



KONKO MISSION BULLETIN

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You are cordially invited to attend the
Spring Grand Ceremony
For Tenchi Kane no Kami-Sama
天地金乃神様 御大祭

Date: Monday, April 13, 2015

Time: 6:30 p.m.

Place: Konko Mission of Wahiawa

Sermon: Rev. Dr. Todd Zenji Takahashi

Kibimai: Ms. Ke'ala Takahashi

Naorai fellowship lunch will follow. Let's receive the divine arrangements of being able to worship on this very important day.

Mindfulness

By Yasuhiro Yano
Head Minister

The expression of "mindfulness" seems to have been spreading in the community at large, not only in the religious communities. It is said the expression is originated by the Buddhist community. My understanding of the expression is to develop awareness or alertness of the elements exists around us from moment to moment.

Actually, the spirituality of mindfulness has been deeply ingrained in the everyday Japanese way of living. You might have used the expression of "arigato gozaimasu," "omedetou gozaimasu," "mottainai," "itadakimasu," "okagesamade," "osewani narimasu" and the list goes on. These expressions have been used by common people, not just deeply religious people. When we use those expressions, we are consciously or subconsciously aware of indebtedness to others and any other identifiable or unidentifiable elements that help actualize the circumstances when we naturally pour out those expressions. We have been aware of elements that help us in one way or another.

When we say, "okage samade" for the good health we enjoy, we are expressing our gratefulness to some greater power or elements that help us to keep enjoying our good health. Even if we eat organic natural foods, exercise, take vitamins, and try to take care our ourselves, there is just no guarantee that we will be able to live a full and healthy life. Our life is full of uncertainties. There can be invisible, unidentifiable elements that help and sustain our good health. Actually, this religiously-oriented mindfulness is one of the ingrained elements of the

broad Japanese culture we may not be much aware of. We enjoy Japanese TV programs in Hawaii every day. In any day of the program, there can be one or two episodes in which people enjoy eating. Every such occasion of food partaking, they always show the gesture of clasping their hands together and saying "Itadakimasu." And the regular English caption of "Itadakimasu" is "Let's eat." But the expression of "Itadakimasu" is a religiously-oriented expression. In accordance with the Konkokyo practice, we extend this thought of partaking foods in appreciation of the blessed nature of foods being nurtured and brought to be served at the dining table through countless elements of blessings, such as the work of nature, hard work of farmers, distributions systems and the people who cook it. Basically majority of the Japanese may understand that every grain of rice can have the potential of producing thousands of grains. The act of eating can be expressed by the word "taberu" but we use the expression of "itadakimasu" which holds the context of partaking food with gratitude. There are many other religiously mindful expressions in everyday Japanese language. "Mottainai" is an expression used when receiving gifts with the heart of appreciation and gratefulness and being careful not to waste the gift, can also be one of those expressions of mindfulness.

In the Konkokyo faith community, the Founder Konko Daijin related to Jiroshiro Kataoka, "Those who practice faith should always pray with *miki* in their hearts. Then Kami will make any request come true." Those who practice faith should not forget this. *Miki* means the three *ki* which are *arigataki* (gratefulness), *osoreoo-ki* (awe), and *mottaina-ki* (reverence). If those who practice faith forget these three things, they will not be able to receive divine blessings" (III Jinkyukyogoroku135).

The 4th Konko-Sama, the late Rev. Kagamitaro Konko used to express the thought of "Sewani naru subeteni rei wo yuu kokoro Heiwa umidasu Kokoroto ihan" or to have the heart of wanting to express appreciation for any and all elements of blessings we enjoy is the heart that can contribute to promote peace. If we try to apply the expression of mindfulness in the expressed thought of the Konko-Sama, we can easily understand the message. Actually I have been introducing his identical extended thought in my prayer shared at the annual interfaith prayer meeting for all those years.

While I was at the Konko Church of Amagi for my spiritual training before I came to Hawaii, the Rev. Fumio Yasutake always reminded the student minister to exercise the heart of "Kokoro kubarai" or trying to exercise extended mindfulness in identifying blessed elements and respond accordingly in the daily living at the church. The shugyo practice at the church is a sort of exercising this spirit of "Kokoro kurabi" in such a meticulous manner that help us to remind the elements of divine blessings in the very living condition of the day to day living. The Rev. Matsutaro Yasutake, the founding minister of the church showed such an extreme mindfulness in using anything at all. He used only a limited supply of water for bathing, used the wash-cloth in such a manner that the towel can last the most.

