



## "The blessed nature of water and how to connect to Kami-Sama through water."



By Rev. Yasuhiro Yano  
Head Minister of Konko Mission of Wahiawa

Greetings! I would like to share with you the message I shared during the Konko Missions in Hawaii 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual ZOOM Gathering. This gathering has been organized by the Konko Missions in Hawaii Community Engagement and Outreach Committee.

We have been conducting a bi-monthly Kyoten Study Group Session on ZOOM for the past year and a half. We generally have about 5 to 8 participants join. Nowadays, we spend a little over an hour discussing a message or two from The Voice of the Universe. So for today's Zoom gathering, we hope to exchange thoughts about "The blessed nature of water and how to connect to Kami-Sama through water."

When I was an intermediate student, I was a participant in an English dictation contest. The contest was just to remember a short article in the English textbook. I still remember the first word spoken by Helen Keller was the word "WATER." It could be very symbolic that the first word she could ever pronounce was water, since it is the most prevalent and essential element for the sustenance of life on earth. Water could be very special for her since she could not hear, see or speak. But with the help of her teacher, she learned to pronounce the word water.

Water is a big subject. There have been ongoing international forums, researches of different aspects, cultural traditions, religious usages and customs and we simply use it for granted.

One of our concerns would be our monthly water bill. Some people have been very concerned about contaminating elements of water that may be in the very water we use every day.

The theme of today's meeting "The blessed nature of water: How to connect to Kami-Sama through water" can be quite meaningful.

Last year in October, I traveled to Japan and stayed three weeks under the cumbersome and restrictive nature of the pandemic by having to quarantine for 2 weeks at a hotel near Narita International Airport. I went to Japan to attend the centennial anniversary of the Konko Church of Iwatani in Hiroshima, which by the way is my elder brother's church. While in Japan, I visited Gohonbu in Konko Town. I greeted the 6th Konko-Sama, the Rev. Hiromichi Konko sitting at the okekai. When I'm at the Headquarters I always visit the water well. The water well was said to have been used by the Founder. We regard the sacred water as "Goshinsui" or holy water. Because of the pandemic, I saw that the water drinking ladles were no longer there. It was probably taken away to prevent the spread of the virus. The faucet was open for use. I filled my water in the bottle and returned to the inn.

The same cool and delicious water from the sacred grounds of Gohonbu was actually served to the Rev. Masayuki Kodama, the founding minister of the Konko Mission of Honolulu who had been under some kind of medical treatment at the hospital in 1973. In a booklet published in commemoration of the 15th Memorial of the late Rev. Masayuki Kodama, published in August of 1988, the Rev. Kikue Kodama extended her thoughts.

"Three months before my husband's departure due to terminal intestinal cancer, Masayuki sensei made a pilgrimage to Gohonbu. One day before his departure, the Rev. Sueko Katsura, Head Minister of Konko Church of Kokura in Fukuoka and her daughter Rev. Ryōko Katsura came to visit Rev. Masayuki Kodama at the hospital. They brought with them bottled water from Gohonbu and served it to him. Rev. Kodama responded in deep gratitude for the special water. The following day, he departed in peace."

It would be virtually impossible to tell the difference between a glass of water they served at the hospital, versus a glass of sacred water that came from the Headquarters. But the Rev. Kodama appreciated the overwhelming thoughts and prayers symbolically filled in the bottle of water by the Rev. Katsura.

It is not just the water from the sacred grounds of Gohonbu, but I believe that all forms of water can be regarded as sacred water.

Water is Kami-Sama. The nature of water can be likened to the presence of Kami-Sama that without water, we simple do not exist. The Founder Konko Daijin related, "The light that the Sun shines upon us is a blessing. So too, for the rain that falls. Kami lets all humans live amid divine blessings. People are born into divine blessings, live amid divine blessings, and die amid divine blessings" (II Toshimori Shino 1).

This short message from Konko Daijin tells of the basic life sustaining elements. I am convinced to response to this given message is to practice faith.

