



KONKO MISSION BULLETIN

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The power of our prayers

By Yasuhiro Yano
Head Minister

Every year, my wife Reiko has makes a call to her parents to extend her congratulations on their birthdays. I remember about five years ago, when she made a call to her mother back in Japan. At that occasion, her father also picked up the phone and talked with her. During the conversation, he made a remark about how much he appreciated his involvement in the practice of faith. He was 86 years old at that time, yet actively engaged in taking care of a cow, aside from taking care of the farmland he owned. He used the expression of “*Nichi nichigara*” in reflection of his faith-oriented life. The expression “*Nichinichi ga sara*” implies that every day is a fresh new day. Keeping this mindfulness for the blessed nature of each and every day, he has been enthusiastically engaged in his pursuit of the faith and got engaged in his daily chores around his farmland in a remote mountainous region where he and his wife settled down soon after WWII ended. He expressed his wish to keep advancing his faith in Kami every day, prayed even a bit of progress in his belief in Kami. Keeping that spirituality, he had no time to idle in complaining. He used the expression, “すこしでもいい、信心が日々成長させて頂きたい。”

What a great way to get engaged in the practice of faith. I feel a bit ashamed of my own engagement in my day to day work as a missionary. It is this sort of expressed thought that provides us the encouragement and assurance for the services we have provided as a minister. We want to have such a believer in our faith community who shows a great zealotness for the advancement of their own faith in Kami and the advancement of the faith community as well.

When I heard the message of Reiko's father, I also remembered the wish expressed by the founding minister of the Konko Church of Amagi, the late Rev. Matsutaro Yasutake. At one occasion, he asked the ministers, “Do you understand the greatest wish and prayer I extend to Kami-Sama daily?” He continued, “I have been praying to Kami-Sama that my faith will keep advancing as much as possible.”

Through our views of commoners like me, I would have thought that he already had attained what he wished for. He enjoyed such fame as one of the greatest spiritual leaders in the faith community and exhibited strong spiritual powers shown in the great church buildings and properties and a large church congregation. Yet he kept aspiring for even greater advancement in his pursuit of faith. He was humble and sincere enough to keep reminding himself of the original blessings he realized through this initiation into the Konko faith. He experienced a spiritual shock when he learned that the Earth and the ground that he believed to be filthy and dirty was actually the body of Kami-Sama. This was shock received at the initial encounter with the Rev. Matsuhei Katsura, the founding minister of Konko Church of Kokura. He was overwhelmed with the feeling of awe and guilt for his thoughts toward the earth, the ground and the soil. He used the distinctive express of “足元から鳥が立つ” which implies a totally unexpected surprise encounter that lasted his entire life thereafter.

The late Rev. Fumio Yasutake of Konko Church of Amagi used to say often that the thing he wishes for the most is to see as many lay believers evolved to become Konko ministers. “Only Konko believers wish and pray for the expansion of the Konko faith community. Who else would do that?”

As for myself, I simply wish to see the expansion of the faith community in Hawaii and the advancement of each and every believer's involvement in the pursuit of the faith. I have kept daily prayers ever since both my wife and I took over the responsibility of the church in Wahiawa 37 years ago.

Lately, I had an encounter that helped to identify what I want to see in my missionary work, not just the expansion of the church community. It would be amazing to see the influence of the Konko faith in the congregation. It can be something simple. One of the young believers in the congregation carries a golf bag with a large red-colored Konko crest. What a great way to show his belief in Kami-Sama. When I bless a car, I hand the car owner a “Goshinmai” sacred rice packet in its holder. I assume that the person will keep that Goshinmai sacred rice in the car and be reminded of the blessed nature of being able to drive a car. When we eat meals, we say grace in appreciation of the blessed nature of the food we enjoy.

We make regular church visits in appreciation of the blessings we have enjoyed through our connectedness to the church. These elements may look insignificant, but they represent the core of our belief in Kami-Sama.

Several weeks ago, I had an occasion to make a visit to a Buddhist temple in Palolo. I was impressed and thought how they could obtain such a large property and a magnificent temple with many facilities. The reflective impression I had at that occasion was that it could be the power of that Buddhist faith community and their contributions to the expansion of the temple in such a manner. The needs and wants of the faith community have actualized in that manner through the community leaders for generations. The Japanese community needed the functions that could be accommodated only by the religious faiths from Japan, especially, Buddhism which was the primary religious faith for many of the immigrants to Hawaii. The temples responded to fulfill the needs. The big temple property is the reflection of the people's needs and wants fulfilled.

