



The Konko Missions in Hawaii will fulfill Ikigami Konko Daijin's vision to embrace the world with the Konko Faith.

Unaware of Blessings, Yet Still Sustained

Rev. Edna Matsuoka, Konko Mission of Wahiawa

Sermon given at the 2026 Spring Grand Service at the Konko Mission of Wahiawa

Thank you for choosing to be present at this year's Spring Grand Ceremony. It is always meaningful to gather together and offer gratitude for the great life force of Tenchi Kane no Kami-Sama—who sustains each and every one of us, every single day.

If we pause and think about it, for us to be here at this exact moment, so many things had to come together. It is almost as if all the stars aligned. And yet, it was also a decision—your decision—to be here.

Recently, I listened to a TED Talk where the speaker asked: *"If you could have lunch with anyone—alive or deceased—who would you choose?"*

Immediately, a few people came to mind for me. Interestingly, they were all people who have already passed: the Founder, Konko Daijin; Rev. Haruko Takahashi, who founded this church; and my great-grandparents. These are people I have heard so much about, yet never had the chance to meet.

I realized I would want to ask them, *"What do you think about the world we live in today?"* I would want to hear their thoughts on the challenges we face now. I often feel that people of the past carried a certain depth of wisdom. They lived without the conveniences we rely on today, yet they endured and reflected deeply on life.

As I imagined this special lunch, I even thought about where we would go. Maybe somewhere local—like Burger Wing Hub here in Wahiawa. Their burgers, potato wedges, and fried chicken wings are so good—I get hungry just thinking about it. They even have a peanut butter and jelly burger that sounds unusual but is surprisingly delicious.

That simple thought reminded me of something important: when we experience something good, we naturally want to share it. Faith is the same way. Every day, we are making decisions—thousands of them. In fact, it is said that we make around 30,000 to 35,000 decisions daily. What to eat, what to say, how



Rev. Edna Matsuoka

to respond, whether to be patient or irritated, whether to trust or to worry. Most of these decisions happen without us even realizing it, shaped by our habits, environment, and upbringing.

For me, attending Godaisai has always been automatic. Even when I am scheduled to work, I try every possible way to still be present. That was how I was raised. If it came down to choosing between a friend's birthday party or Godaisai, it was always Godaisai. Attending Godaisai was never presented as an

"option"—it was simply what we did. And in hindsight, I can see how that path led me to the happy and grateful life I am able to live today.

But that made me reflect: out of all the decisions we make in a day, how often do we consciously choose gratitude? How often do we choose faith? How often do we truly recognize, *"I am being kept alive by Kami-Sama right now?"*

This connects directly to the Goshinden message we read before my sermon: though we live between Heaven and Earth, people are often unaware of Kami's blessings.

When I read this, I felt it described us so accurately. We are surrounded by blessings, supported constantly by Heaven and Earth, by the life force of Tenchi Kane no Kami-Sama—and yet, we do not always notice.

Especially when we are struggling. There are times when we may look fine on the outside, but inside, we are simply trying to stay afloat. In those moments, we are still making decisions: Do I hold onto this pain? Do I close my heart? Or do I turn toward Kami-Sama?

When life feels heavy, it is easy to think, *"Nothing is going right,"* or even, *"Why is this happening to me?"* But the message reminds us that even then, we are still standing on Kami's land. We

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are still being supported. Blessings are still being given.

Sometimes, it is not that blessings are missing—it is that we have lost sight of them. Not because we are doing something wrong, but because we are tired, overwhelmed, or hurting.

Faith, then, does not have to be something big. It can begin with something very simple: noticing. Acknowledging. Returning, even just a little, to gratitude.

I especially love how the message concludes: Kami is Kami because of people, and people are people because of Kami. Both continue to uphold one another.

This reminds us that Kami is never distant. Even when we feel lost, that connection remains. Kami-Sama never abandons us—it is we who drift away.

This teaching feels especially meaningful as we approach the Konko Missions in Hawaii Centennial—100 years of faith in these islands.

