



# KONKO MISSION BULLETIN

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## **“Inochi no shin no hataraki” (The core vital life sustaining functions)**

*By Yasuhiro Yano  
Head Minister*

Both my wife and I have served at the Konko Mission of Wahiawa in Hawaii for 39 years since 1977. It could be “Aien kien” or fortunate encounter with a twist of fate. I still do not know how we were able to live and serve at the Konko faith community in Wahiawa for so many years. It is such a divine blessing.

It also could be “Aien kien” or a fortunate encounter and a twist of fate how I got into the Amagi Church for religious training. Soon after I was admitted to get engaged in ministerial training at Konko Church of Amagi, Head Minister, the late Rev. Fumio Yasutake summoned me to his room and asked, “Will you go to Hawaii and served at the Konko Mission of Wahiawa?” I simply responded, “I will follow your instruction.” When I look back at those days, I understood that the Rev. Fumio Yasutake was in search of a minister who could fulfill the vacant position of residential minister since the founding minister of the church, the Rev. Haruko Takahashi passed away in 1972. He responded to the request of the Rev. Shoichi Okuno, the then Chief Administrative Minister of Konko Missions in Hawaii. It seems that Kami-Sama responded to the prayers of those ministers to continue the operation of the church.

I got married my wife, Reiko on September 24 of 1977. The following day we departed from Konko Church of Amagi for our missionary work. We were just 26 years old. Prior to our departure from Japan we made a visit to see Konko-Sama, the late Rev. Kagamitaro Konko at Headquarters Church at Konko Town and related our mission in Hawaii. At that occasion, Konko-Sama gave us messages. When I look back at the moment I remember he shared a lot of messages. I have treasured the messages that provided us the foundations of our missionary work thereafter.

He talked about “Inochi no shin no hataraki” or the core vital life sustaining functions. Konko-Sama elaborated about the concept by saying, “When a baby is born, everybody involved exchanges congratulatory messages of ‘Omedeto Gozaimasu’ and ‘Arigato Gozaimasu.’ When that baby grows, at every stage of growth, such as birthday, entering school, graduation from school, getting a job and getting married, we continue the exchanging of congratulatory messages in celebration of the blessings. It is the same function we can find in the life of plants and any other living things. The roots of a plant keep taking up water and nutrients up to the stems and leaves, and the leaves create the food through the work of light and send down the food to every part of the body. Once the plant ceases to function in this manner, it is to die sooner or later. The same can be said in our life. If we cease to exchange these life celebrating functions, we may encounter hardship and impasse in life.” He also gave us a down to earth

message in such a manner that he referred to his pair of glasses. He tried to say thank you for the glasses he put on; say thanks for the pen he write with and the sheet of paper and so forth. These messages have provided a fundamental spiritual base as we got engaged in our missionary work.

From day one, as we arrived at the Konko Mission of Wahiawa, we found we had everything we need to continue what the Rev. Haruko Takahashi left off with. We tried to give thanks for whatever we have been given. The late Rev. Shoichi Okuno of Konko Mission of Hanapepe told us that we should be prepared to start our missionary work from scratch in such a manner that we may have only a pair of chopsticks. That could represent an old age traditional spirituality of ministers who actually got engaged in their missionary work. The Rev. Okuno himself had dealt with such adverse conditions in his own missionary work at Hanapepe. So are other pioneer ministers who got engaged in their missionary work where they had to deal with the language barriers, financial difficulties, conflicting human relations among the ministers and the church congregations and so forth.

