



KONKO MISSION BULLETIN

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***“Shinjin wa Shijin de kangaeru”* or “Think things out in exercise of the faith”**

*By Yasuhiro Yano,
Head Minister*

For the first time since we came to Hawaii, both my wife and I enjoyed a pilgrimage to attend the 90th Anniversary Celebration of the Konko Church of Iwatani in Hiroshima where my elder brother has been serving as Head Minister. This Japan trip was a present from our daughter, Edna, as we both turned 60 years old this year. She knew that our greatest happiness is to make a visit to Gohonbu Headquarters Church, Konko Church of Amagi and see our parents and family members in our native towns. While we were away from the church, she took over the responsibilities of the church operation for nine days alone. Along with my visit to the church, we made a visit to eleven churches including Gohonbu Headquarters Church in Konko Town. The churches we visited have contributed for our continued services in Hawaii in one way or another. I was also able to meet my mother and all of my six living siblings and their family members. Their strong involvement in the practice of the Konko faith is another contributing factor for our continued engagement in our missionary work in Hawaii.

The anniversary celebration services were held on November 5 and 6, 2011. The service held on the 5th was called “Zenya-sai” or pre-celebration service. And the following day, the main anniversary service was held in combination with the annual observance of the Grand Service for Ikigami Konko Daijin. The services were well attended with many ministers from local regions and visitors from many places along with the local congregation. It was deeply moving in witnessing my brother who was afflicted with a stroke 10 years ago and was temporarily paralyzed has regained his normal health and conducted service.

About a half year before the function, my brother, the Rev. Seiji Inagaki, asked me to be the keynote speaker for both of the services since I came all the way from Hawaii. I humbly accepted the offer and was able to present my sermon in Japanese for over one hour and a half, which was also the first time I have spoken that long in Japanese at a church function in Japan. For the preparation of the speech presentation, I developed a speech script titled “Inochi no Ohatsuho” or an offering of oneself in

appreciation of the blessings received. I felt like I have given a very good opportunity to look back at my missionary work in Hawaii in the last 34 years. The script included how the Yano family has gotten involved in the practice of faith by my grandfather and how I got engaged in my missionary work in Hawaii and some of my thoughts and experiences in here.

After the presentation, my brother expressed his amazement for the thought of “*Shinjin wa Shinjin de kangaeru*” or when we practice faith, we need to think things out in exercise of the faith. He expressed he had never heard of such an expression of “*Shinjin wa Shijin de kangaeru*” when we are determined to practice the Konko faith.” When we speak English, we are naturally thinking in English. I am just applying the principle of the language learning. We learn to speak our language only because we continue to retain what have been spoken in our environment ever since we were in the womb. In about one or two years after the birth, we learn to speak the language. It is the state of saturation of the elements in our head. When our brains are saturated with the elements of the native language, we naturally learn to speak out in that language. Just like a cup filling up with water; the water overflows when filled to its maximum capacity. In the same sense as the elements of the Konko faith saturate our minds, we naturally begin to think things out in exercise of the faith.

Do you remember the story related by the Rev. Horio of Hita during last year’s KMH-KCNA Joint Conference held at Camp Erdman? His message was so powerful that I still remember it vividly. I would like to introduce a brief description of the quoted episode for your reference. One of the church members encountered a theft. One day, she parked her car at the side of the road for a short errand. Several minutes later when she returned to her parked car, she found the door of the car to be open and her purse and other valuables left in the car were stolen. She panicked and responded to the situation quickly by notifying the banks of the stolen cards and so forth. Then she went to see the minister at church and related the encounter. At first, she extended her apology to Kami, citing that because of her carelessness, she had helped someone to commit the crime of theft. And extended her appreciation in acknowledgement of the development as an instance of a major misfortune turned into a minor one, despite the fact her personal belongings were stolen.” This is a typical response of a Konko believer who thinks things out in a faith based perspective.

But later, as she left the church hall, she met with one of the church members in the yard. They got engaged in a conversation. They talked loud and their conversation and could be audible by the minister who sat in the hall. The same believer who extended her exemplary response to the episode of theft at the place of the Divine-Mediation began to pour out her uncensored thoughts to her friend in an unbelievable manner. She mentioned how lax the law enforcement was when she is paying taxes for the police officers and so forth. The minister was shocked to hear this coming from the mouth of the same woman who seemed to have mediated ever so humbly earlier. He began to question his own ministry as to what went wrong in the process of trying to develop a faithful church member. He concluded that he could not blame the believer. Instead he blamed himself for the woman's behavior because his ministering has failed to teach the believer adequately.

