



Faith Enriched

Rev. Edna Yano

Konko Mission of Wahiawa



Rev. Edna Yano

Happy New Year!!

The Boar rules the year of 2007. A short description of the Boar: "They are affectionate, kind to loved ones, honest and straight-forward."

In bringing back a little of what we did last year, a two-hour Faith Enrichment Meeting was held at the second floor of the Konko Mission of Honolulu in the afternoon of Saturday, November 18, 2006. Five young ministers of the Konkokyo Community in Hawaii presented their views on three unique aspects of practicing the Konko Faith: Going to Worship, Toritsugi Mediation and Prayer. Each minister was given a strict 10 minute time limit.

While listening to the presenters, I was struck in amazement at some of the stories I have heard, such as the account presented by Reverend Alvin Yasutake of Wailuku Church. He mentioned that prayer is an essential part of faith, and said that prayers should consist of appreciation, forgiveness and actual prayers for ones desires.

Reverend Alvin usually prays before going out to work for the safety of others and himself, but one particular day, he did not pray. Coincidence or not, Reverend Alvin was struck by a car while riding his bicycle. A split second before he was hit, he called the divine name "Konko-Sama." He tumbled off of his bicy-



Rev. Alvin Yasutake

cle, and lay on the road a bit puzzled at what just happened. Witnesses of the accident called the paramedics, and the police. Reverend Alvin sustained only minor scrapes and bruises. The situation was under control, and he rode his bicycle home. Then he mediated about the accident to the head minister at his church.

While Reverend Alvin thought that his lack of prayer caused him to get into the accident, he actually received a tremendous divine blessings of walking away alive. He may have forgotten to pray that day, but many were praying for him, and Kami-Sama was watching out for him. His every day faith in Kami-Sama must have turned a major misfortune into a minor one.

Listening to this episode really made me realize that it is not enough for us just to be careful when we are out on the road, riding our bicycles, driving the car, or even taking a walk. If there is a reckless driver out there, there is no knowing of who will become the next victim. We must receive blessings from Kami-Sama every second of our lives.

The young ministers all did a wonderful job! After the presentation, we proceeded to break up into two groups—one English, and one Japanese, and discussed the three topics in more detail. These in-depth discussions made the meeting all the more enjoyable and truly enriching.

Even the children's group enjoyed the



Rev. Roy Yasutake



Keiki Program



Rev. Koichi Konko



Rev. David Yano

Faith Enrichment Meeting. They reviewed how to draw the Konko crest; did a Konko crest jigsaw puzzle challenge; learned how to offer the Tamagushi sacred twig; and did a Konko crest hunt. Can you guess how many they were able to find? They counted over four-hundred Konko crests, in the worship hall alone! They saw it outside near the roof; they counted the crests on the altar curtains; they even found the crest on a photo hanging off a wall! Their eyes were keen in



searching for the Konko crest. “Look, I found one over here!” They would shout. It was like finding treasures. And they loved it. Even after the meeting was over, they shouted, “Look, another one!” to ones they’d miss.

This was a great opportunity for people of all ages to be faith enriched.

Let’s all hold an affectionate heart throughout the entire year, and have an honest and straight-forward faith in Kami-Sama—just like the Boar!

Faith on Garden Isle

On December 2nd, the Konkokyo Hawaii Center (KHC) held a Faith Gathering in Hanapepe town on the Garden Isle. Reverend Setsuko Okuno (Head Minister of the Hanapepe Church) & her son, Mr. Loren Okuno, and Reverend Saijiro Matsuda (KHC) got together with faithful Hanapepe members.

We first greeted and renewed our aloha’s with one another. Then we started with a prayer, and this was followed by Reverend Okuno’s personal greeting. Even though she shared it in Japanese, her heartfelt, wholehearted message reached out in mind to the local members: “I’m truly grateful we’re here, and that we have been here up to now. But our job is



not finished yet. We have yet to pray for our ancestors and children, or grandchildren. We can save not only ourselves, but also our ancestors and descendants with our Konko Faith. Let’s keep praying and practicing faith in Kami-Sama!”