Actually, the church we started to manage could hardly sustain its operation in consideration of the size of the church congregation and the consequential income for the operation of the church. The church seemed to be thriving before WWII started. Once there were over 180 church members in accordance with a record. But due to the war and the death of the founding minister, the number of active members shrunk to the minimum. Several regular church members showed up for the regular monthly services. The income for the church has been based on free-will offerings from the church members. The head ministers were not supposed to work besides his or her own missionary work based on the traditional religious conviction that Kami will take care of the life of ministers and the family who serve Kami. Before our departure to Hawaii, the Rev. Fumio Yasutake took me to the Konko Church of Kokura, the parent church of Konko Church of Amagi and introduced me to the Rev. Sueko Katsura, the former Head Minister of the church. She gave me a message, “神様は見殺しにはされんからな” or Kami-Sama would not leave you to die. Her message has proved right for the last 39 years. Some people in the faith community wondered and have asked us, “How were you able to survive?” We have responded, “Kami-Sama no Okagede” or thanks to divine blessings, we have been enabled to sustain our lives.

From day one, on September 27 as we arrived in Hawaii, we have tried to extend our thanks and gratitude for the mission given to us in Hawaii.

I would like to extend my thanks to the Rev. Michio Miyake of the Konko Church of Tokiwadai who gave me a message in celebration of our departure for our missionary work in Hawaii when we made a courtesy visit to greet him. He has provided a momentous opportunity for me to get engaged in ministry of the Konkokyo faith when I was in Tokyo. He jotted down a message on the cover of the wrapping of goshinmai sacred rice. The

message reads, 「有り難きこの思召いつまでも忘れずに行け人助けの道」。I have interpreted this message in this manner, “Never fail to appreciate this wondrous divine mission granted to you for saving people” dated September 27, 1977. I have placed this Goshinmai sacred rice packet at the Toritsugi-Mediation Desk to serve as my daily reminder. Interestingly, the message has never faded away. The message has the same line of meaning of “Konnichi made no orei” or extending thanks for any and all blessings I have enjoyed thus far. I have been deeply appreciative of the message as years pass by.

On July 16, we celebrated the wedding of Clayton Masao Matsuoka and my daughter, Edna Kazuko Yano at Konko Mission of Honolulu. Their wedding seems to signify the life both my wife Reiko and I have dedicated to serve at Konko Mission of Wahiawa for all those years. We have witnessed the birth of our three children, their sound growth, and their engagement in their missionary work in their given conditions. We were also able to witness their academic achievements and their marriages.

In a sense, Kami-Sama has responded to our missionary dedication in such manners as we feel proud of our children who are able to get engaged in their own missionary work hereafter. I am sure the prayers I have jot down in the daily notebook would be actualized by our descendants. And one of the vital elements of my prayers is the expansion of the Konko faith community in Hawaii. This is the only element that ensures the continued operation and expansion of the church functions in Hawaii.

## Konko-Sama Says . . .

Few have a heart that Kami can accept. Those whose hearts can be accepted by Kami will be blessed with good health, wealth, and wisdom for three generations, resulting in a strong family lineage. Those whose hearts are not accepted by Kami may have wealth as well as wisdom, but will get sick. Those who have wisdom and good health will lose their wealth. If they do not lose their wealth, their beloved children will die, leaving no heirs. Since these people are not aware of Kami’s blessings, they are always lacking one thing or another. If you practice faith and understand Kami’s blessings, you will live a peaceful and stable life. You will have descendants and gain wealth. You will receive divine blessings from year to year, and then from generation to generation. (III Konko Kyoso Gorikai 78).

## Bulletin Board

### Main Services for August 2016

- 1 Mon -Monthly Service for Tenchi Kane No Kami (7:30 pm)
- 7 Sun -Sunday Service (9 am)  
-Volunteer activity at Wahiawa General Hospital at 10 am
- 14 Sun -Monthly Service for Ikigami Konko Daijin (9 am)
- 19 Fri -Women’s Club Meeting (1:30 pm-3:30 pm) \*Make lei
- 21 Sun -Monthly Memorial Service (9 am)  
-43<sup>rd</sup> Memorial Service for the late Rev. Masayuki Kodama at Honolulu Church (9 am)
- 28 Sun -Sunday Service (9 am)

### September 2016

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

### 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration of Konko Missions in Hawaii

We will be commemorating the 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration of the Konko Missions in Hawaii on **Sunday, September 4, 2016** at the Konko Mission of Honolulu at 9:30 a.m.