When we think about those who came before us, they faced tremendous hardships: unfair labor conditions, illness, discrimination, poverty, and uncertainty. And in many ways, struggle still exists today. It may look different—relationship stress, social media pressures, feelings of loneliness—but suffering is still suffering.

And yet, our predecessors continued forward. They chose to trust, to pray, and to give thanks—even when it was difficult. Because of that, this faith has continued for 100 years. If there were no blessings, it would not have endured.

This leads us to an important reflection: have we been sharing those blessings? Have we been passing on the light we have received?

There are still many people in spiritual darkness. And we have been given light.

Recently, during a gratitude workshop I delivered at the Hawaii Buddhist Women's Association, I invited participants to write down simple things they were

grateful for: waking up, having something to eat, arriving safely. These may seem small, but for some, even these are not guaranteed.

When we truly reflect, we realize they are not small at all.

Even one moment of recognizing our support becomes the beginning of awareness of Kami-Sama's blessings.

During the workshop, I also encouraged participants to write down what supported them that day—perhaps their refrigerator, their car, their phone, or even their bathroom. Not to begin worshipping these things, but to recognize how they support our lives.

Everything around us—seen and unseen—is supporting us in this very moment. When we take the time to notice, gratitude arises naturally.

There is a phrase shared by the late Rev. Kagamitaro Konko, the 4th Spiritual Head of Konkokyo. He said, "*Sewani naru subete ni rei wo iu kokoro, heiwa wo umidasu kokoro to iwan.*" In other words, a heart that can express gratitude for all that supports us is a heart that brings forth true peace.

As we reflect on this Spring Grand Ceremony, let us remember: we are living within blessings, even when we are unaware. Just as we cannot see the air we breathe, and fish cannot see the water they swim in, we are immersed in support.

Before we question whether blessings exist, we can pause and notice what is already sustaining us. Even being here today is a sincere expression of gratitude. Kami-Sama is surely happy that you have come.

As we return to our daily lives, I hope we carry with us one simple awareness: that even in this very moment, we are already being supported.

And when we begin to truly notice that, gratitude will naturally flow. Our hearts will become lighter. And we will be able to live this faith—not only for ourselves, but for the next 100 years to come.

Thank you again for being here.



Konko Missions in Hawaii
Centennial Celebration

100 Years of Faith: Continuing to Serve Kami and the People of Hawai'i

Save the Date!

Saturday, August 15, 2026 from 11 am to 3 pm
(At Ko'olau Ballrooms & Conference Center)

Sunday, August 16, 2026 from 10 am to 3 pm
(Optional BBQ Picnic event at Magic Island)



Scan the QR code, fill out and submit the online form to register for the KMH Centennial Celebration.

Register by JULY 13, 2026!

Add it to your calendars!

The KMH Centennial Appreciation Pilgrimage to Gohonbu is being planned for November 11-18, 2026. While details are still being finalized, we encourage everyone interested to save the dates. More information to follow as it becomes available. We hope you can join us for this special pilgrimage of gratitude!