What about your own wishes and prayers in your engagement in the church? Some of my endeavors have been in the process of actualization, such as our children's engagement in the ministry. I have been utilizing the personal prayer form I have created several years ago. Every morning, I jot down my prayers on the slip of paper. The first line of my prayer is always the expression of "Konnichi made no orei" which means extend thanks for the blessings I have enjoyed thus far. And then keep writing the items of my endeavor as I have mentioned. So please try to utilize the prepared personal prayer form for your own sake. It surely will help you to clarify your wish and prayers. That is the fundamental aspect of our engagement in the pursuit of the faith.



Konko-Sama Says . . .

I, Tenchi Kane No Kami, want to say the following: "Though they live between Heaven and Earth, people are unaware of Kami's blessings. Shrines, temples, and homes stand on Kami's land. Unaware of this, people only refer to the Days and Directions, commit irreverence to Kami and encounter hardships due to their accumulated offenses. They are to receive divine blessings by practicing faith. I, Tenchi Kane No Kami, have sent Ikigami Konko Daijin to people to give blessings and teachings and to have them prosper forever. Man is man because of Kami, and Kami is Kami because of man. Both continue to uphold each other."

(Oshirasegoto Oboecho 25-3)

Bulletin Board

Monthly Services for August 2014

- 1 Fri -Monthly Service for Tenchi Kane No Kami (7:30 pm)
- 3 Sun -Sunday Service (9 am)
- 10 Sun -Monthly Service, Ikigami Konko Daijin (9 am)
- 17 Sun -Monthly Memorial Service (9 am)
- 24 Sun -Sunday Service (9 am)
-85th Anniversary of Konko Mission of Honolulu and 41st Memorial Service for the Late Rev. Masayuki Kodama (11 am)
- 31 Sun - Sunday Service (9 am)

September 2014

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

HCRP

The monthly meeting of the Hawaii Conference of Religions for Peace will be held at the Gedatsu Church on Monday, August 11, 2014 at 1:30 p.m.

Monthly Volunteer Activity

We will make a visit to the Wahiawa General Hospital Long-Term Care Facility for our regular volunteer activity of interacting with the long-term care patients on Friday, August 15 from 10:00 a.m.

Wahiawa Church Board Meeting

We will hold a board meeting on Sunday, August 3, 2014 at 10:00 a.m. following the Sunday Service which begins at 9:00 a.m. We will make a resolution for the creation of a new bank account for educational programs, such as the annual Summer Ohana Camp initiated by our church.

KMH Young Adult Seminar

The annual Konko Missions in Hawaii Young Adult Seminar will be held from August 8 through August 10 in Kona, Big Island.

KMH Board Meeting

Konko Missions in Hawaii board meeting will be held on Saturday, August 16, 2014 at Konko Mission of Honolulu at 10:30 p.m.

A Gathering for Peace

A group of the local young ministers named "AKD" a shortened form of Apostles of Konko Daijin, will hold an interfaith peace-oriented gathering named "Itsukushimi No Inori" for offering prayers on Sunday, August 17, 2014 at the Konko Mission of Wahiawa at 4:00 p.m. Please join this new approach for peace. Refreshments will be served.

Honoring the Mitama Spirits

August

Masaru Nakano	8/5/2004
Sunao Hayashida	8/8/1958
Jinpei Hayashida	8/13/1939
Masataka Yano	8/14/2012
Helen Y. Eguchi	8/14/1946
Shizue Eguchi	8/19/2012
Rev. Masayuki Kodama	8/24/1973



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 88, 89 and 90)

No. 88

People talk about dying from a disease, but even after the body dies, the disease may remain with the descendants. Practice faith and the root of the disease will be cut. (III Jinkyū Kyōgoroku 74 Kyōten page 836)

Cutting the root of disease

The Founder referred to the nature of “meguri” or accumulated irreverence and offences, shown in the form of disease.

Some members of the family inherit the hereditary constitution of some types of disease. It is believed that the hereditary constitution for some types of cancer would pass down from generation to generation. But the Founder stated, “Practice faith and the root of the disease will be cut.” Not all of those family members who inherit the genes for cancer get the disease. There can be ways to get blessed to be free from getting the disease through divine arrangements, or through improvement to the genes. The expression, “the root of the disease will be cut” referred to those possible changes that can be developed through the practice of faith.

In accordance with the teachings of the Founder, it would be possible that the Mitama Spirits of the deceased would be saved; and the “meguri” or accumulated irreverence

and offences would be cleared away through the practice of faith. Then what can we do for our descendants?

