

Foreword

”Relay of Life”

by the Rev. Hiromichi Konko
Spiritual Leader of the Konkokyo

I was born into a Konkokyo family. I grew up enfolded in the grand prayers of my grandfather and father. My grandfather was the 4th Konko-sama, the Spiritual Leader, and my father was the 5th Konko-sama.

My grandfather cherished his words, "Seek a daily life that is based upon gratitude," and "Try to have a heart that expresses gratitude towards everyone and everything



that takes care of oneself." The 4th Konko-sama not only cherished these words but also put them into practice. And he did so consistently. When I passed by my

grandfather's room, I always heard him say "Thank you very much." His voice was clearly audible, because the door to his room was a shoji door, the wooden sliding door covered by thin Japanese rice paper. Whenever I think of my grandfather, it seems to me that he was a person who always showed me what practicing faith in Kami is like. Showing examples to someone is quite important, I believe, when we want that person to carry on our faith.

My father often said, "I intend to do exactly what the 4th Konko-sama did." My father inherited the position of the Spiritual Leader from my grandfather. And he kept those cherished words in his heart. A



remarkable greatness of my father, in my opinion, is that he let me do whatever I wanted to. My father, never said to me, "Do this!" or "Do that!" When I lived in Tokyo in

my youth, my father made sure to send Goshinmai or Sacred Rice to me at the beginning of each month. Goshinmai is rice carefully prepared by people who give deep, earnest prayers to Kami while preparing it. He never forgot to do this for me.

Back in those days, I often felt like my life was being driven forward by the speed of the city. I felt deep inside that something was not quite right. When I was all by myself in my room and thought about my



future, I felt extremely anxious. Amid such a deep concern, prayer gradually began to bud in my heart. Until then, I had not really thought about it. But there came a time when I gradually began to realize that I was an individual who people prayed for, and who was enveloped by my them, my family And I finally came to feel it keenly.

I believe that parents who are connected to Konkokyo spend years, even decades, in instilling their faith-based beliefs in their children. In my case, years had already passed since I had left Konko Town where the sacred grounds of the Konko Faith resided, to live in Tokyo. I was away from Konko for many years, but I had this vague feeling that there was something special about the Sacred Grounds and so there was nothing for me to worry about. I would never have had such a feeling if my parents had not practiced faith in Kami. I am truly grateful for that. "To know gratitude and to try to repay their kindness and affection" are enormously important concepts when one practices faith. What I mean by this is

that I am here today BECAUSE OF and THANKS TO my parents' deep prayers for me.

I left Tokyo and came back to the home of my parents. I got married and am blessed with three children. They too were born into a family. They are fortunate, because they were able to grow up in a home where they could see and talk to their grandfather and grandmother every single day. We lived with the 5th Konko-sama and his wife. We had our meals together, did our evening prayer service after dinner, took a bath, and went to bed, like a custom. These were the regular family routines in our home, and I am thankful about this. Their dear grandpa, the 5th Konko-sama embraced each of our children physically and mentally with a great, grand sensitivity. Maybe not very often, but Konko-sama taught and guided his grandchildren. Our children have grown up to be warm-hearted, caring individuals thanks to their grandpa and grandma. I have no doubt about it.

I firmly believe that world peace starts with peace in the home. I am keenly aware of how difficult it is sometimes, to practice faith in our family, day in and day out. For example, when our children get injured or



have pain somewhere, I make it a rule to give Sacred Rice, Goshinmai to them. When something painful happens to them, I say to them, "Take Goshinmai into your body."

They nod their heads, saying "OK" and take Sacred Rice obediently. They do so probably because they believe in the presence of Kami in the Sacred Rice. To me, they believe, "All right, we will receive blessings from Kami, because we have just taken Sacred Rice into our bodies." Our children respond to my words of encouragement positively and obediently because they believe what I teach them, and I am truly grateful for this. Our three children quarrel from time to time, but overall, they get along with each other very well. Their joyful, peaceful relationship shows that they receive grand blessings from our Parent Kami daily. I have no doubt about this.

