



To Keep Thriving Is the Best Way to Say “Thank You” to Our Ancestors



By Rev. Yasuhiro Yano,
Head Minister

The following message is based on the speech I gave for the annual Autumn Memorial Service held on September 22, 2024.

I have planted as many fruit trees as possible in the very limited space of the church yard. I am from Ehime, where my family has been engaged in citrus farming for generations. We are fortunate to have yuzu trees, tangerine trees, egg fruit trees, a lemon tree, a lemon drop mangosteen tree, a starfruit tree, a fig tree, a jaboticaba tree, a jackfruit tree, banana trees, mango tree, and so forth. I water the yard every morning and admire the greenery. There are also cherry trees which bloom beautifully in the spring.

When you look at a tree—any tree—consider Japan, the land of cherry blossoms. Cherry trees do not yield much fruit, except for cherries. I have been wondering why people admire the beauty of the cherry blossoms. The answer is simple: we admire the thriving nature of the trees that produce beautiful flowers year after year. Admiring the beauty of flowers is to admire the thriving nature of the trees that produce them. The same is true for the fruit trees in the yard.

The Dazaifu Tenmangu Shrine in Fukuoka is well known for its beautiful plum blossoms. The founding minister of the Amagi Church, Rev. Matsutaro Yasutake, composed a Japanese verse saying that people admire only the beauty of the flowers but do not appreciate the workings of the roots that sustain the thriving tree. If a tree produces poor flowers, we do not care about the presence of the tree at all. However, when it produces attractive flowers, we look at and admire their beauty.

The same sentiment can be extended to a tree stump. The Founder, Konko Daijin, said that when you take a rest, even on a tree stump, and enjoy some comfort, say “Thank you” for the comfort you could enjoy. A tree stump may seem useless, and we often pay no attention to it or even try to get rid of it. Yet, when the tree thrived in the past, people might have admired its liveliness and beauty.

Our lives are similar. If a person enjoys a successful life, people pay attention to and admire that individual. However, they may not be aware of the “roots” of that person and only look at the outward achievements. Without the foundational support of the individual’s ancestors, that person would not be able to enjoy a thriving life. In a sense, our lives reflect our ancestors.

The same can be said of our church in Wahiawa. If the church had closed after the passing of the founding minister, Rev. Haruko Takahashi, her name would have been forgotten. The perpetual presence of this church is the best way to say “Thank you” to Rev. Haruko Takahashi. It is your presence that helps sustain the church’s operation. Your presence here today expresses your gratitude to the founding minister and your family ancestors as well.

Whenever I encounter a successful individual in society, I always extend my thoughts to their ancestors.

Voice of the Universe...

1. There are people between Heaven and Earth. Heaven is father and Earth is mother. Humans, plants, and other living things live on Earth through the blessings they receive from Heaven. *I Ishihara Ginzo 1*
2. Heaven and Earth continue to live. Because Heaven and Earth are alive, all people are able to live. *III Jinkyu Kyogoroku 104*

Bulletin Board

December 2024

- 1 Sun -Monthly Service for Tenchi Kane No Kami
(9:00 am)
8 Sun -Monthly Svc for Ikigami Konko Daijin
(9 am)
15 Sun -52nd Memorial Svc Late Rev. Haruko
Takahashi (10 am)
22 Sun -End of the Year Service (9 am)
29 Sun -No Sunday Service—Mochi Prep
30 Mon-33rd Annual Mochi Pounding from 8:00 am

January 2025

- 1 Wed -New Year's Day Service at 9 am

● Monthly Volunteer Activity at St. Francis The next activity will be on Fri, December 6 @ 10:30 am

● KMH Kyōten Study Group via Zoom Voice of the Universe Join us: December 11 (Wed. 5 pm-6 pm) ZOOM

● KMH CEOC Meeting, Monday, December 16 at 9:00 am, ZOOM

December

Hilda Kazuno Yamamoto	12/14/2007
Isamu Iwasa	12/17/1943
Rev. Fumio Yasutake	12/23/1995
Shizuko Takayama	12/21/2006
Rev. Haruko Takahashi	12/24/1972
Lillian Tanigawa	12/16/2010
Fumitake Yoshiiwa	12/15/2012
Frederick Michael Conti	12/6/2015
Francisco Bareng	12/12/2017
Hitoye Higuchi	12/25/1969
Sojiro Noguchi	12/15/1961

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, "Konkō Kyōso no Shōgai" or "The Life of the Founder Konko Daijin" authored by the Rev. Mikio Seto and published by Konkōkyo Theological Research Center in 1980. Many biographies about the life of the Founder Konko Daijin exist. I would like to introduce this article for your reference in your pursuit of faith. An English translation was provided by Rev. Yasuhiro Yano. (continued from the previous issue) Page 160-163

Dedication of Bunji to the Toritsugi-Mediation

The way Bunji devoted himself to his service as a Toritsugi-Mediator was extraordinary. After he began his work, he left the Hiromae for external matters only on a few occasions for the rest of his life. He consistently served at the Hiromae. At an early stage of his service, according to a talk by Hagio Konko, "At the beginning, he never left the Hiromae unattended if there were visitors. Later, he served from 6 o'clock in the morning to 6 o'clock in the evening." Whenever he was informed by Kami of a visitor, he would sit at the desk and wait for the arrival, even late at night, as noted by Tahichi Matsumoto. Occasionally, he attended to visitors one after another from early morning without having breakfast, with his only meal being in the evening.