### Hawaii Conference of Religions for Peace

The regular meeting will be held on Monday, August 8, 2016 at Gedatsu Church of Hawaii at 1:30 p.m. On Sat., September 10, 2016, the HCRP has initiated the annual interfaith cleanup program at the Kakaako Waterfront Park from 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. The purpose of the program is to clean the entire Kakaako Waterfront Park, including the Ehimemaru Memorial to help spread awareness for homelessness in Hawaii. We invite any volunteers who have taken care of the memorial, people in the interfaith communities as well as homeless people for this program.

### Volunteer Activity

The annual volunteer activity at the Wahiawa General Hospital Long Term Care Facility will be made on Sunday, August 7 at 10:00 a.m. following the Sunday Service. After the program we will enjoy lunch at the basement of the church. And the regular monthly visit to the Long-Term Care Facility at Wahiawa General Hospital will be made on Friday, August 19, 2016 from 10:00 a.m. to 10:45 a.m.

## 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
Kima Yamashita	8/?/1979

*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 281, 282 and 283)*

**No. 281: Carrying a heavy load on your shoulder or back is burdensome. But practicing faith is not. It is easy. Have your everyday work be the same as practicing faith. (II Ishida Tomosuke 3-1 Kyoten page 434)**

## Practicing faith is easy.

When the believers try to introduce other people to get engaged in the practice of faith, they usually show some hesitation by citing their fear of obligations that they would be demanded to do something special that would impose some restrictions on their daily life. It is also a fact that some religious sects demand prohibitive admission fees and membership fees for the people to get involved in their religious practices. They refrain to get distance from any unfamiliar religious practices.

But the Founder stated, “The religious training of this faith does not involve traditional physical austerities. Doing your everyday work is religious training” (III Konko Kyoso Gorikai 39). In this manner, the Konko faith does not impose any restrictive activities on the believers. The Founder clearly stated that doing our everyday work is religious training of the Konko faith. The Founder also stated, “Offerings made sincerely are accepted by Kami with pleasure, but Kami is not pleased by burdening people with compulsory donations and contributions” (III Konko Kyoso Gorikai 15). In this manner, the Founder strictly prohibited to impose compulsory donations and offerings from believers.

In the original statement of the last message quoted above, there is a passage in Japanese, “氏子が真から用いるのは。” We are likely to interpret the message in such a manner that Kami accepts the sincere offerings made by a believer. But the true meaning of the passage is that Kami accepts sincere reverence extended toward Kami. The interpretation is based on the same expression, “Kane No Kami-Sama imparted, ‘Bunji, you have revered me as Kami. I, Konjin, shall allow you to clap your hands in prayer’” (Oboecho 2-1-2).

In the practice of faith, believers are not imposed any burdens for their engagement in the practice of faith. To practice faith shall be free of burden and easy.

The original statement has an additional line that reads, “People sometimes reject Kami, but Kami never rejects people.” If we have no restrictions in the way how we get engaged in the practice of faith, we are likely to get lazy. Kami never gets lazy. We should be mindful not to get lazy in pursuit of faith.

*No. 282: Since you say you will start a business, Kami will watch without helping. If you have a heart that would like to be allowed to start a business, Kami will support you. (I Shimamura Hachitaro 40 Kyoten page 332)*

### Different spirituality of “Suru” and “Sasete-itadaku”

In general it is common we use the casual ordinary expression of “shitai” or want to do something, “suru” or take an action for something, “shita” or past form of “suru.” But in the Konkokyo faith community, some novice believers become confused when they witness the believers often use such expressions of “sasete-itadaku” or in gratitude I will serve to do something, “sasete-itadkimashita” or past form of “sasete-itadaku.”