We clean the Kami altar of our home on scheduled days. It was my mother who used

to do this, but my wife has taken up this cleaning work. I do not want our children to say, "OK, this is what mom is supposed to do, so we don't need to help." My desire is that they instead consider this cleaning work a service in which all members of our family can engage. Therefore, I join my wife on cleaning day, and I invite our children to join us too. I try to involve as many of our children as possible. They sometimes say, "Why do we have to do this?" but when the designated time comes, they gather in front of the Kami altar and help.

What delights me is that during our cleaning our children have asked questions sincerely and curiously. As the children wiped the photographs displayed on the altar, for example, they have asked, "Who is this?" "Is the 4th Konko-sama the father of our grandpa?" "Doesn't grandpa's photo stand too close to that of Uncle Akinobu?" In this way, we have often talked about

Kami and our ancestors, and this makes me very happy. We are a happy family when we spend some time at the altar together.

Through generations, our ancestors have



passed life onto each one of us. I am already grateful when I think of this. Moreover, I cannot help but think of how much we are all being saved through doing goyo for Kami. I am also allowed to realize how much we should be grateful for being blessed with an unshakable anchor, Kami. I also believe that being thankful is not enough. I believe that we need to think about what we must do to repay the grand favors our Parent Kami and ancestors have given us. We make sure that we will neither get lost nor lose faith itself. We also should speak to our younger, future generations about the Way of Konko faith. And I pray earnestly that we will all be allowed to work hard on this important mission.



Explanations of Konkokyo Organization's activities by the Chief Administrative Director of Konkokyo at the 62nd Annual Konkokyo Congress

by the Rev. Michio Hashimoto
Chief Administrative Director of the Konkokyo

On July 21st, the Reverend Heiki Konko, the 5th and former Konko-sama or Spiritual Leader/Principal Mediator of the Konko Faith, passed away. On the 24th and 25, the private funeral ceremonies for the 5th Konko-sama were conducted. On August 22nd and 23rd, we had the 61st ad-hoc Konkokyo Congress, where we discussed a supplementary budget for the official funeral ceremony for Konko-sama. Our budget proposal was approved in the congress, which enabled us to conduct the official funeral ceremony on August 29th, 2024. Every ten days (counting the passing date as Day 1), we held "Shin-Reijin Sai" or "Service for a New Mitama Spirit." And on September 8th, we held the 50th Day Service and Enshrinement Ceremony for a New Mitama Spirit of the late Reverend



Heiki Konko to the Mitama Altar of the Konkokyo Headquarters' Worship Hall. We held all these ceremonies as the official ceremonies of the Konkokyo Organization, and I am deeply thankful that we were allowed to conduct all of the ceremonies without any trouble. To

all ministers and members/believers of the Konko Faith, I would like to convey my sincere gratitude for your visit/worship to Konko-sama's funerals and various sorts of cooperation for the ceremonies.

On October 18th, 2024, we had the General Election for the Delegates of the Konkokyo Congress. To all ministerial delegates who were elected via this election and appointed as delegates by the incumbent 6th Konko-sama, congratulations. To all delegates representing the Konko believers/members who were appointed as delegates upon recommendation, congratulations. We welcome you all, and we would like you to do goyo/selfless service as the delegates of the Konkokyo Congress sincerely, responsibly and with a



feeling of great delight. As you may know well already, the Konkokyo Congress has an important role: The Konkokyo Constitutions say, "In the Konkokyo Congress, the delegates are supposed to discuss and vote on the items regulated in the Konkokyo Constitutions." I am truly grateful that you, the delegates, who are present here today, are about to fulfill these duties.

On December 8th, the Konkokyo Headquarters will hold the Ceremony to Appreciate the Mitama Spirits of Konko Ministers and Believers with Outstanding Contributions to the Spread of the Konko Faith. Just as much as we sincerely appreciate the mitama spirits of our deceased senior ministers and believers

with contributions to the spread of the Konko Faith, we would like to dedicate our utmost sincerity and gratitude to the former Konko-sama, the late Reverend Heiki Konko, who did goyo as Konkokyo's Spiritual Leader/Principal Mediator for three decades or six straight terms in the December 8 Ceremony. As you all know well, the former Konko-sama will be newly enshrined to the Mitama Altar of the Konkokyo Headquarters. We will hold "Convention for the Entire Konko Faith Congregation" after the ceremony. This time, with a wish to seek "true peace of the whole world," we would like to think about how we can put our faith into practice from now through listening to concrete examples. I earnestly pray and hope that through this convention, we will be united as one and that we will take each humble step forward in order for us to realize "true peace of the whole world" in our respective daily lives.