He even tried to use portions of used papers for different purposes and maximized the given life of that paper which was supposed to be thrown away.

At one occasion, while he was riding a train, and eating lunch. Some grains of rice accidentally fell to the floor. He picked up the bits of rice and flicked it out the window of the train as it crossed a river. The accompanied person asked what he was doing. He responded that the food once touched the floor is unsanitary for consumption, but that can be fed to the fish in the river. It may sound funny in today's world, but that was the extent of his mindfulness for the blessed nature of rice. He tried to fulfill the divine intention in such a seemingly minor way.

I have lived in Hawaii serving as resident minister of Konko Mission of Wahiawa for 38 years and come to appreciate the spiritual training I received at the Amagi Church during the span of approximately three years. I had an invaluable opportunity to witness the faith life exhibited by the late Rev. Fumio Yasutake. It is his spiritual mentoring that so many young and old student ministers have been educated in accordance with the Konkokyo faith tradition. When I reached ordainment, I cherish all remarks made by my mentor minister as precious spiritual guidance and reminders during my ministerial career here in Hawaii. I feel convinced of the power of mindfulness in getting engaged in the practice of faith.



Konko-Sama Says . . .

Konko-Sama said, "People are endowed with the spirit of Tenchi No Kami-Sama. Nittenshi-Sama blesses our bodies with muscles and bones. Gattenshi-Sama blesses our mouths with moisture, enabling us to speak. However, few have a heart that Tenchi No Kami-Sama can accept.

Those whose hearts can be accepted by Tenchi No Kami-Sama will be blessed with good health, wealth, and wisdom for three generations, resulting in a strong family lineage. This is having your heart accepted by Tenchi No Kami-Sama. Unfortunately, people are unaware of this. Thus Kami-Sama feels pity for them.

Having great wealth requires the wisdom that must go with it. Those whose hearts are not accepted by Tenchi No Kami-Sama may have the wealth, but not the wisdom. Thus, they will inevitably meet adversity.

Others who have the wealth as well as the wisdom, will get sick even if they do not want to. They won't be able to go out and work in the village.

Those who have wisdom and good health will lose their wealth. If they don't lose their wealth, their main successors will die, leaving not inheritors.

And since those with wisdom and a good family lineage don't have money, they won't be asked to fill responsible positions.

These are all evidence of hearts which are not accepted by Tenchi No Kami-Sama. Since these people are not aware of Tenchi No Kami's blessings, they are always lacking one thing or another.

If you practice faith, understand Kami's blessings and live a peaceful and stable life, you will have descendants, gain wealth, and be rest assured. Look forward to the future. First you will receive divine blessings from year to year, then from decade to decade, and finally from generation to generation.

Even if a fruit tree blossoms, we don't know if it will bear fruit or not. If it does bear fruit, the fruit will gradually get bigger. Similarly, with time, the divine blessings you receive will get bigger.

Kami-Sama exists throughout Tenchi, even in mountains, valleys, and river bottoms. So practice faith." (II Sato Mitsujiro 13)

Bulletin Board

Monthly Services for April 2015

1 Wed -Monthly Service for Tenchi Kane No Kami
(7:30 pm)

5 Sun -Sunday Service (9 am)
-Honolulu Church Grand Service (11 am)

12 Sun -Sunday Service (9 am)
-Waipahu Church Grand Service (11 am)

13 Mon-Wahiawa Church Grand Service (6:30 pm)

19 Sun -Sunday Service (9 am)

26 Sun -Monthly Memorial Service (9 am)

May 2015

1 Fri -Monthly Service for Tenchi Kane No Kami
(7:30 pm)

Hawaii Conference of Religions for Peace

The next meeting will be held on Monday, April 20, 2015 at the Gedatsu Church at 1:30 p.m.

Monthly Volunteer Activity

The regular monthly visit to the Long-Term Care Facility at the Wahiawa General Hospital for volunteer activity will be made on Friday, April 24, 2015 at 10:00 a.m.

Zippy's Fundraiser for 5th Ohana Camp

We will conduct a fundraising through the Zippy's Benefit Fundraiser program for the 5th Ohana Camp to be scheduled for June 20-21, 2015 at Camp Erdman. Your support for the program will be greatly appreciated.