There seem to be a lot of things we can do for our descendants. But the numbers of things we can offer for our descendants become fewer and fewer as the generations change. We may be able to offer some contributions up to our great-grandchildren. We may not be assured if we would be able to witness the birth of our great-great-grandchildren.

What we can offer to our children and grandchildren whom we can interact, and those descendants we may not meet, is to cut the root of disease. The utmost contribution we can offer is to perpetuate the Konkōkyō faith tradition from generation to generation.

Our descendants can be likened to a chain of circles connected together. It can be possible that we would pass down the “meguri” or accumulated irreverence and offences we might have to our descendants. This should not happen to those who practice faith.

No. 89

Being filial to your parents is foremost. Be filial, and you will be happy in the future. If you are not, you will be unhappy. (I Ishihara Ginzo 3 Kyōten page 196)

Both filial and ungrateful traits towards our parents can be passed down

Either being filial or ungrateful towards our parents may inevitably affect us and our descendants. The message also shows another aspect of “meguri” or accumulated irreverence and offences.

In general we believe that if we are dutiful to our parents, we would be able to enjoy blessed lives accordingly; while if we are ungrateful to our parents, we should be prepared to encounter hardship in life accordingly. Some people may find the idea uncomfortable by saying that it would be hard to believe there would be such a direct correlation between our attitude towards our parents and the future perspectives of our life.

If “oya-kōkō” or filial piety is perceived in such a manner as “devoting ourselves in fulfillment of our parents,” there would be no assurance that we would enjoy the same treatments from our children in reward of our contributions to our parents and enjoy a happy life. The same can be true that not all of those people who show little appreciation and gratefulness for the contributions and care given by their parents would be punished with no child who would be filial to them and suffer in unhappiness in the future. They could be blessed with some dutiful children despite their ungrateful

attitudes toward their parents. It would be hard to believe there would be such a direct co-relationship between our attitude towards our parents and the future perspectives of our life.

In my understanding, two fundamental elements can be identified in the meaning of “oya-koukou.” First, we should acknowledge and appreciate the love we enjoy from our parents. Second, we should also acknowledge that we exist because of our parents. We should develop a sincere acknowledgement and appreciation for these fundamental elements. “Oya-koukou” or filial piety can be fulfilled when we hold the sincere mindfulness of the grateful nature of our parents and actions in reflection of thoughts towards our parents. Without that mindfulness, we cannot fulfill our parents.

Those people who understand the most essential elements of “oya-koukou” or filial piety in such a manner as discussed in the previous paragraph, that is, a person who acknowledge and appreciate parental love and the fact that one exists because of the parents, he or she will surely be able to enjoy perpetual happiness throughout life.

Whether we are filial or ungrateful towards our parents seem to determine the future life perspectives of ourselves and our descendants.

No. 90

Now, hear the sound of the Universe opening, and be awakened. (*II Kunieda Sangoro 12 Kyoten page 491*)

The sound of the Universe opening

Kunieda Sangoro lived in the current locality of Otoshima, Tamashima, Kurashiki City in Okayama Prefecture.

When he reached the age of 37, he lost his eyesight due to the effect of syphilis. His wife went to see the Founder and asked help for her husband and responded to make a daily pilgrimage to see Konko-Sama. In about one year and a half, he regained his eyesight. He became involved in the practice of faith so devotedly that he helped many people to get engaged in the practice of faith.

In the darkness that Sangoro had to endure, he might have experienced a great deal of spiritual awakening in listening to the message given by the Founder, “Now, hear the sound of the Universe opening, and be awakened.”

The message might have reminded him of the vivid memory of his visual recovery. Any vivid memories may fade away as time passes by.

Through the extended message, the Founder might try to convey, “You should be awakened with your spiritual eyes wide open and identify the truth in the Universe.

You shall not feel content just being healed of your lost vision alone, but try to move on.” The voice of the Founder might have sounded just like “the sound of the Universe opening.”

Here is an interesting episode shared by Mokuhei Takahashi who stated in his writing “Gorikai Kanwa” that the Founder stated, “Kunieda-san, I hear a clear sound of the opening of Heaven and Earth. Can you also hear it?” Kunieda responded, “I am afraid, I don’t think I can hear such a sound at all.” The Founder responded to him, “How can you not hear such a clear and loud sound? I can hear it clearly” (page 26). The Founder might have actually heard the sound of the Universe opening. What a deeply inspiring statement that sounds!

As we get engaged in practice of faith, “now” is a vital element. “Now” is “now” at all times. The Founder might extend his prayer that the believers would get awakened and overwhelmed with the sense of deep awe as we live from moment to moment.