I, by the way, was appointed the Chief Administrative Director of Konkokyo by Konko-sama, on May 9th, 2024, replacing the Reverend Iwasaki, my predecessor. Since then, I have been engaging myself in this important goyo.

The Iwasaki Administration, during their four-year tenure, encountered a totally unexpected adversity of the worldwide pandemic of Covid-19. Because of its huge impact/influence, the Iwasaki Administration had no choice but to be creative and imaginative enough to restrict the number of worshippers for each of the ceremonies at the Konkokyo Headquarters and to adopt remote, "online" meetings. In their very first year, 2020, the Iwasaki Administrative undertook the renovation work/construction of the Headquarters' Central Mediation and Worship Hall, along with the a partial demolition of the former Himei residence and the leveling of the demolished area. This cabinet came across another unexpected event: In December of the same year, 2020, the then incumbent Konko-sama (the 5th Konko-sama) expressed his intention to step down from the position of the Spiritual Leader/Principal Mediator of the Konko Faith. The Iwasaki Administration, therefore, held an election for the next Spiritual Leader of Konkokyo in the following year, 2021. The result of the election showed that the entire Konkokyo congregation wanted the Reverend

Hikomichi Konko to become the next Spiritual Leader of the Konko Faith. Hiromichi sensei graciously accepted our sincere request, and we were able to go through this huge transition period in peace. It was a grand blessing for all of us, indeed.

On the other hand, what we found difficult to agree to in last year's 59th (annual) Konkokyo Congress were:

- ① The (then) Iwasaki Administration intended to abolish the radio broadcast of Konkokyo which the Konkokyo Broadcasting Center is responsible for.
- ② The (then) Administration intended to change the publishing frequency of the Konko Shimbun Newspaper.



The (Iwasaki) Cabinet explained that they wanted to implement these things mainly because they were short of (enough) manpower. However, they showed us what they intended/wanted to do, not really evaluating and reflecting on the content and "fruits" of the Konko Shimbun Newspaper publishing activities. In other words, they simply showed their conclusions, while they didn't really showed us the process through which they finally reach those conclusions. Because of this, we, as delegates/Congresspersons, rejected Agenda No.3. Since the proposal for the year 2024 budget was rejected, the then administration immediately prepared a tentative budget for the following 2024, which was a minimum-size budget. They then had the tentative budget examined by the Finance Committee. The Committee approved the minimum-size tentative budget for 2024. In February, 2024, the Iwasaki Administration called the 60th Special Konkokyo Congress, where the delegates discussed the newly proposed tentative budget proposal for 2024. The delegates approved the revised (minimum-size) budget proposal for 2024. Since the end of the Iwasaki Administration term was on June 30th, 2024, they were in the

position to ask the next Administrative Executives to make appropriate judgments/decisions on the 2024 budget. In order for those next Executives to be able to do so, the Iwasaki Administration made sure that almost each item of the yearly activities of the Konkokyo Organization for the year 2024 was to be paid from contingency/reserve/emergency funds. After witnessing that the tentative budget proposal was approved in the Special Konkokyo Congress, Rev. Iwasaki resigned from the position of the Chief Administrative Director, and the Iwasaki Administration resigned en masse. This is why we are here as the Hashimoto Administration. On principle, we were supposed to immediately call another Special Konkokyo Congress for an official approval by the delegates, but we instead had a meeting with the Finance Committee, because we formed the 2024 budget within the framework that had been considered by our predecessors. And we decided to implement our 2024 activities and have the supplementary budget at the end of the fiscal year discussed and evaluated in the 62nd Konkokyo Congress, which we are having right now.