Reverend Matsuda shared a brief talk-story about the relationship between Kami-Sama and us. And as a gift, he presented to each of us our Prayer Book and the selected teachings of Voice of the Universe.

We had lunch after this, and shared a lot of happy hearty small talk. We were so pleased to have held this Gathering of Faith, and celebrated the many blessings we’d received!

KMH Vision Committee Report

The KMH Vision committee has been established in 2004 through the inceptive recommendation of the Rev. Kyoji Muta (Former Chief Administrative Minister of Konko Missions in Hawaii) as a means to find ways to invigorate the stagnant situations of the Konkokyo community in Hawaii. One of the main objectives of the committee is to foster a localized operation of the organization. The Chief Administrative Minister of the Konko Missions in Hawaii appointed the ministers and lay members of the faith community to serve a two-year term on the committee. In the last two years, the committee has held meetings on a quarterly basis. New



committee members have been appointed for term-two, and the first meeting has been held on December 3 at the Konko Mission of Honolulu.

One of the accomplishments of the committee is the creation of the official website for the Konko Missions in Hawaii <<http://konkomissionshawaii.org/>>, which has been up and running for the past year.

In responding to the 80th Anniversary Conference of the Konko Missions in Hawaii, the committee has been working to find ways to materialize the constructive thoughts and ideas brought forth by the people who attended the conference.

Ministers' Meeting

Re-

ported by **Rev. Yasuhiro Yano**
Head Minister of Konko Mission of Wahiawa

Reverend Toyohisa Harada, Deputy Head Minister of Konko Church of Totsukawa in Nara, Japan, was invited to make a presentation for the ministers' meeting held at the Konko Mission of Honolulu on Saturday, December 16, 2006. His presentation was focused on the theme of Konkokyo's concept of *Mitama* spirits or the spirits of the deceased and our ancestors.

The subject matter regarding that of *Mitama* spirits or *Mitama* souls has not been talked about thoroughly in the Konkokyo community due to its distinctive nature of uncertainties of the supernatural world after death. However, Reverend Harada made a clear statement that the work of Toritsugi-Mediation, the unique religious function of salvation and helping people works both to those who live now, as well as to the deceased and the ancestors who already belong to the spiritual realm. The function of Toritsugi-Mediation serves not only those who believe in Tenchi Kane no Kami, but even those who belong to other religious denominations as well. His speech was primarily focused on *Mitama* spirits not directly related to the Konko religion—like the wandering spirits whose identity has been neglected for many decades and generations in the community he has lived.

When Reverend Harada was in his thirties, there was a car accident in his town, and the neighboring people talked about the accident, saying that it had occurred at the site where a Buddhist temple once existed. He learned that there used to be 55 Buddhist temples in town, but all the temples except for a few that were preserved as public facilities, had been demolished. Even the headstones of the residential priests were thrown off the cliff. Responsible was the "*Haibutsu-Kishaku*" which was a Buddhism purge movement that developed in the area in 1874 and swept the entire nation of such temples. Reverend Harada was seemingly urged by an unseen force to investigate the remains of the local Buddhist temples that have been demolished at the wake of the Meiji Era.

He tried to unearth the carelessly buried, displaced and neglected remains of the temples and graves, one or two places at a time. At every trip, he cleared the surrounding area, scrub-cleaned the headstones of the priests and conducted a memorial service. In this

manner, it took him three years to identify the remains of all the demolished temples and headstones of the priests. From time to time he developed negatively inclined thoughts, that what he was doing seemed meaningless. But he continued his task until it was complete.