At Gohonbu, a jar of water and cooked rice is offered to the main sanctuary every morning in appreciation of the blessed nature of water and rice to sustain our given lives. It's offered every morning in coordination with the daily morning procession of Konko-Sama from his residence to the Worship Hall. As a standard, Konko Churches in Japan and around the world cook rice first thing in the morning and offer it along with a jar of water during the morning prayer. We refer to them as "*goshin-pan*" or sacred cooked rice and "*goshin-sui*" sacred water.

Some dedicated believers place a glass of water and cooked rice at the house altar in following what the Konko church does daily. By doing so, they try to appreciate these elements as blessings of the Life Force: Tenchi Kane No Kami in our daily living.

Personally, I put about a half a litter of water in a pot and add some goshinmai rice into the water and gently boil it to make it soft water. Then I partake it as "*goshin-sui*" or a sacred water and drink a cup of the water every morning.

The late Rev. Kagamitaro Konko, the 4th Konko-Sama composed a signature verse. The original Japanese reads, "世話になるすべてに礼を言う心 平和生み出す心といはん" that can be translated into English as follows, "Responding in gratitude for all elements that contribute to our lives can also contribute to the prevalence of peace." This verse is totally applicable in our daily life. Personally, I remind myself as follows: 「世話になる全ての水に礼を言う心」 or "Respond in gratitude for any elements of water in our daily life".

When I wake up in the morning, I use the bathroom, wash my face, gargle my mouth, shave my face, brush my teeth, drink a glass of *goshinsui*, drink coffee, eat breakfast, wash dishes, cook, use the washing machine, take a bath, and so forth. It rains often in the morning in Central Oahu, but I still water the plants daily so they do not wilt in the afternoon Sun. Every time I use water, I have to remind myself to say thank you. Without water, we would be heavily inconvenienced. I want to challenge you to appreciate water in the many ways we use them in our daily lives.

I want to share with you a legendary episode about water the Founder Konko Daijin gave to Rev. Matsuhei Katsura for your reference.

"After the Founder finished giving a teaching, he said, "To the person from Suo Province, I'm glad to see that you have come to worship from afar."

I was deeply impressed by Konko-Sama's divine virtue. While I was in awe, Konko-Sama quietly went before the altar and clapped his hands in prayer. In a prompt revelation, "Though you think that water as bad, don't think so. Think of water as medicine. Then you won't have a stomach illness."

He solemnly continued, "Don't say that water is the cause of your stomach illness. Without water, you cannot live even for a day. What is the earth made from? It's made from water. Don't they say that a single ear of rice needs a liter of water to grow? Be aware of the benefit of water."

I felt so much gratitude that my body trembled while I bowed. When Konko-Sama returned to his *kekai seat*, he turned to me with smiling eyes and kindly told me, "Person from Suo, your doubts of I being a phony kami have been dispelled. This is good. "I was so much in awe, and felt so ashamed by Konko-Sama's divine virtue, which could span across the nation, that I felt like crawling into a hole." (GII:Katsura, Matsuhei:1.7)

How aware are we of the blessed nature of water?

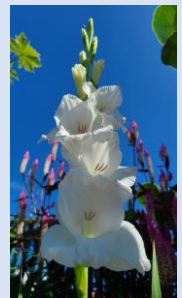
## Konko-Sama Said

Everyone is now able to receive the blessings of Tenchi Kane No Kami because Konko Daijin received divine blessings first. If there is one true believer in a family, then all of the family members will become believers. If there is one family in a village who truly believes in this faith, all of the villagers will begin to receive divine blessings. Practicing faith is like one seed becoming ten thousand. Therefore, those who initiate faith should sow a good seed. If the seed is bad, it will be a bad start, and it will be difficult to raise no matter how hard you try. (III Jinkyukyogoroku 37)

## 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.

# Bulletin Board

## Church Services for August 2022

1 Mon -Monthly Svc for Tenchi Kane No Kami (7:30 pm)  
7 Sun -Monthly Service for Ikigami Konko Daijin (9 am)  
14 Sun -Sunday Service (9 am)  
21 Sun -Monthly Memorial Service (9 am)

## September 2022

1 Thur -Monthly Svc for Tenchi Kane No Kami (7:30 pm)  
4 Sun -Sunday Service (9 am)  
5 Mon -KMH Kauai Visit to past site of Hanapepe Church  
-Holiday—Labor Day!