In May this year, we held a board meeting

and councillors' meeting of the Konkokyo Foundation. In this meeting, we reported to the present members that we intended to continue publishing the Konko Shimbun once a month for the year of 2025. And we were able to assemble their approval on this matter. We have already informed the staff members and the council members of the (Konkokyo) Broadcast Center that we will continue to broadcast Konkokyo's teachings and messages on the radio through one radio broadcasting station, telling them that we still have enough manpower for this goyo and that our financial situation will allow us to pay for the yearly broadcasting cost of approximately 1,400,000 Japanese yen. And we have decided to create our broadcasting content from October, 2024 on. As to radio broadcasting, the Asahi Broadcasting Company asked the Konko Faith Headquarters to send our spiritual messages to people through the radio, in order to heal the devastated heart of numerous people in Japan right after the Second World War. This is how we started our radio broadcasting goyo. Today, our program is one of the long-running radio programs in Japan. Why is it such a long-



lived radio program? It is because our senior Konko ministers had such a hot, fervent passion to speak to people about our faith. And it is also because their

passion reached so many listeners, which has enabled us to continue this radio broadcasting goyo for such a long time. And through program production works, we have been able to develop valuable human resources. We have also provided raw manuscripts/drafts of the radio broadcast for other media of Konkokyo. It is true that we have diminished the total number of radio stations for Konkokyo programs from 14 to 1 because of our recent financial situations, but if "1" became "0," it would be extremely difficult for us to have "1" (one) radio station again. Since we know this very well, we have decided to continue our radio broadcasting services for the listeners. This is what we would like to add as our explanations.

As I explained at the beginning of my presentation, although we did hold the 61st ad-hoc Konkokyo Congress this past summer, we discussed the supplementary budget of the official funeral ceremony for

the 5th Konko-sama ONLY. Right before this Special Congress, we made a decision among our cabinet members that we would discuss our supplementary budget proposals for other items in this ongoing 62nd Annual Konkokyo Congress.



By the way, when we glance at what is going on in our society, we had no choice but to spend several years due to Covid-19, during which people's movements/travels and distributions of

goods halted on a worldwide level. We were living in a "closed" world in those days. During those years, we, as the Konko Faith Organization, could hardly implement any activities/events. We obviously learned something important from this global pandemic. We knew we needed to be creative and that we should do what we could do nonetheless. In the case of Konkokyo, we were given a chance to "have a fundamental rethink of our faith." From now on, we must develop our faith, making the best use of our rethinking experiences. When we look at the affairs outside Japan,

severe confrontations among countries are becoming more and more clearly visible. To many of us, the members of the Konko congregation, these are not incidents taking place far away from us. We naturally regard those horrible events as problems that directly affect our daily lives. Here in Japan, we witness non-peaceful situations in human relationships in various scenes, and we see and hear those human relationship troubles in the information we receive every day. To our eyes, people in general seem to have little idea what to do for the solution of this kind of problems, and they appear to be helpless accordingly.

When we look back on the history of Japan since the end of WWII, feelings of helplessness were shared among tens of millions of Japanese people right after the war. In this severe social situation, what upheld the Konko Organization at that time was the 3rd Konko-sama, who continued to sit at the Mediation Seat of the Konkokyo Headquarters' Worship Hall. The following 4th Konko-sama also worked hard in order to (continue to) sustain Konkokyo spiritually. Konko-sama's sincere attitude toward goyo has always given all of us one clear guideline. The 4th Konko-sama also left us a lot of tanka or Japanese poems of

31 syllables. One of his tanka reads, "It is the very heart of one to thank everybody and everything that take care of him or her that brings about peace. And I have no doubt about this." At the Headquarters' Mediation Seat, the 4th Konko-sama often spoke to the worshippers about the importance to "try to live one's life that is based upon gratitude." This, I believe and observe, is another way to refer to the attitude of "thanking everybody and everything that take care of one." The spiritual attitude of "considering (expressing) gratitude important" has been shared among each one of us, the Konkokyo believers, as the fundamental backbone of our respective faiths in our Parent Kami. This spiritual attitude has been handed down to the 5th Konko-sama and then to the current (6th) Konko-sama, who graciously remarked this very thing during his speech/address as the chief mourner of the official funeral ceremony for the 5th Konko-sama this past August.