Honoring the Mitama Spirits

April

Gilbert Toshio Iwasa	4/9/1999
Zenji Takahashi	4/12/1966
Yoshiro Kamitomo	4/16/2000
Kiku Takahashi	4/26/1967
Robert Mendoz	4/27/2006
Shinichi Furushima	4/30/1996

If you wish to have a name added to the church Mitama listing or removed, please contact Rev. Yasuhiro Yano.

Insight into the teachings in “Tenchi wa Kataru” or “Voice of the Universe”

The following are excerpts of series of an English translation of “Tenchi wa Kataru—Kanwa-shu” or “Compilation of Insight into the teachings in the Voice of the Universe” which contains 400 selected teachings from the original “Konkokyo Kyoten” or the “Konkokyo Scriptures.” Three authors, namely, the Revs. Mikio Seto, Yasushi Hata and Matsutarō Kōsaka contributed the insightful articles. The translation is provided by Yasuhiro Yano. (Reference pages 111, 112 and 113)

No. 111

Have an open heart. Be broad-minded about the world. The world is in your own heart. (I Ichimura Mitsugoro 1-44-1 Kyoten page 213-214)

The world is in your own heart.

The Founder got engaged in farming in a small village at Otani in Okayama during the transitional period of Tokugawa Government into Meiji Era, and responded to the Divine Call to serve as the Toritsugi-Mediator who confined himself in such a humble straw-thatched roof house at the skirt of Yuzaki hill. How could such an individual ever made statement, “The world is in your own heart?”

During the turbulent socio-political transition in the nation, people in rural farming villages might struggle to survive to take advantage of any evolving opportunities to fulfill their own needs. They might have to deal with some unethical inevitable consequences. The Founder, who served as the Toritsugi-Mediator, had to deal with many criticisms and envious resentment from others.

But the Founder responded to those circumstances in such manners as have been shown below: “Konko-Sama advised, ‘Don’t keep a bad heart day after day. If someone speaks ill of you, don’t bear a grudge against him.’ I (Hide Onishi) remarked, “But if someone comes to me with a bad heart, I will also develop a bad heart.” He answered, ‘Still, you must not have such a heart. Always keep a good heart’” (II Onishi Hide 9). “There was a straw hedge around Konko-Sama’s house, but it was set afire maliciously. A follower who noticed the partially burnt hedge said, ‘Konko-Sama, you should curse the person who did this.’ Konko-Sama replied, ‘I must pray for those who do such things, so they will reform their hearts’” (II Okamoto Shige 2).

The Founder also shared his thoughts with Fujimori Kondo about the subject. “Once, I went to worship with the Kinugawa Noodle Shop owner and brought offerings from many believers. While humbly presenting the offerings, I gave Konko-Sama a list of the donors. He said, ‘Since I cannot read well, I may misread the list. So if you would read it, I will write it.’ I began to read it aloud, ‘Osaka, Higashi Ward, so-and-so street...’ Konko-Sama then interrupted, ‘No, no, just read the city and the year of birth.’ Kinugawa then said, ‘But Konko-Sama, Osaka is a big city. It has four wards and two counties.’ Konko-Sama replied, ‘Ha, ha, Osaka is big. But to Kami, it is no bigger than a poppy seed’” (II Kondo Fujimori 6). “When I went to the

Hiromae, the fisherman was also there and I heard his story. Konko-Sama, turning his head from left to right, said, ‘People may think ten years is a long time, but to Kami, it is as short as the time it takes to look from left to right.’” (II Kondo Fujimori 13-4).

The Founder seemed to learn to appreciate the wondrous nature of blessings received from Heaven and Earth in the course of his advancement in his pursuit of faith. Because of his appreciation for the nature of Kami, he could respond to many criticisms in keeping his heart broad as his own spiritual training. To cope with ever changing social environment, he might exercise spiritual training of being broad-minded.

The Founder exhibited his solid conviction to hold the perception of “The world is in my own heart” in dealing with the authorities of Meiji Government. His solid conviction could be attributed to the devastating episode of imposed termination of his religious activities.

No. 112

People who practice this faith should not be unhappy and go around with gloomy faces. Because we believe in the Parent Kami of the Universe, we need to have a heart as broad as the Universe. (III Jinkyukyogoroku 8 Kyoten page 811-812)

A heart as broad as the Universe

In the Konkokyo Kyoten Scripture, prior to this quoted message, the following message is placed. “Konko Daijin said, ‘Joy is what started this faith. So childbirth will always be a joy’” (III Jinkyukyogoroku 7). The “joy” in the message refers to “a childbirth” or “an easy childbirth.” The Rev. Jiroshiro Kataoka of Konko Church of Saizaki was initiated into the Konkokyo faith tradition in responding to his eldest son who passed away at the age of four. He was agonized at the death of his beloved son.