Rev. Toyohisa Harada

During his endeavor, he had two supernatural encounters in which the Buddhist priests conveyed their messages of thanks through the mouth of a believer who accompanied Reverend Harada in the task. One of the *Mitama* spirits identified himself as a monk who died at the age of 26. He related, "Although I have tried to seek help for my pain and suffering through many religious people, none of them were capable of helping me. But Konko-Sama has helped me. Now my spiritual existence can be recognized by the people. I am overjoyed with gratitude." Another high priest expressed, "Thank you for coming from afar during such cold weather to help redeem my spirit. Please relate my thanks to Kami-Sama. Although our beliefs differ, we have the same mission of saving people. I will also undergo spiritual training with you."

In completion of the project, he visited the four main temples in Kyoto which were related to the demolished temples, and reported his accomplishment. At one temple, the Chief Abbot acknowledged the work of Reverend Harada by complimenting, "Through the virtue of your work, you have been blessed."

Following the completion of his task, Reverend Harada made a visit to see Konko-Sama, the late Reverend Kagamitaro Konko (4th Spiritual Head at the Headquarters Church). When he proceeded to the Toritsugi-Mediation Desk and bowed his head in respect, he couldn't utter a word due to an overwhelming sense of awe and gratefulness, and sat crying out loud before Konko-Sama. Konko-Sama, extended a message by saying, "Let's receive blessings together" in a gentle voice. When he heard the message, he was certain that the message was directed to the many Buddhist priests who were present behind him in spiritual form at the worship hall of the Headquarter Church.

Reverend Harada's presentation reassured to us that

Experience at Faith Training Institute (FTI)

KCNA Faith Training Institute was held at Gardena Church on Oct. 27 to 29, 2006. Four KMH members joined it.



Mr. Arthur Isaki
Konko Mission of Honolulu

Our journey to better understand our Konko faith actually started three weeks before taking our trip. Reverend Matsuda had selected and contacted the four of us to see if we were able to attend this year's Faith Training in Gardena California. Fortunately for us, everyone was available and very eager to attend.

I was very fortunate and blessed to be selected as the only Konko church member from Hawaii to experience Faith Training during this session. The other three attendees were Reverend Koichi Konko (Honolulu Church), Reverend Edna Yano (Wahiawa Church), and Reverend Alvin Yasutake (Wailuku Church).

The first leg of our trip started at the Honolulu International Airport where we all just happened to meet up at curbside after being dropped off by different vehicles. After checking in and going through the security process, we finally made it to our boarding gate where we all sat and talked. It was very obvious that everyone was very excited and it really showed. For Edna Yano could not stop talking to us because of all her excitement and adrenaline flow. She did however stop talking for two minutes after I jokingly asked her to.

Our red eye flight over was routine with all three sensei's getting their five-hour beauty rest and sleep. As for me, I stayed up the entire flight because of the loud jet engine noise. The not so exciting in flight movie also kept me awake.

After landing in Los Angeles Airport, we were met by Reverend Uzunoe who picked us up with the Gardena church van. The weather was cool and we were prepared with our winter wear. As we headed towards Gardena church on the freeway, I was surprised that we did not get stuck in the early morning rush hour traffic. The rush hour traffic was clogged going in the opposite direction.

After arriving at the Gardena church, we settled into our rooms, which were pre selected by the sensei. My roommate whom I got to know very well was Reverend Alvin Yasutake. We then attended morning prayer with Reverend Uzunoe who later took us all out for breakfast and them to Target (store) on the way back

to church.

We all decided to skip our nap after returning to church and went walking around the neighborhood as tourist. We walked safely down to Marukai (there are two stores in Gardena), visited two shopping complexes and then took the long sight seeing tour around the neighborhood behind the church and then made our way back to the church. All I can say is that it is not like Hawaii, the weather was dry heat during the day.

The other attendees started showing up in the late afternoon from different churches. Reverend Uzunoe went back to the airport several times to pick up people including his daughter. The FTI actually started at 5:30 PM. There were a total of 15 people who attended FTI.

Every member who attended was assigned to conduct either a morning opening service or evening closing service along with a sermon. During the workshops, there were four qualified speakers who presented their material in a very understandable, logical sequence. Everything was in English which helped make communication easier. The discussions were very deep and intense and I learned a lot more about our religion through these interactions.