Sixty Years Since the Passing of the Third Konko-Sama

Article from the Konko Shinbun Issued July 12, 2023

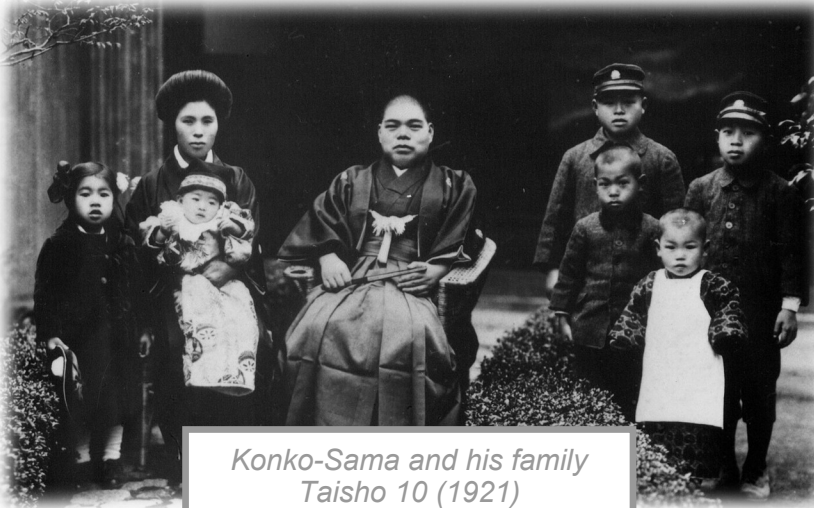
This year marks sixty years since the passing of Rev. Konko Setsutane, whom we respectfully and affectionately call the Third Konko-Sama. During the eras of Meiji, Taisho, and Showa, he served in Toritsugi-Mediation for seventy years. Let us look back upon his life and his words.

In December 1893, the Second Konko-Sama, Rev. Konko Shijin, was lying ill in bed. At his bedside were his elder brother, Hagio; his wife, Kiyo; his eldest son, Setsutane; and others. To them he left the following words:

"When I was six years old, I was to die, but through the single-hearted prayer of our Parent, I was saved. This was truly Kami's blessing. Worry is poison. Brother, please do not worry. As long as the hearts of the Three Administrators are united, there is no need to worry. Brother, you probably will not be able to remain constantly at the Hiromae (Worship Hall). Please go in and out as you are able, and please make use of Setsutane. Please instruct him in all matters. When Setsutane reaches about this age, he will be able to serve at the Hiromae."

The "Three Administrators" mentioned here were Rev. Shirakami Shinichiro II, Rev. Kondo Fujimori, and Rev. Sato Norio, who supported the Konko faith community at that time.

Two days after leaving these words, on December 20, Rev. Konko Shijin passed away at the age of forty. In accordance with his will, the spiritual path of the Founder and the Second Konko-Sama was inherited by Konko Setsutane-Sama, who was only fourteen years old by traditional Japanese age reckoning. This means he was around the age of a middle school student today.



*Konko-Sama and his family
Taisho 10 (1921)*

It is said that when there were no worshippers, the young Third Konko-Sama would stand by the window of the Hiromae and quietly watch his friends playing outside. It is not difficult to imagine how difficult it must have been for him to be separated from school and friends and to sit at the Mediation Seat from

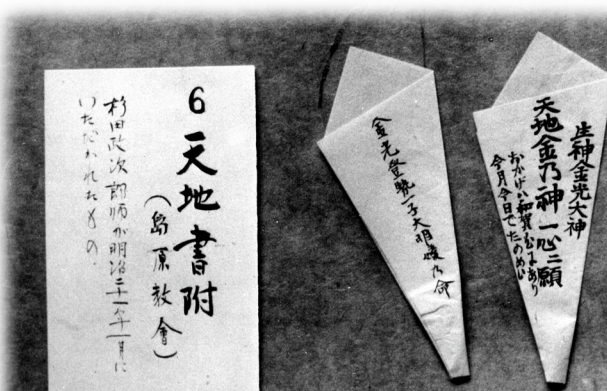
morning onward. Yet he continued to sit and serve with great perseverance.

When the Third Konko-Sama was likely in his late teens, a worshipper once asked him, "The Founder and the Second Konko-Sama often taught us many things, but you do not speak to us very much." The Third Konko-Sama replied, "The Founder and the Second Konko-Sama gave teachings. I will put those teachings into practice."

In 1898, when he was nineteen, the Third Konko-Sama married his cousin, Konko Shikiko. Around this time, even after completing a full day of Toritsugi-Mediation, he would spend long hours praying at the Hiromae and at the Founder's Okutsuki, the sacred resting place. It is also said that, perhaps in order to avoid becoming weakened from sitting all day, he would run early in the

morning or in the evening to worship at places such as Yuzakiyama, and sometimes even as far as Urami Village, the birthplace of the Founder.