The 4th Konko-sama points out in the above-quoted tanka that "the heart to thank everybody and everything that take care of one" is "the heart to bring about peace." This is not the same as some peace



(advocating) activities that are done by so-called peace movement activists who engage themselves in those activities passionately and powerfully. In this

world, there are people with different opinions and points of view on things. Not everyone can be convinced and walk in one single direction. If somebody forces people to follow hasty reforms, it will cause new resistances and confrontations. However, a peace activity that starts with "saying 'Thank you' to everybody and everything that take care of one" is in fact a far-reaching faith practice. This faith practice may take us much time, but it is also a faith practice where all people will come to walk in the same direction, slowly, gradually but steadily. To Seek peace by trying to keep our own attitude towards our daily life peaceful may not even be achievable during our respective lifetimes, but in order for us to lead a non-peaceful world to a "world in true peace," we need to make our own daily life as peaceful as possible, even if it may

take us a tremendous amount of time. Fundamental human problems such as the absence of peace can only be solved through this very process.

The 4th Konko-sama deals with a human relationship based upon the "attitude to thank everybody and everything that take care of one" and a human relationship based upon "mutual reliance/aiyo kakeyo" AS ONE. Until the recent past, we, as the Konkokyo congregation, engaged ourselves in "life in mutual reliance" for 20 years

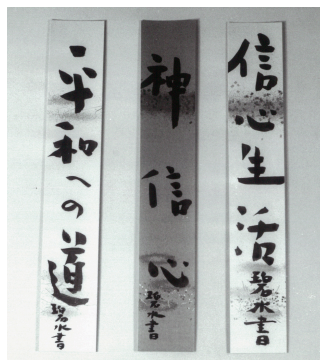
through two faith movements. Putting these two movements in practice meant putting a "heart to bring about peace" into practice. If I am allowed to do so, I would like to comment/evaluate that we in fact

worked hard to realize world peace at the level of our daily life. As Konkokyoites, we have always cherished an attitude of expressing gratitude, and now I am deeply feeling that such a faith attitude of ours has allowed us to make endeavors to let "true

peace of the world" come true.

In order for us, Konko members, to tackle with various problems of the world, we are blessed with local Konkokyo churches. (Of course, each of these churches is also totally open to all people.) Each Konko church has Mediation Seat. What the Konko Faith means by "Mediation Seat" is NOT "barrier" that strictly defines a holy, non-vulgar area. In our religion, this stands for a place to connect between a sacred area and a secular world. And "Sacred Mediation/Toritsugi" that is done at the Mediation Seat is truly performed when the one serving at the Mediation Seat and the one requesting Toritsugi exchange wishes with one another. Here, it's quite important that they both receive Kami's workings. It is so-called an act between these two people that takes place on a non-strict boundary between a sacred world and a secular world.

In most cases, the Divine Reminder or Tenchi Kakitsuke is hung in the middle of the Kami Altar of a local Konkokyo church. We, the believers of the Konko Faith, do not just chant each word of Tenchi Kakitsuke when we are at a prayer service of our church. During a prayer service, yes, we appear to be orally reading the words of





Tenchi Kakitsuke, but what we in fact should be doing is that we live our daily lives and meet/deal with many people, as if we were hanging the Divine Reminder in our hearts. If we are really conscious of the content/words of Tenchi Kakitsuke, when we are at home and/or in our workplace, our acts, our words will reflect the content of the Konko Faith/our Founder's teachings. In this sense, it is important for all of us to imagine we are in our (Konko) church wherever we may be.

The Mediation Seat of a Konkokyo church is also called a "sunken place" (kuboi tokoro),

people around us. In this way, we have the light in our hearts shine upon our society little by little; we are allowed to invigorate people around us slowly but steadily. You are a Konko believer, and suppose you have a problem one day and you are therefore seriously depressed. You, however, make good use of your connection to your Parent Kami, cherish your bond with people around you, confirm your relationship with things around you, get invigorated and finally get to generate a light of salvation...



all of these things come true because of your (local) Konkokyo church. These things are also possible because you are a Konkokyo believer with a bright light in your heart.

Our predecessor, the Iwasaki Administration, paid good attention to the functions of a Konkokyo church. They would often say, "We would like to make our local church a church where we can envision a broad world right before us. We would like to make our church a church where kami is born 'right here, right now.'" We, the present Administration, would like to

a place which all (kinds of) sufferings flow into. Here at the Mediation Seat, not only those worldly problems flow into the side of Kami but also the venerable content of Kami reaches our heart. Thanks to this, we, humans, get to awaken to "kami in our hearts," and we are allowed to share rays of light with more people around us. A person who brings his/her sufferings to the Mediation Seat is allowed to awaken to his/her kami in his/her heart through "bright light" of Konko-sama. And this person can return to his/her home and/or workplace with big smiles.