The meals were "ono" with one of the Gardena church members preparing most of the dishes that were served.

Day light savings time kicked in on Sunday, which I had forgotten about. I had gotten up early and was wondering why everyone else was still fast a sleep. I couldn't go back to sleep because I had just taken a shower to wake me up. The other members were surprised that we do not have day light saving in Hawaii.

Faith training ended at noon on Sunday the 29th. Everyone who attended learned a lot and the training went so fast since it was well organized. It was nice to meet and talk to other members from different churches on the West Coast (San Jose, Whittier, Portland and Glendale). Everyone was a very friendly, sincere, open, courteous and true believer of our Konko faith. I felt so fortunate to have experienced and to have participated in this year's FTI in Gardena and hope that other church members will be fortunate enough to maybe someday attend one FTI in their lifetime. I would like to thank Reverend Matsuda and KMH for allowing me the opportunity to attend and gain from this valuable religious experience.

Otoritsugi: Tune In, Turn On, and Take Off

The Keynote speech,
KMH 80th Anniversary Conference Day 2

Dr. John Tamashiro
Konko Mission of Waipahu

Good morning everyone! A famous person once said, “Everyone will have fifteen minutes of fame.” My 15 minutes has just begun so I should start before time runs out.

I am going to ask all of you two questions about Konkokyo. Many of you will have good answers to these questions.

1. What is one idea that summarizes Konko achievements in bringing prosperity to its members?
2. What is one pioneer ritual that guides us into the future?

For answers to these questions, each of you may have a different idea or word, but I believe that *OTORITSUGI*, YES, *OTORITSUGI* explains the achievements of our faith and its prosperity in Hawaii.

Therefore, let us “TUNE IN” TO *OTORITSUGI* as I quickly review or expand on its meaning for you.

What is *otoritsugi*? In Japanese, it means MEDIATION with your sensei as the mediator who sits between a believer and Kami-Sama.

There are two types of *otoritsugi*. The FORMAL or RITUALIZED type occurs as a believer approaches the minister in the church to express thankfulness, or to apologize for his mistake or to make a request for help from Kami-Sama. The minister then relays these messages to Kami-Sama and also receives messages from Kami-Sama to be communicated to the believer.

INFORMAL *otoritsugi* is different from its RITUAL COUNTERPART. Informal *otoritsugi* happens outside the church when a minister and member talk with each other, and this minister who is highly respected by the believer says something that “touches his heart” or as others might say, “hits home”.

Now that we have TUNED IN TO *OTORITSUGI* let us “TURN ON” TO THIS TOPIC. By that I



mean to get excited about it or, at least, to greatly appreciate it as the principle method by which Konkokyo rooted itself in the hearts of its believers.

It did so in four ways: by HEALING DISABILITIES AND ILLNESS; by GUIDING INDIVIDUALS THROUGH DIFFICULTIES AT WORK; by SUSTAINING INDIVIDUALS THROUGH UNAVOIDABLE CRISIS; and by RECONCILING FAMILY MEMBERS ANGRY AT EACH OTHER.

Surely you can agree that “prosperity from generation to generation” is largely dependent on health, work, family, and survival during and after crises.

I will start with *otoritsugi* HEALING and one dramatic account of this achievement. Ms. Haruko Takahashi experienced a rapid improvement from poor to good eyesight. Her words from a Konko publication, “In about a week (after *otoritsugi*), my eyes were miraculously recovered to normal. I could enjoy reading books and could see things clearly like anybody else”. So moved was Ms. Takahashi by this transforming experience that in 1940 she opened the Wahiawa Konko Mission as its first minister.