In between his work of Toritsugi-Mediation, the Third Konko-Sama read many books and studied on his own. He obtained university lecture notes and specialized academic books, and he regularly read newspapers. He appears to have paid close atten-



Goshinmai written by Konko-Sama

tion to the movements of society and the world around him.

In June 1900, Konkokyo achieved its long-cherished independence from the Shinto Honkyoku and was officially recognized as a religious organization. Around the time of this independence, many young ministers established churches in different regions, and the teachings spread throughout Japan.

In the late Meiji era, after Japan's victories in the Sino-Japanese War and the Russo-Japanese War, Japan expanded its territories in Asia. Along with this, the number of Japanese people migrating abroad increased. Many people also crossed the seas with the wish to propagate the faith. Through the Toritsugi-Mediation of the Third Konko-Sama, churches were established in Taiwan, mainland China, and the Korean Peninsula.

In the midst of this, in November 1905, his beloved wife, Shikiko, passed away. She had become ill and was bedridden. After completing his duties each day, the Third Konko-Sama remained by her side and cared for her. Their marriage, filled with mutual affection until the very end, lasted a little over seven years. Later, the Third Konko-Sama remarried Kikuyo.

The times moved into the Taisho era. Through the Toritsugi-Mediation of the Third Konko-Sama, blessings and divine virtue increased year by year. Around the Headquarters Hiromae, the railway station formerly called Konjin Station was renamed Konko Station, and the Otani area became Konko Town. In this way, the name "Konko" spread even further.



The 3rd Konko-Sama (18 years old) sitting at the Okekai in the Old Hiromae

New facilities were also built one after another on the Headquarters grounds. In 1921, when the Third Konko-Sama was forty-two by traditional age reckoning, a three-day dedication celebration was held for the newly completed Daikyokaisho, the Great Church Hall, which served as the new Headquarters Hiromae.

On the second day of that celebration, there were so many worshippers

that many could not enter

the Hiromae and had to worship from the grounds outside. Unexpectedly, the Third Konko-Sama spoke to them, saying:

"Thank you all very much for coming to worship. Congratulations. As we welcome this celebration, I hardly know what to say. How do all of you feel? I am truly filled with deep emotion. The joy of the congregations is Kami's joy. Kami's joy is the joy of the congregations. I always feel deeply sorry that my own gratitude and joy are insufficient."

He then continued by saying that he wished, together with the believers, to renew their faith even more, to practice a true faith that would become a model for people in the world, to help even one more person in difficulty, and to repay Kami's blessings.

At that time, Konko-Sama's residence stood behind the Daikyokaisho, and he would come to the Hiromae every morning by four o'clock. Grand Ser-

vices were also held in this building. It is said that the long corridors of the Daikyokaisho were kept beautifully polished by the Third Konko-Sama, Kikuyo, and their children.

The Daikyokaisho was truly the crystallization of the prayers and wishes of the entire faith community. However, in April 1925, a fire broke out from one of the attached buildings, and a great fire occurred. The



flames spread not only to the main sanctuary but also to several facilities, Konko-Sama's residence, the former Hiromae, and neighboring private homes.

The Third Konko-Sama offered prayers before the altar and then evacuated with his family to his younger brother's home. To those who came to express their concern, he said, "Everything has burned, but as long as Kami is with us, there is no need to worry."

Because of this fire, Konko-Sama moved to the residence below the present Headquarters grounds. From that time began the practice known as "Odemashi" and "Ohiki," meaning Konko-Sama's coming forth from his residence to the Hiromae and returning home afterward. Later, a temporary sanctuary was built on the grounds. This became what is now the middle room of the Shutokuden. The Third Konko-Sama continued to serve at that Hiromae until his later years.