The ordinary people use the expression “suru” for getting engaged in daily living without any sense of awkwardness. The spirituality

of “suru” becomes apparent when we deal with money we earn for living. Everybody work hard to get money to enjoy comfortable lives. When we achieved financial gains, we are likely to credit our own hard work and sacrifices to get money. It is “I” who made that much financial gains would be the thought held by majority of people.

When we experience financial loss due to some speculative investments, we are urged to get back what has been lost and try to borrow money from others and invest in speculations. We could be easily driven to act insanelly by the spirituality of “I” centeredness. There could be little space Kami can provide help for the people obsessed with the spirituality of “I” centeredness as has been stated in the quoted message, “Since you say you will start a business, Kami will watch without helping.”

Through the practice of faith, we will learn to appreciate the faith-based perspective that whatever we could do can be possible only because of the elements of blessings we enjoy. We can get engaged in work that brings income because we are blessed with good health and other elements of sustenance. When we learn to appreciate the nature of what we are in relation with Kami, we naturally feel like extending our gratitude and naturally use the expression of “sasete-itadaku” or in gratitude we get engaged in doing things. It is this spirituality of “sasete-itadaku” that Kami will accompany and support us for whatever we do. Even financial dealings would be helped by Kami if we keep that spirituality of “sasete-itadaku.”

The founding minister of Konko Church of Okayama, the Rev. Hachitaro Shimamura, was a samurai served at the financial department of the Okayama Clan. Because of his interactions with many business people, he appreciated the quoted message from the Founder.

Although we enjoy financial prosperity in Japan, there could be many elements we should reform in the society we live.

*No. 283: When immersing rice seeds, pray to be allowed to immerse the seeds. When the seeds are sown into a nursery bed, pray to Tenchi Kane No Kami for permission to plant them in Kami’s ground. Pray for the seeds’ healthy growth, free from insects and disease. During the rice-planting season, take out the seedlings from the nursery bed and taken them home. Offer three bunches of them to Kami, and pray to be allowed to plant them in the paddies. Pray that the offered seedlings will take root and grow well without insects and disease. Also pray for a large harvest. Pray for all other crops in the same way. Always remember to do this, and receive the virtue of Heaven and Earth. (I Saito Sojiro 9-2, 3 Kyoten page 302-303)*

### Receive the virtue of Heaven and Earth through your conscientious prayers for doing things

As a farmer, the Founder tried to revive the Akazawa family where he was adopted at the age of 12. He worked hard and became one of the biggest farm land owner in the village when he reached around the age of 40. Because of his background as a successful farmer, many farmers went to see him for matters pertaining to the practice of farming.

Some of them consulted the Founder how they could increase harvest yield of crops; some other farmers tried to find out the best rice seeds for the year. They were attracted to the mysterious spiritual power exhibited by the Founder.

But the Founder didn't give them specific instructions for their requests. He simply stated an ordinary practice of farming that they should extend conscientious prayers for their engagement in their day to day operation of the farming. He didn't give any mysterious instructions for them. The Founder stated that whatever they did they could get virtues of Heaven and Earth through their extended prayers. In farming, the most vital element is to learn to appreciate the wondrous working of Heaven and Earth. The yield of crops represents the virtuous work of Heaven and Earth. Keep this in mind is vital in farming.

They say that the true essence of the Konko faith practice is expressed in the term, "Jitsui-Teinei" or conscientious exercise of one's heart for doing anything and get engaged in doing anything with the heart of sincerity. First, we have to extend our sincere prayers for anything we are going to do because we do not do anything on our own power. For Konko believers it would be a due action to extend our prayers to Kami for doing anything because we need Kami's help. To extend prayers to Kami is not asking Kami to take care of what we have done. Through our conscious exercise of extending prayers for doing anything, we will learn to appreciate virtuous work of Heaven and Earth.

People in this advanced society seem to neglect to extend their prayers to Kami. While we enjoy modernized convenient life styles, if we have a heart of extending prayers to Kami even such a minor act of turning on household equipment, we would be able to enjoy virtuous work of Heaven and Earth.

*Below are photos from Clayton and Edna's Wedding*

