

# KCNA Activity Speech in the 4th Konko International Gathering, November 14, 2017

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*KCNA Activity Speech*

By the Rev. Amy Uzunoe-Chin



Hello! I am Rev. Amy Uzunoe-Chin associate minister of the Konko Church of Portland and currently serving my first year as the Chief Administrative Minister of the Konko Churches of North America (KCNA) Office. It is an honor to be here once again with all of you. Last year, was my first time back to Honbu in 13 years, and honestly I felt like nothing much had changed. Everything seemed to stand still in time while the world around this sacred ground had changed and grew. However, I realized that this is not a bad thing; I don't want it to change. The pure foundation of this Konko Faith should not change, and this was comforting to me. Our Founder, Ikigami Konko Daijin has shown us that it is through this Toritsugi Mediation is how both people and Kami are saved.

Today, everything around us seems to happen at such a high pace, trying to juggle everything in a chaotic manner. With modern technology, medicine, cars, smart phones. You think that it should make our lives easier, but in reality, I think we are actually busier and have hectic lives because we are able to do more with modern

technology. I realized that we are becoming a more human-centered world than a Kami-centered world.

Konko Daijin's Disciples spread their passion of this religion and their faith like wildfire throughout Japan and eventually spread across the seas to North America, Hawaii and Canada. Continuing to grow the Konko Faith and propagating beyond the borders of this sacred home has always been a challenge to propagate our faith in countries that has different customs and cultures. The KCNA Pioneering Minister's "isshin" faith and passion in spreading the Konko Faith in North America has come a long way. However, it seems like that fire, the passion does not have the same intensity today. I mean, we have it much easier than our Founder, we have many teachings, we have our Founder's life to show us to practice faith and communicate to Kami, AND we have Toritsugi Mediation. So, why is it not that more people are being saved?

When I received Sacred Mediation from our Spiritual Leader, who said, "Never forget that this is your home" I always thought that it meant for me not to forget Kami Sama, and always practice faith with Kami, not to forget that this Sacred place is home to your faith.

I now realize that there was one more important message that he was also telling me. It was that the key to saving yourself, saving others, is through Toritsugi Mediation. Practice faith through communicating and always praying, talking to Kami Sama and giving appreciation for the gift of life bestowed upon me. This realization is what connects us to Kami. I knew that in my head but have recently realized the importance of this.

As my journey to prepare for the new KCNA CAM this year, seeing the evidence of declining overall number of believers, participation in KCNA activities, and decline in people seeking Toritsugi Mediation. I asked myself why

is this? There may be various reasons, like modern medicine, finding cures, or just a busy life that prevents people or have the purpose to seek Toritsugi Mediation and ask for Kami's help. As we become a more Human-centered world relying on technology, medicine, others, I fear communication with Kami becomes less and less and the appreciation for the gift of life we have received is getting bit cloudy.

We tend to forget that the life we have cannot be sustained on our own power, but it is through Kami that we have this gift of life, which allows us the ability... to love, give love, help others and make others happy.

Many of us can say that knowledge is power, BUT, knowledge itself cannot be useful, whether it be in studying, practicing faith or even exercising. Without knowing how to utilize the knowledge we may have gained WITH practice and understanding that we are allowed to live, we cannot improve or move forward.

Thus, this year, on an organizational level, to help us re-focus. We changed going from a large theological ideas to a smaller, individually focused on: how can a believer deepen a relationship with Kami through their own daily actions? Realizing their relationship between Kami on a practical level hopefully will help them understand and appreciate Kami, enabling us to "Smile from Within."

We wanted people to realize why and how we should appreciate our lives by asking ourselves 4 things: 1.) What our purpose in life is? What we want to do in this life time. 2.) How Kami plays a role in our life. 3.) If we want a relationship with Kami? Why? 4.) How are you going to maintain this relationship and receive blessings to fulfill that life you want with Kami?

We started the first year of our 4 year Movement of "Shine from Within and 1<sup>st</sup> subtheme: Through Heart, Mind and Body."

We are alive thus, our Heart, Mind and Body are components that are interrelated to each other and requires a balance in order to maintain a grateful heart, a healthy physical body and give us hope and healing, giving us a peace of mind to be able to move forward even when life may throw us some obstacles on our road.

We hold the map to our happiness. With the knowledge we gain through practicing faith daily, I pray that all of us will keep continuing to spark Kami's light that wants to shine brightly within each and every one of us. So, let our Kami's heart, in each one of us, be the beacon of hope and guidance for you and to those around us so that we can all "Shine bright AND be Able to truly Smile from Within."

I return once again to this sacred ground called Goreichi. The pure foundation of this Konko Faith should not change... at the same time we should also practice a faith that will not deviate from the pure foundation of this Konko Faith. We should not forget Kami's Wish and we should not forget to give appreciation for the life we have received.

On behalf of the Konko Churches of North America, I would like to say "Thank you" to our Founder Konko Daijin and his successors,

"Thank you" to our Spiritual Leader Rev. Heiki Konko, and his family for their daily goyo and prayers for allowing those who come to worships at this sacred ground to continue for people, even for someone like me and everyone around the world, to be able to receive Konko Daijin's sacred Toritsugi Mediaton. I pray that this will never disappear so that many more people can be saved for many generations to come.

Thank you.