## Announcements:

●We miss the physical presence of **Ms. Jean Fusaye Noguchi** who passed away on April 17, 2022 at the age of 94 and 10 months in our faith community. Her private funeral was conducted in accordance with the Buddhist tradition. We continue to pray for her spirit.

### ●**Blessing at Honouliuli National Monument Site**

On July 19, 2022, Rev. Edna Matsuoka conducted a blessing for the Honouliuli National Monument in request from the JCCH (Japanese Cultural Center of Hawaii) in commemoration of the 20th anniversary since the site was initially identified in 2002 and pray for the safety during the construction of their new access way. In corresponding to the ceremony, the Rev. Matsuoka has also been invited to a dedication ceremony at the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles to honor the people of Japanese ancestry who have been incarcerated at the internment camps throughout the United States in September of this year.

### ●**Annual Summer Memorial Service at the Ehimemaru Memorial**

Hawaii Ehime Kenjinkai will host the annual Summer Memorial Service at the Ehimemaru Memorial on August 20, 2022 at 10 a.m. Rev. Yasuhiro Yano will conduct the service with the assistance of Rev. Edna Matsuoka.

### ●**Kaka'ako Waterfront Park Clean-up Program**

Hawaii Conference of Religions for Peace (HCRP) will host the annual Kaka'ako Waterfront Park Clean-up Program on Sat. Sept. 24, 2022 from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. Just be there and enjoy clean-up of the entire park area. It will be a refreshing experience for you. Bottled water and clean-up supplies will be provided.

●Thank you for your support and help for the garage sale held on July 3, 2022. A total of \$2002.19 was deposited to the church general fund account to cover some of the costs of the church fumigation.

## Konko Missions in Hawaii

- KMH CEOC Meeting on Zoom on August 5, (3 pm)
- KMH Board Mtg on Zoom and in person on 8/6 (10:30 am)
- The Community Engagement and Outreach Committee initiated the bi-monthly KMH Kyoten study group via Zoom. The main reference book will be "Voice of the Universe."

Please join the study session and deepen your understanding about the messages of the Founder on August 24 (Wed at 5 pm)

●HCRP Mtg @Honolulu Church, August 29, 2022 (1:30 pm)

●Rotary Hanashikai Gathering on Zoom

The second Rotary Hanashikai Gathering will be held on September 11, 2022 on Zoom. The meeting will be hosted by the Konko Mission of Honolulu. Please join to share your okage blessings with other people in the faith community.

### ●**KMH Kauai Gathering 2022**

KMH Community Engagement and Outreach Committee has planned a one-day trip to the initial site of Konko Mission of Hanapepe. The church building is still said to be standing with the faint silhouette of the eight petaled Yatsunami Konko Crest on the upper entrance board of the house building. The church building was closed over 28 years ago in 1994, and used by a third party now. This year marks the 25<sup>th</sup> Memorial Year of the late Rev. Shoichi Okuno, the founding minister of the church. In commemorating this auspicious year, we simply wish to visit the site and remember and contemplate about the missionary work at Konko Mission of Hanapepe. It will be a one-day gathering. We will leave Honolulu early in the morning and arrive back to Honolulu in the early evening. The flight to Kauai will be arranged individually and paid. The ground transportation will be subsidized by KMH. If you have interest in the visitation, please contact with the Rev. Koichi Konko at 808-533-7173.

The deadline for the application will be on August 17, 2022.

## The Life of the Founder

金光教祖の生涯 瀬戸三喜雄 金光教学研究所 紀要別冊教学叢書 2

*The following is an English translation of a book titled, "Konko Kyoso no Shougai" or "The Life of the Founder Konko Daijin" authored by the Rev. Mikio Seto, and was published by Konkokyo Theological Research Center. The publication was made in 1980. There are many biographies about the life of the Founder Konko Daijin. I would like to introduce this article for your reference in your pursuit of faith. An English translation was provided by Rev. Yasuhiro Yano. (No.19 page 63-66)*

(continued from the previous issue)

### **Pilgrimage for a safe clearance of the "Yakudoshi" a calamity at the age of 42**

In 1855, Bunji turned 42 years old. In accordance with the social tradition, Bunji extended his prayer for a safe clearance of the passage of the year claiming to be unlucky. He did this by praying at his house altar and extending a prayer to the deity of the year. He also made pilgrimages to the village shrine and asked Head Priest Chikuzen Kōda for the passage of the year of calamity and requested to change the birth year of his son Unojō.