Another sensei, Reverend Yoshifusa Nishida, the head minister of the Konko church of Hilo on the Big Island, participated in his own recovery from a serious lung disease under the guidance of his minister in Japan. Does the phrase “participated in his own recovery” sound strange? What I mean by “participated in his own recovery” can be illustrated by a 3rd example of healing—this one by Mr. Yoshii Fukuichi, a Konko member on Kauai, who suffered

from shingles, a painful inflammation of the nervous system. Mr. Fukuichi conscientiously followed the spiritual direction of Reverend Shoichi Okuno who established the Konko Mission of Hanapepe, Kauai. Reverend Okuno told him to be more diligent in his faith, to pray often and, of course, to practice *otoritsugi*.

Therefore, *otoritsugi* is not a “one shot” deal like a child going to see Santa Claus to ask for a present that suddenly appears the next morning. It requires patience by the minister and the member as well as many prayers by both parties.

If the effectiveness of this ritual requires discipline and cooperation so do many of the prescriptions of modern medicine. For example, treatment for type two diabetes requires the patient to obey the doctor, control his diet and exercise regularly. Even the physician as a “miracle man” can take the patient only half way to his recovery.

The second ACHIEVEMENT of *otoritsugi*—that of GUIDING AN INDIVIDUAL in his or her occupation—can gradually produce results over a long period of time.

In the words of Mr. Shige Higuchi, a Honolulu Church leader, “everything went smoothly” at work and I “always finished work on time”. How did this happy situation come about? You may ask. Mr. Higuchi went on to say, “I started to drop in at our church to show my appreciation and to give thanks to Kami”.

He also attributed job satisfaction not only to Kami-Sama, but also to complete trust in Reverend Masayuki Kodama, the path-finding minister of the Honolulu Church, who along with Reverend Nishida, established the first two Konko missions in the islands.

Shige’s words make two important points: one is that a positive or optimistic attitude is essential for self improvement in the Konko faith. A second is that our religion can help individuals in their jobs, particularly as businessmen who seem to make up maybe the most common vocation of the male believers in Hawaii.

During the 1950s and until his recent passing, Shige served as one of the pillars of the Konko Church in Honolulu with many of his relatives still standing in similar positions carrying on the legacy of the Higuchi family.

A third ACHIEVEMENT of *otoritsugi*: it helped

SUSTAIN many individuals through crises, sometimes in strange and unexpected ways.

Mr. Masao Nagasako of the Wailuku church on Maui wrote an article about how the Konko faith helps a person face death with calm resignation.

From this article about serenely accepting your own demise or that of a loved one, here are his words of comfort: The “body after death is only a shell. It is somewhat similar to the black crab that lives among the rocks by the seashore. The crab sheds its shell and with a new shell lives on. The body of a man is like the old shell.”

These words of solace he learned from his minister Reverend Takiyo Nakai, the founder of the first church on Maui. Perhaps, Reverend Nakai had come to realize the true meaning of this quote from her pivotal dream experience with her deceased husband who persuaded her to become a minister.

Although Mr. Nagasako’s article seemed to have addressed a general readership, it may have sustained his relatives through their grieving process because he died shortly before it went to press—coincidentally and tragically by drowning—in a fishing accident maybe on the same rocky beach front he had described earlier.

A fourth ACHIEVEMENT of *otoritsugi*: it served to draw members closer together with others in their family. The following is an account of RECONCILIATION within an *Issei* family.

Mr. James Tottori of the Waipahu Konko Mission seems to have been particularly headstrong as a young man even to the point of leaving his job at the family business.

One night, while driving Reverend Kodama home from the Waipahu church, Mr. Tottori was told, “parents are like the head and children are like the body. We cannot separate them. We cannot survive without a head or body.”

These words made Mr. Tottori realize the importance of family togetherness, and he began to care for his parents rather than argue against them.

His reconciliation with his father resulted in a return to the family business, a move that positively impacted on my life because after my marriage to his daughter, the Tamashiro’s shared in the success of his poi factory and his leadership at the Konko Church of Waipahu.