Konko Daijin teaches, "Konko is written with two kanji characters that stand for 'Gold' and 'to shine.' Everybody can see things when they are in a bright place. Gradually, people will come over to a bright place." Our Founder also imparts, "Konko means 'Gold shines.' Kin/Kon means a part of the deity name, Kane No Kami, and ko/hikari means the light of the sun. It is bright when the sun is above us. Konko, therefore, signifies that Kane No Kami makes sure that He lets His light shine to the whole world and allows people to receive His blessings." This "light" not only invigorates ourselves but also shines upon

succeed their wish and work hard so that their vision will come true. We know that our Konko churches are and always should be open to all people. What can we do in order to let our churches play a bigger role in our communities than ever? What can we do in order to help them grasp today's social issues more? Yes, Okekai is fully open, but both the Mediator and the worshipper/Toritsugi-seeker are humans. There is an inevitable gap of information and knowledge of modern social problems between individuals. If we can adjust ourselves to the changes of the time more flexibly, the words of the Mediators will reach the hearts of Toritsugi-seekers better and more deeply, even when those seekers at the Mediation Place are non-believers of the Konko Faith.

Therefore, one important role of us, the Hombu Administration, is to provide a space/place where the HQ Organizational staff can discuss information on our modern society and various political issues. I say this because each minister may not be able to obtain such information enough and because he or she may not always be able to judge those political problems well. The discussions in the HQ Admin. Office will be lively, hot and rich in their content. And I

would like to make sure that the "fruits" of the discussions will be shared among local Konko churches, ministers and believers. Traditionally, we, as Konko churches/ministers, have basically been somewhat "passive:" We have been waiting for people with problems to come over to us at the Mediation Seat. This has no problem in itself. It is totally OK. But we, as the Hombu administration, can also try to collect information with a positive attitude and consider each of those social issues from a viewpoint of religious faith. If necessary, we can show our fellow congregation our attitude to tackle some big, serious problems in society. By doing these things, we will show our "raison d'etre" or "reason of being/existing" in society. Through these activities, we will succeed in developing our antenna to perceive our modern society with the "eye of faith." And this will hopefully lead to cultivating valuable human resources for future Konkokyo. For the last several decades, the number of Konkokyo churches has been diminishing, and we have been finding it harder and harder to secure successors for our churches. And this is a grave issue for us, the Konko Faith. Yet,

because of this, it is even much more important (than ever) for us to show the world the significant meaning of Konkokyo's presence in our society, which is obviously in confusion in many ways. As I remarked before, the Konko Organization carried out a faith movement, "Movement for us to Live Our Daily Life with Mutual Reliance between Kami and People" or "Kami Hito Aiyo Kakeyo no Seikatsu Undo'o" for 10 years from 2012 to 2022. Our efforts to put this movement into practice allowed us to reconsider how we can receive divine blessings from our Parent Kami, when and how we got to "meet" with this Faith/Religion, and so forth. The previous faith movements of Konkokyo stimulated our spiritual attitude quite effectively, and each of those movements gave us a guideline for the future. Each of them showed us the way. Because of this historical truth, we would like to review the minutes of the past meetings at Hombu about those "faith movements" and we also would like to hold a "Meeting on 'Faith Movements of Konkokyo.'" By doing so, we would like to seek and consider a new "Faith Movement" towards the 150th Anniversary of the Passing of our Founder in

2033.

Putting all these things in consideration, I would like to show you the Basic Policy and the Activity Policies for the year 2025 as follows. Please note that these are currently our proposals and that they are waiting to be approved by you, the delegates of the Konkokyo Congress.

Basic Policy

We will hopefully become the light for world peace and the salvation of all humanity.

We will try to let this come true by our representing the content/messages embroidered in the Divine Reminder.

Activity Policies

1. We will make the function of each local Konkokyo church even more active than ever
2. Each of us will engage ourselves in the promotion of "Propagation by the Konko Organization"
3. We will cultivate valuable human resources for a bright future of the Konko Faith

As we approach the 150th anniversary of our Founder's passing, I hope that we can firmly inherit the experiences we have had up until now and take the next step together towards world peace and the salvation of all humanity.

Thank you for your continued support.