What does the expression, “a heart as broad as the Universe” mean? The heart represents the heart of purity and warmth. But how can we develop such a heart?

Mitsujiro Ichimura, who made an initial pilgrimage to see the Founder from the Saizaki village in 1882, became a devoted believer of the Konko faith. The person who met Mitsujiro Ichimura who was at his advanced age, expressed his impression on him, “Mitsujiro Ichimura was a gentle and attractive person.” Was he like that even when he was young?

What was particular about the messages recorded by Mitsujiro Ichimura was that he received teachings about the inclination of getting angry. The Founder related to Ichimura Mitsugoro, “When you get angry, it is essential that you be patient. Not getting angry is practicing faith in Kami” (I Ichimura Mitsugoro 1-2-7). It could be assumed that when he made the initial visit to see the Founder at the age of 37 and at the prime of his career as a plasterer who might have disciplined and trained his apprentices with harsh words and intimidating attitude. When he made a visit to see the Founder, he could have anger in his face. He also received many teachings in regard to the subject

of passing on the faith among the family members. “Konko-Sama imparted, ‘Out of a thousand worshippers, it’s rare to have even one that goes home with divine blessings. They all lose their blessings when they go out of the Hiromae. Even one word of Kami-Sama’s teachings cannot be exchanged for a thousand *ryo*. Receive Kami’s words in gratitude, then your gift will be divine virtue that cannot be loaded even onto a boat or cart.’ He added, ‘When you get home, convey the teachings to your wife and children well’” (I Ichimura Mitsugoro 1-50). He might have shown some frustration on his face over the concern that he could not let the family members get engaged in the practice of faith.

Through his engagement in the practice of faith under the Founder, Mitsujiro Ichimura attained spiritual transformation to become a person who developed a heart as broad as the Universe.

Let us try to follow those exemplary Konko believers in pursuit of faith.

No. 113

If they lose their belief in, “On this very day, pray with a single heart. Divine blessings are within your own heart,” the world will be in turmoil. The glory of Kami and the glory of parents will be gone. (I Ichimura Mitsugoro 1-11 Kyoten page 201)

Uphold the truth in pursuit of faith

Acknowledgement of the truth in the statement, “On this very day, pray with a single heart. Divine blessings are within your own heart” can be appreciation of the truth in the statement of the Divine Reminder.

The original Japanese word “Kenshiki” means intelligence to be able to identify truth in matters, or it also implies to self-respect.

The Founder stated that if people lose their belief in the message of the Divine Reminder or “Tenchi Kakitsuke” the world would be in turmoil; the glory of Kami and the glory of parents would be gone. His statement did not give us warning that we will fail to get blessed if we lose our belief in the message of the Divine Reminder. What would be the reason for this statement?

The Meiji Government tried to establish Shinto-oriented system for the nations’ propaganda. For this purpose, the government imposed a strict religious control. In February of 1873, the village Head summoned the Founder and gave instruction that he conducted religious activities in violation of the new law and ordered him to terminate his religious work. The sanctuary furnishings, fixtures and decorations were all taken away from the worship hall in compliance of the order. But 25 days later from the termination of his religious activities, Kami gave him a divine message to write down the statement of “Tenchi Kakitsuke” or the Divine Reminder which reads in Japanese, “天地金乃神 生神金光大神 一心に願え おかげはわが心にあり。” The message can be translated into English, “Tenchi Kane No Kami, Ikigami Konko Daijin, pray with a

single-heart. Divine blessings are to get realized in your own heart.” The Founder confined himself in a six-tatami matted room all alone. The divine message could show the Founder how to proceed from that state of impasse in pursuit of faith. It would be a divine response to the Founder’s single-hearted prayer in seclusion.

Five days after the revelation of the Divine Reminder, unexpected development occurred. The Village Head informed the Founder that he could start his religious work again. Kami revealed the message of the Divine Reminder for the Founder to spread the blessings received during the impasse to others.

The revelation of the Divine Reminder evidently show the unyielding strong belief in Kami exhibited by the Founder who did not succumb to any governmental suppression imposed on him. The quoted message is a stern warning to the people that if they succumb to any authoritative suppression and fail to appreciate truthfulness of the message in the Divine Reminder, the entire society will encounter turmoil.

The Founder developed such a conviction about the vital nature of the Divine Reminder.