When she went to see the minister at church, she expressed her thoughts in exercise of the faith. While she encountered one of her acquaintances, she responded in exercise of her subconscious mind. Maybe she knew the lay believer may not understand her expressions of taking this incident as a blessing.

That story shows us an excellent example of thinking things through on a faith based perspective.

I also found another good example of this topic exhibited by the Rev. Naofumi Inoue, Head Minister of Konko Church of Ishinomaki in Miyagi Prefecture. The church sustained minor affects but escaped devastating damages from the 3/11 Earthquake and Tsunami Disasters in Eastern Japan. In recollection of the disasters, he stated, "It is not that the place I live in Ishinomaki was afflicted with devastation. But I was allowed to live in Ishinomaki which was afflicted with the devastation of the earthquake and tsunami, so I was able to experience the living nature of Heaven and Earth" (Konko Shinbun issued on November 27, 2011, page 3).

To our church members, I always try to quote a teaching that Konko-Sama related to Toshimori Shino, "The light that the Sun shines upon us is a divine blessing. The rain that falls is a divine blessing as well. All humans are allowed to live in the midst of divine blessings. People are born amid divine blessings, live amid blessings and die amid divine blessings" (II Toshimori Shino 1). The blessed sunlight and blessed water shall remain blessed elements regardless of the surrounding circumstances. We refer to blessed sunlight as "oterashi" or euphoric expression of blessed sunlight, and "oshimeri" or euphoric expression of blessed moisture.

The best way to learn to live faith with a faith based perspective is to go to church and try to saturate your mind with the elements of the Konko faith.



Revs. Seijiro Inagaki, Yasuhiro Yano, Reiko Yano and brothers and sister and their family members at the Konko Church of Iwatani

Konko-Sama Says . . .

"Nothing is more blessed than having an illness cured. Up to now, people have practiced faith in Kami only during sickness, and not during wellness," said Konko-Sama. "You must also pray while in good health. Practicing faith is ever more important while not in pain. Request wholeheartedly for divine arrangement that will have your family and farm animals safe and healthy." (Gorikai I Ichimura Mitsugoro 53)

Tenchi Kane No Kami wants 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 examine the Days and Directions and commit irreverence to Kami and encounter hardships due to their accumulated offenses. They are to practice faith and receive divine blessings. Tenchi Kane No Kami has sent Ikigami Konko Daijin to the people to give blessings and teachings and to have them prosper forever." (Konko Daijin Oboegaki 21-21)

Bulletin Board

Regular Church Services for December 2011

- 1 Thur -Monthly Svc. for Tenchi Kane no Kami 7:30 pm
4 Sun -Sunday Service at 9 am
11 Sun -Monthly Service for Founder at 9 am
18 Sun -39th Memorial Service for the Late Rev. Haruko Takahashi at 10 am. Naorai lunch will follow.
25 Sun -End of the Year Service at 9 am

January 2012

- 1 Sun -New Year's Day Service at 9 am. Traditional New Year's Cuisine will be served after service.

Volunteer at Wahiawa General Hospital

We will make a monthly visit to the Wahiawa General Hospital Long-Term Care Facility on Friday, December 9 at 10:00 a.m. by means of offering entertainment for the people cared for in the facility. The program is in Japanese.

H.C.R.P. Peace Prayer Observance

The regular meeting will be held on Monday, January 9 at the Church of Perfect Liberty at 1:30 p.m.

39th Memorial Service for the Late Rev. Haruko Takahashi

The annual 39th Memorial Service for the late Rev. Haruko Takahashi, the founding minister of Konko Mission of Wahiawa will be held on Sunday, December 18. She passed away on December 24, 1972 after serving 32 years for the faith community in Wahiawa. Please join the service in person and extend your appreciation for her contribution for the blessed lives we have been enjoying as Konko believers. A light Naorai lunch will be served after the service.

Mochi Pounding

This year marks the 20th year since we started the traditional mochi pounding with wooden mallet and specially crafted stainless steel shelled "usu" mortar. Mochi pounding will start at 7:00 a.m. and end around 4:00 p.m. Mochi pick up will be after 3:00 p.m. The first 250 pounds of orders will be accepted. The deadline for order will be on Monday, December 26. Your participation is a must for this labor-intensive program. We need mochi pounders, fire-keepers, mochi-shapers and so forth. Some give away mochi and curry lunch will be served for the volunteers.

