Meeting, has been in recent e-mail contact with Mitsuo Otsu and other Japanese Friends, who treasure the teaching legacy of devoted Quaker missionaries from the US, England, and Canada. Hiromi translated the following message from Mitsuo:

The earthquake, tsunami and nuclear crisis—the catastrophe that we face today reminds me of the terror and devastation of World War II. We are grateful for Friends from all over the world for sending us messages of support.

Mito Meetinghouse was burned down by air raids, only to leave parts of the brick walls as remains. Later, using those bricks that withstood the fire, the Meetinghouse was rebuilt. Now, again, it is severely damaged by the tremendous power of the earthquake.

However, God does not give us trials that we cannot persevere. With the trials, he will also provide us the way of escape. (1 Corinthians 10:13—“No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide you with the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.”) We will not stop even if we are plagued from all four corners, we will not lose hope even at the bottom of the disappointment. We will not be destroyed even when devastated. (2 Corinthians 2:8,9—“So I beg you to reaffirm your love for him. For this is why I wrote, that I might test you and know whether you are obedient in everything.”) With our faith, we will rebuild, once again, with the bricks—of the same red color as the bricks of the Seoul Meetinghouse in Korea and the Jordans Meetinghouse in England that suffered the fire. We will live our faith as led in James 2:14-17 (“What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and filled,’ without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.”).

*Mitsuo Otsu*  
*Mito Monthly Meeting*