My family and I are typical examples of how Konkokyo has benefitted the descendants of strong

believers such as Mr. Tottori. This may sound like boasting, but many of you can also make similar claims—You too can say *OKAGE SAMA DE* to a pioneer minister or believer. I am who I am because of you. At this time, I want to say thank you to Reverend Santaro Sonoda, founder of the Waipahu church who endured hardships and poverty to bring *otoritsugi* to our community.

Now that I've commemorated only some of our founding fathers and mothers—I wish I could tell all of their stories, but time is moving on—let us “TAKE OFF” from *otoritsugi*. How can we build on the accomplishments of *otoritsugi*? Or even more simply and perhaps even more importantly, in the future, how can the church help you or how can you help Konkokyo?

First, *otoritsugi* has enabled individuals to HEAL themselves with Kami-Sama's essential assistance. It probably continues to perform this function. Please say so in your group discussions for, as we all know, medicine still does not have instant solutions to our health problems.

Because millions of Americans still turn to religion when their doctor's care is inadequate, what more can Konkokyo do to address your health issues? The Waipahu church has a yoga class once or twice a month after church service, but that's only a small move in the right direction. We should meet more often in the yoga class, but also promote good health and safety (hurricane emergency kits?) in other ways.

Second, *otoritsugi* addressed work related problems as with Mr. Higuchi who received long term COUNSELLING from Reverend Kodama.

However, other people also need help with specific problems that defy easy solutions? For example, some senior citizens raise ethical problems related to life and death such as how long should your close relative be kept on a life support system? Does he or she have a living will to help determine when the treatment for the terminally ill should be ended?

Perhaps our church can bring in speakers to encourage our members to think about questions such

as these.

Another moral dilemma this one for young Americans in their twenties or thirties: If a person is committed to serve in the military, should he or she be forced to fight in a war such as in Iraq, a conflict increasingly perceived as immoral?

Third, Konkokyo helped individuals SUSTAIN themselves during emergency situations. How about Konkokyo helping individuals during those uneasy times of transition from one stage of life into the next?

For example, how can Konkokyo help individuals quit their jobs and then adjust to retirement? Invite speakers on medical insurance? Organize senior groups to play golf?

Can Konkokyo help you and your children and

grandchildren adjust to a new stage in life? Returning to school from a long summer? entering middle school for the first time? graduating from college and looking for a good job? enduring a middle age crisis?

Finally, Konkokyo helped Mr. Tottori reconcile with his father thus changing the direction of his life.

How can Konkokyo help family members bond together?

The *mitama* altar in the home can serve as the center for the family prayers. Or as a place where children can see their parents in prayer thus emphasizing the importance of faith practice.

Can the family altar serve as a place where family members can speak meaningfully to each other about problems in their relationships?

Perhaps our vision committee—an ongoing group to improve Konkokyo—can help members research their family tree using existing websites online or by helping members collect information on their own family histories.

Now that we have tuned in to *otoritsugi* and turned on by it, let us “take off” from it into our discussions emphasizing the future. Remember that for the future of our church this discussion does not need to be about *otoritsugi*, but instead, how can the church help you and how you serve Kami-Sama?



2007 KMH Activity Plan

is below to help Konkokyo fit into our future and to take on the theme of our 80th Anniversary Conference, "Prosperity from Generation to Generation." The objectives are 1) To develop Individual faith, 2) To promote our Faith through the English language, 3) To involve more members in our Planning, 4) To upgrade the Programs we have, in order to attract KMH members, 5) To encourage individual churches with their activities, 6) To cultivate Human Resources.

1. Family Gathering
2. Summer Camp (6/15-17 @ Maui)
3. Insights into Konkokyo Workshop
4. Kauai Gathering
5. Faith Enrichment Meeting
6. Young Ministers' Sermon in Rounds
7. Vision Committee
8. Support for Volunteer Activity
9. Konkokyo Movie on TV
10. The Publishing of our Newsletter *Malamalama*



Notice: Rev. Edna Yano becomes part-time staff at Konkoko Hawaii Center from January, 2007.

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