In 1933, the faith community observed the fiftieth year since the passing of the Founder. That autumn, the Founder's Fiftieth Grand Memorial Service was held five times. The

services were led by Konko Iekuni, the Chief Administrative Minister, while the Third Konko-Sama sat at the Mediation Seat throughout the day. On service days especially, worshippers came without pause, and there were times when he did not return home until after ten o'clock at night.

That same year also marked forty years since the passing of the Second Konko-Sama and forty years of the Third Konko-Sama's divine service. The following year, a plan was made within the organization to hold a "Gathering of Gratitude for Forty Years of Divine Service" in honor of the Third Konko-Sama. However, he said, "Please decline the matter of the gathering of gratitude. Merely having served for many years does not mean that I have any merit. If everyone offers thanks to Kami, that is sufficient." Therefore, the gathering was canceled. Those who had planned it received Konko-Sama's heart and instead held a "Gathering for Faith Practice in Gratitude," through which each believer advanced in faith practice with the wish to renew their faith.

Afterward, the organization passed through what is known as the "Showa 9 and 10 Incident" of 1934

and 1935. Through this experience, Konkokyo came to a renewed awareness that the central life of Konkokyo is service before Kami (Toritsugi Mediation), beginning from the Founder's Hiromae. The church regulations were revised, and the Third Konko-Sama was appointed "The Toritsugi Mediator of the Central Worship Hall." From the Headquarters Grand Service in the autumn of 1935 onward, Konko-Sama began serving as the principal officiant of the services.

In 1936, all the head ministers of Konkokyo churches gathered at the Headquarters for the "Head Ministers' Gathering to Learn from Konko-Sama's Service at the Hiromae." Their purpose was to learn from Konko-Sama's way of serving at the Hiromae. At that time, the Third Konko-Sama shared these words:

"A little while ago, an airplane passed overhead, did it not? Whenever I hear the sound of an airplane, I pray to Kami that it may arrive safely at its destination.

When I hear the cry of a child, I pray that the child's suffering may be relieved. Kami always grants blessings

beyond what we ask. How



Ceremony for the Completion of the New Worship Hall

grateful this is."

Everyone was deeply moved. At the second gathering, the participants asked him again to share words of teaching. He said:

"Yes. And it is not only airplanes. On the voyage of life, too, there are sudden gusts of wind and mechanical troubles. Therefore, we must pray that great misfortunes may be transformed into no misfortune through divine protection."

In 1941, the Pacific War began, and extremely difficult times followed. In 1944, as the war situation became more severe, the New Year's issue of the Konkokyo newsletter featured calligraphy by the Third Konko-Sama that read, "True Peace of the World." During wartime, it was said that one had to be cautious about speaking easily of "peace." Nevertheless, the Third Konko-Sama had long continued to pray for "the safety and well-being of all people and true peace of the world." He wrote this prayer at the beginning of the prayer notebook he prepared each day and prayed for it continually.

After the war, Konkokyo established new church regulations, and the Third Konko-Sama assumed the

position of “Kyoshu,” or Principal Mediator. He then showed the entire faith community the direction of “renewing the whole church” and “becoming one family throughout the whole church.” With this, Konkokyo began a new step forward.

On April 13, 1963, the very day when the Spring Grand Service was being held at the Headquarters Hiromae, the Third Konko-Sama passed into the spiritual realm, watched over by Kikuyo, his family, and relatives. He was eighty-four by traditional age reckoning, and it was the seventieth year of his divine service.

In 1936, a young minister once came to worship and apologized to the Third Konko-Sama for his irreverence and shortcomings, asking to be guided back onto the right path. At that time, the Third Konko-Sama gave him the following teaching: “The matters of Heaven and Earth are beyond human power. In faith in Kami, the most important thing is to persevere in all things.

The Founder cast aside desire and accepted the work of Toritsugi-Mediation for Kami. The Second Konko-Sama followed after him for ten years, sitting day and night, having cast aside desire, and then he

passed away early. After that, I, who knew nothing, was told that all I had to do was sit, and so I was allowed to sit.