Honoring the Mitama Spirits for December

Hilda Kazuno Yamamoto	12/14/2009
Lillian Tanigawa	12/16/2010
Shizuko Takayama	12/21/2006
Rev. Fumio Yasutake	12/23/1995
Rev. Haruko Takahashi	12/24/1972

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

Distinctive nature of offerings in Konko Faith

The Konkokyo Honbu or Konkokyo Headquarters Office published a book titled "Toritsugi ni ikiru" which is a compilation of articles contributed by the ministers who lived as Toritsugi-Mediators at their own designated churches. The following is an excerpt from pages 24 to 26 of the book. The subject of the article is about the distinctive perspective of offerings in accordance with the Konko faith tradition. The English translation is provided by Yasuhiro Yano.

The offerings forwarded by the believers represent an expressed message of appreciation to Kami, and not the Toritsugi-Mediators (ministers). But it could happen that the Toritsugi-Mediators conceive the nature of the offering mistakenly, in such manners that he or she would extend thanks to the believers who made the offerings, or may take the offerings for themselves in exercise of a human-oriented perception. The same misperception could happen to the believers. If the believers intend to give offerings not to Kami but to the ministers in return for the blessing received, his or her thoughts of thanks may not reach Kami.

It is through the Toritsugi-Mediators who should always be mindful that the nature of offerings are directed to Kami and keep the basic attitude of a Kami-centered service at the Toritsugi-Mediation desk, that makes it possible to convey the forwarded sincerity from believers to Kami without any disruptions.

The following episode shows that the Toritsugi-Mediators successfully guided a believer to get connected to Kami through the subject of offerings.

Offerings are to be forwarded to Kami; not to the Toritsugi-Mediators

The following episode was related by Mr. Magotaro Igarashi, a believer of Konko Church of Otaru in Hokkaido. His article is printed in the publication "Otaru no Michi wake" issued by the Konko Church of Otaru.

If I say "Thank you" to the believers for offerings (Case No. 3)

The Rev. Kojiro Yashiro of Konko Church of Otaru never extended words of thanks to the believers regardless if they offered large amounts of money, an expensive item or rare items. He simply placed the offerings on the offertory table and communicated the extended thoughts of the believers to Kami-Sama through his prayer. I was always puzzled at the way the minister responded to the offerings in such a manner that he seemed to have no interests in making money. He could give an incentive to the believers to give more offerings to him and he would gain much financial freedom if he extended appreciative words or return pleasing remarks. And one of those days, I was urged to ask the minister, "Sensei, I believe you are missing something important because you have never expressed thanks to the believers who forwarded offerings to you. Why don't you ever say thank

you for those offerings that people make? What do you think about my thoughts?” When I look back at this moment in life later on, I felt so ashamed of myself for my awkward question to the minister.

The Rev. Yashiro responded, “Igarashi-san, I have encountered many people, but you are the first person who dared to ask me this question. But that is a good question. And I will tell you the reason for my behavior in handing the offerings forwarded. The believers come to church and forward offerings in appreciation of the work of Kami-Sama. I proceed before the Kami altar and convey the message extended by the believers by citing the name of the believer and place the offerings on the offertory table. If they express the offerings are for me, then, I would say thanks to them. But I cannot say thanks to them for the offering intended to Kami-Sama. If I would extend my thanks to them for the offerings made by any chance, I would be stealing them for myself, and the offerings would not reach Kami-Sama. Consequently, the believers would not be able to enjoy blessings from Kami-Sama. Because I do not interrupt the expressed intent of the believers, Kami-Sama would respond to them. If I say thanks to them, I would be stealing the offerings intended to Kami-Sama for myself. A teaching of the Founder says, ‘Kami will give thanks to you when other people do not appreciate your assistance.’ This distinctive concept about the offerings in the Konko faith tradition shall be appreciated in the practice of faith. Any other religious faiths, including Shintoism and Buddhism, the priests and monks take all the offerings for themselves, and the believers do not get blessed. In the same token, if the believers receive thanks from the ministers for the offerings they make, they would not get blessed either. Such practices will be meaningless and regretful. They do not appreciate this principle about the nature of offerings. I feel sorry in witnessing many believers who become entertained by receiving pleasing comments by their ministers when they offer great things. Both the ministers who receive offerings for themselves and the believers who forward offerings would not get blessed. Instead, they will be committing irreverence against the deities they believe. Ever since I have engaged in my missionary work in Otaru, I have been keenly aware of not to make any mistakes in handling of offerings.” He also added, “There are many believers who have enjoyed blessings, but do not respond to come to offer appreciation for the blessings received. But a teaching stated, ‘The Toritsugi-Mediator will be blessed with divine trust if believers do not give thanks for the blessings they received.’ I do not care much, but feel more grateful if the believers come to offer thanks to Kami for the blessings they enjoyed. We should be mindful about the solemn nature of the offerings made to Kami-Sama.”

(Reference resource: “Otaruno Michi Wake” by Konko Church of Otaru)