Family members, concerned about his well-being, tried to entice him to take a break and eat by pulling the sleeve of his clothes from behind, saying the prepared meal would get cold. However, Bunji did not respond to their requests and kept serving. During the cold winters in Otani village, despite the harsh weather, he did not use a portable heater or seek comfort at a heated table, according to Ichimura Mitsugoro. In May, based on the lunar calendar, he wore a kimono with cotton inserts meant for winter. When a visitor asked, "Don't you feel uncomfortable in your clothes?" Bunji replied, "I will not change my clothes until I receive an instruction from Kami," according to Mitsujiro Sato.

In this manner, Bunji treated every aspect of his daily life as "shugyo," or spiritual and mental training designated by Kami. He always prioritized Kami's intentions.

Bunji once shared with someone, "While I serve at the Hiromae in this manner, responding to visitors, I never feel the need to use the bathroom, nor do I feel hungry, even if I sit here from early morning until midnight," as recounted by Shinzo Aizawa. Bunji never displayed a proud attitude about his service to Kami; he simply felt grateful for the opportunity to serve.

For about three years in the early stages of his service, Bunji asked Kami for permission to sit in the relaxed "agura" (cross-legged) position, as the formal sitting style of folding the legs underneath was difficult for him as a farmer.

The reason Bunji adhered so strictly to remaining at the Hiromae and not leaving the place became clear

later in his life. Some people urged him to go out and engage in missionary work in public, believing it would help more people receive blessings. Bunji responded, “I cannot leave the Hiromae unattended. That is the only reason I do not go out. I have never failed to respond to those who sincerely seek help,” as shared by Jirosiro Kataoka. Kami guided those in need to visit the Hiromae, even from as far away as 300-ri or 400-ri (1-ri is about 4 kilometers), according to Fujimori Kondo.

Bunji was always alert to meet visitors at any time. However, he did not simply wait idly for people to come. His service was grounded in his conviction that through the power of intense prayer, he could help people wherever and whenever they needed assistance. Only those with absolute faith in their power of prayer could practice this method of saving others. Bunji believed this approach was more effective than going out into public for missionary work.

Ever since Bunji began Toritsugi-Mediation, following Kami’s instruction, he placed bundles of straw barrels of barley near the entrance gate under the eaves of Higashinagaya. The unevenly stacked barrels appeared to contain charcoal or barley hulls. Kami’s intention was to teach Bunji the importance of relying on Kami rather than on food reserves. According to Tomie Takahashi, Kami conveyed, “You will sustain your engagement in Toritsugi-Mediation once you have consumed all the food.” While Bunji and his wife experienced frictions over this situation, Kami’s instructions proved correct, as they were able to sustain their daily lives.

In March 1863, following Kami’s instructions, Bunji removed the wooden rain-resistant door at the entrance, allowing people to freely enter the Hiromae. This practice of maintaining a “permanently open entrance” was based on the belief that a house of worship should always remain open for anyone, as explained by Tomie Takahashi.

Visitors came to the Hiromae freely during the daytime, though there were instances of theft. Kami responded to these situations by instructing Bunji: “Today, you will encounter a thief; sneak around the Hiromae, and you will witness the presence of a thief.” On one occasion, a thief froze in place and left the Hiromae without stealing anything. Witnessing such responses from Kami, Bunji developed a conviction that Kami would take care of any situation. He accepted every encounter as part of Kami’s guidance.

Welcome Rev. Yōki Sekiguchi!

Please join me in warmly welcoming Rev. Yōki Sekiguchi, the newly appointed resident minister of the Konko Mission of Hilo! Demonstrating his dedication right from the start, he contributed to the KMH Joint Rummage Sale just a day before embarking on his new journey in Hilo. Rev. Sekiguchi officially assumed his role as resident minister of Hilo Kyokai on December 1, 2024. Let us extend our heartfelt aloha and unwavering support to Sekiguchi Sensei as he begins this exciting chapter of his ministry!



BIG MAHALO!



We extend our heartfelt gratitude for the generous donations of goods for the Wahiawa Church Impromptu Garage Sale held on Sunday, November 17th. The proceeds, totaling \$626.71, will support the church's general fund to aid in its operations. We are also deeply thankful to everyone who stepped in to help on such short notice—it made all the difference. Mahalo!

Just six days later, the Konko Missions in Hawaii organized a large joint rummage sale at the Waipahu Church on Saturday, November 30th. This event was made possible by the generous donations, dedicated volunteers, and the collective efforts of the Konkokyo community. Special thanks go to the ministers and members of the Waipahu Church for hosting this event, taking on extra preparations, and ensuring all the volunteers were well-fed. We are truly grateful for everyone’s contributions to making these events a success!