At first, it was painful, so painful, and I often cried. But I was allowed to follow the teachings of our Parent. As I sat there crying and persevering, little by little, the things I wanted and the things I thought about disappeared before I knew it. I became filled with gratitude beyond words. No matter how much thanks I offer, it is never enough. I only keep apologizing that my gratitude is insufficient. How precious and humbling this is.”

The seventy years during which the Third Konko-Sama served were years of great turbulence in the world, in Japan, and in people’s lives. In the midst of such times, he continued to sit at the Mediation Seat without change, just as the Founder and the Second Konko-Sama had done. How much peace of mind and spiritual salvation must his presence have brought to countless people?

The prayer for “True Peace of the World” continues even now—at the Headquarters Hiromae and at Hiromae throughout Japan and around the world—unchanged, uninterrupted, and ever alive.

Lessons Learned through Work

Taken from the Konkokyo Booklet “Spring Light”

Some years ago, I ran a small retail shop that sold handmade tableware, clothing, and other everyday items. Because these were stylish daily goods, many customers purchased them as gifts, and we were often asked to deliver them.

For distant places we shipped the items by delivery service and charged postage, but for nearby homes we delivered them ourselves free of charge. Today I would like to share how my heart was gradually refined and nurtured through this simple task of delivering goods.

Delivery was simply an after-purchase service. All I had to do was bring the items to the address given by the customer. It was not a particularly difficult job.

However, because I tended to be lazy, I often complained. When it was hot, cold, or raining, I would grumble to myself about having to go out. If the person was not home when I arrived, I would complain. If the address was wrong and I could not complete the delivery, I would even become angry.

The people who received the deliveries were all different. Some kindly said, “Thank you for bringing this,” and accepted the package warmly. Others were rather unfriendly. Depending on their reaction, my mood would either brighten or sour.

Once, when I delivered a package to a home, the person inside was watching a sports broadcast. His team must have been losing, because he was intensely focused on the television and seemed irritat-

ed. I entered and announced loudly, “Delivery!” He immediately urged me to hurry and leave. Sometimes people would shout from inside, “Just leave it there!”

On another occasion, someone was deeply absorbed in a television drama. When I called out to them, I seemed to interrupt their enjoyment, and they came out looking annoyed. During summer afternoons, some people were taking naps, and when the doorbell woke them, they appeared with sleepy, irritated expressions.

Whenever someone treated me unpleasantly, I felt resentful. I thought, “I went out of my way to bring this to them.”

At that time I was already practicing the Konko Faith. But looking back, I realize my faith was still very self-centered.

Konko Daijin, the Founder of Konkokyo, taught:

“Even if you endure anger, if you are merely suppressing your feelings, your spirit will suffer. That is still not enough. Take one more step forward and become a person who does not even feel anger. Then it becomes medicine for the body.”

Reflecting on these teachings, I realized how far my heart was from them. I began apologizing to Kami for my attitude.

Eventually, I recognized that my way of thinking itself was mistaken. Until then, I had only considered my own convenience. I had blamed others, complained, and criticized people.

When I examined my heart carefully, I realized something surprising: **I myself was the stubborn, selfish, and short-tempered one.**

From that point on, I tried to consider the other person's situation when making deliveries.

As I did this, my greetings began to change. Instead of speaking politely only on the surface, I could sincerely say from my heart:

"Excuse me for interrupting."

"I'm sorry to disturb you."

"Thank you very much."

In the past, when problems occurred, I quickly made excuses. That only caused others to react negatively. Now I first tried to apologize sincerely whenever inconvenience occurred.

This change in attitude also affected how I treated customers in the shop. I realized that although there were many stores they could choose from, these customers had taken the time to visit **my** shop.

I began welcoming them with genuine gratitude. As a result, customers often said, "This shop feels very pleasant," and they continued to support us.

Previously, when few customers came, I would feel discouraged. But once gratitude began to grow in my heart, I could appreciate each customer who came that day, no matter how small the sales were. My gratitude expanded beyond work.