The age of 42 for men was originally shown by the Chinese character, 役年 that meant they have matured enough to be able to be assigned to public duties, such as tasks for the annual village festivities. People who reached the age of 42 may have undergone cumbersome rituals and rites of passage such as purification of their bodies and minds. Undergoing these cumbersome and troubling rites of passes imposed some burdens on those people who reached the age of 42. They began to perceive the age of 42 as the year of having to go through those cumbersome traditions. It was also about the time when people began to experience some physical abnormalities, and that in turn was shown in the Chinese character of 厄年, the year of calamity. They began to see the age of 42 as the year they had to endure with some negative encounters in life.

Bunji was also very much concerned to turn 42. In responding to the ominous age, he made pilgrimages to the three well established shrines and temples located at Bizen province (eastern region of Okayama), Bitchu province (central region of Okayama) and Bingo province (western region of Okayama) and prayed that he would be able to safely clear the age of calamity. Tomono Gion Shrine in Bingo province was well-known for its believed virtuous power of healing and prevention of epidemics, such as smallpox. At the shrine, Bunji asked the priest to grant a wooden talisman placard as a proof of his visitation. Kibitsugu Shrine located at Bitchu province was the main shrine that included the village shrine at Otani. At the shrine, Bunji asked the priest to perform a religious rite of a large kettle for cooking rice. When some portion of rice was boiled in the kettle, it made some sounds that could be interpreted by the priest for fortune telling. During the rite, the kettle sounded twice. Bunji interpreted the unusual kettle sounds as a sign of good fortune and extended much gratitude. The Saidaiji Temple in Bizen province held the annual observance of clearing away bad encounters for two weeks from the New Year's Day. At the closing of the observance, they held "Eyou" tradition in which an overwhelming number of participants compete to grab a sacred wooden staff called the "Shingi" that was believed to have the power to ward off bad encounters in life. Bunji was one of the participants. Bunji attended to those established religious places well prepared and with a firm determination to ward off any negative encounters at the age of 42.

In the aftermath of April 25, after finishing the day's work of harvesting barley, Bunji felt some discomfort in the throat and eventually bedridden. He developed "nodoke" or a serious throat ailment. The condition turned serious, and he could hardly swallow even some water. The doctor diagnosed that he was at the critical condition. While he was bedridden, he pondered about the difficult condition, "It could be the curse of the age of 42; the situation could be the result of the bad combination of being a 42-year-old parent with a two-years old child; or it would be the case of the so-called 'Seven death of the curse of Konjin.'"

Bunji seemed to respond calmly and accepted the critical condition as the due course of his life. At that time, Bunji did not agonize. Through the lifestyle he lived, he could accept the situation. In the calmness, for some reasons, he could surrender himself to the hands of Kami-Sama without any doubts. He assured that he had done the utmost dealings with the encounters in life as a human being. He could not find any other alternatives for the given situation. What he could do was to accept whatever the consequences that could develop in accordance with the will of Kami-Sama and Buddha. The fact Bunji could have turned his heart toward Kami-Sama and Buddha in facing his own terminal stage in life assured the way of his religiously oriented life he had lived up to that stage. His heart was empty and clear in calmness. He could observe his own illness through a third person's vision. The conversations exchanged among the relatives who had gathered sounded like it had nothing to do with his condition.

The relatives who showed up in responding to the situation tried to help the farm work of the house that was stranded because Bunji was bedridden. The work was to thresh the harvested barley. Some of them remarked in regret, "Unojo should not have been raised." If the household head died, the burden of the family could be devastating. He heard some of the other relatives saying, "This is not the right time to thresh the barley." They all agreed with the expressed thought and hurried to finish threshing barely as quickly as possible. After finishing the work, they all gathered in a room, and prayed to Kami-Sama for Bunji. They responded to extend their prayers together in responding to the way of life Bunji who lived in faith. The gathering continued from the evening and late at night on April 29. (to be continued)

*Flower that bloomed in the Wahiwawa Kyokai Garden*