At meals, instead of hurriedly eating, I began to

think, *This food supports my life.* Even simple food felt precious.

At night, when lying down, I felt grateful for the futon that allowed me to rest warmly. I even felt like bowing in appreciation to it.

I realized how much I was supported every day by people and by things.

Konko Daijin taught:

"Human beings live between Heaven and Earth. Heaven is our father and Earth is our mother. Humans, plants, and all living things live on this earth through the blessings of Heaven and Earth."

As I shifted my focus away from myself and toward others, my awareness expanded further—to the blessings of Heaven and Earth themselves.

I came to understand that complaints arise from a self-centered mindset. When we cultivate gratitude, our hearts gradually become peaceful and rich.

But gratitude must be nurtured continuously. Without effort, our hearts quickly return to dissatisfaction. Each morning when I wake up, I say:

"Thank you for granting me life today."

Beginning the day with awareness of the blessings of Heaven and Earth brings vitality to the entire day. Even difficulties become opportunities to refine my heart.

With this understanding, I pray that each day may continue to polish my spirit.

Memorial Day

On Memorial Day (May 25, 2026) a group of Konkokyo ministers and members paid their respects to those laying at rest at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, located in the Punchbowl Crater



Would you be interested?

The Konko Mission of Honolulu owns 10 burial plots at the Hawaiian Memorial Park in Kaneohe. These plots are available for sale to those in the Konkokyo community. Pricing is negotiable. Please contact Rev. Koichi Konko at the Honolulu Church if you are interested in purchasing a plot.

Konko Missions in Hawaii

Malamalama Editor: Aimee Yasutake

1728 Liliha Street, Honolulu, HI 96817

Phone: (808) 536-9078 E-mail: kmhcenter@konkomissionshawaii.org

Website: <http://konkomissionshawaii.org/>

Konkokyo Hour : Radio K-ZOO AM1210 at 7:00 a.m., every Sunday

To:

KMH Mission Statement

The Konko Missions in Hawaii addresses the spiritual needs of the people of Hawaii by promoting the Konko faith through a better understanding of the life and teachings of Konko Daijin, and through the practice of Toritsugi (Divine-Mediation).

“Malamalama” is now available through e-mail!

For our devoted readers who would like to receive the “Malamalama” electronically, please let us know at kmhcenter@konkomissionshawaii.org

For our readers who would still prefer a hard (paper) copy, please do not hesitate and let us know.

Thank you!

KONKO MISSIONS IN HAWAII

HONOLULU 1728 Liliha St., Honolulu, HI 96817
Phone: (808) 533-7173
E-mail: Konko-Honolulu@hawaii.rr.com

HILO 58 Huapala Lane, Hilo, HI 96720
Phone: (808) 935-3239
E-mail: hilokonko@gmail.com

WAIPAHU 94-106 Mokukaua St., Waipahu, HI 96797
Phone: (808) 677-3716
Use same # for Fax.
E-mail: waipahu.konko@hotmail.com

WAHIAWA 207 Muliwai Ave., Wahiawa, HI 96786
Phone: (808) 621-6667
E-mail: konkowahiawa207@gmail.com

WAILUKU 2267 Mokuhaui Rd., Wailuku, HI 96793
Phone: (808) 244-4738
Use same # for Fax.

HANAPEPE c/o Rev. Setsuko Okuno
1544 Molehu Dr., Honolulu, HI 96818
Phone: (808) 423-7707

KONKO CHURCHES OF NORTH AMERICA

Administrative Office

1911 Bush St. #4A

San Francisco, CA 94115

Phone: 1(415) 851-9722 Fax: (604)-876-4326

E-mail: kcnaoffice@konkofaith.org

Website: <http://www.konkofaith.org/>

We welcome any and all article contributions! If you have an interesting story of faith, inspiration or have any ideas or suggestions for material you'd like to see in future issues of the Malamalama, we're all ears! Please contact us at kmhcenter@konkomissionshawaii.org.