KONKO MISSION BULLETIN

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In Commemoration of the 30th Memorial of the Late Rev. Fumio Yasutake

By Yasuhiro Yano

I attended the 30th Year Memorial Service for the late Rev. Fumio Yasutake, the second Head Minister of Konko Church of Amagi, held on November 23, 2025. I traveled all the way from Hawai'i because I wanted to respond to the thoughts and prayers Rev. Yasutake had extended to me over the years.

My family in Ehime, Japan, entered the Konko Faith through my grandfather, Tōsuke Yano, at the Konko Church of Kawanoishi. He began practicing simply because, after visiting the newly opened church, he was blessed with children. If he had not encountered the faith, our family line might have ended there.

The third Head Minister of Kawanoishi, Rev. Hidejiro Hosaka, who came from the Konko Church of Amagi, often told my parents, "Yano-san, your family has been greatly blessed. I have been expecting that one or two of your children would one day serve Kami-Sama directly." My parents had eight children, and my father always responded, "Sensei, please don't ask such a troublesome thing." He never imagined any of us would become ministers, knowing how difficult that path could be.

But in the end, both my second eldest brother and I became Konko ministers—something that now feels like a natural unfolding of events arranged long before we understood it.

After gaining some English skills, I looked for work but could not find anything suitable. I began wondering whether those skills might help within the Konko community. While living in Tokyo, I attended the Konko Church of Tokiwadai under Rev. Michio Miyake, who was active internationally in interfaith work. I asked if I could train there as a shugyō student, and he initially agreed. But one week before I was to begin, he suddenly said, "I am sorry, I cannot accept you as a trainee." I didn't ask why, but I now feel that even that rejection played a part in guiding my direction.

That was when I suddenly thought of the Konko Church of Amagi—the parent church of Kawanoishi. If Tokiwadai wasn't the place, then I wanted to train at Amagi. I called my father in Ehime to tell him, and he replied, "That is wonderful. Rev. Hidejiro Hosaka must be very happy."

My father was born through the Toritsugi mediation of Rev. Hosaka. Although he was deeply involved in the church, he once told me, "Until I met Rev. Hosaka at age 19, I thought the church was simply a place to ask Kami-Sama for blessings. But he patiently explained the true nature of the Konko Faith, and that is when I formally became a believer."

Even though Rev. Hosaka was devoted to serving the church, he once traveled to see Rev. Matsutaro Yasutake, the founding minister of Amagi, and confided that he could no longer continue serving the Kawanoishi church—perhaps due to conflicts involving my father. Rev. Matsutaro replied, "The Yano family exists because of the Konko Church of Kawanoishi, and the Konko Church of Kawanoishi exists because of the Yano family."

As I waited at home to enter Amagi for training, Rev. Hosaka thought carefully about how I might be accepted there. He decided the best way was to present me as an "offering of life"—*Inochi no Ohasuho*—from the Yano family in appreciation of all we had received. Some ministers at the time accepted trainees in this traditional manner, as offerings from families who had been blessed.

I entered the Konko Church of Amagi on September 29, 1974. A few days later, while sweeping the yard with a bamboo broom, an elderly man approached me and said, "Yesterday, when we were returning from Konko Church of Kokura, Rev. Fumio Yasutake told us, 'A believer has been offered as osonae.' Through our human eyes, we do not know who Kami-Sama will choose for His work." Only later did I fully understand how meaningful it was to be accepted in that way.

A few months after that, Rev. Yasutake called me in and asked, "There is a vacant church in Hawai'i. Will you go and serve there?" Without hesitation, I replied, "Yes." Regulations required two years of actual service before a minister could serve in the United States.

My wife and I were married at the Amagi church on September 24, 1977, and the very next day we departed for Hawai'i. We visited Gohonbu, greeted Konko-Sama, Rev. Kagamitaro Konko, visited Tokiwadai, and then flew out. We arrived in Honolulu on September 27, visited the Konko Mission of Honolulu, and the next day reached the Konko Mission of Wahiawa. I still remember the sweet floral scent in the air and the warm welcome of the people.

My first act upon arrival was to turn on the light of the worship hall, walk to the sanctuary, and offer my first prayer. From then on, I continued the practice of *Konnichi Made no Orei*—daily gratitude for simply living through each day. My wife and I continue this even now.

Rev. Yasutake once said, "When you are blessed with children, let them become Konko ministers." When we learned he had lung cancer and was given 500 days to live, I thought, "My children should see the minister who lived his faith." We attended the church's 90th Anniversary as a family. Later, David and Rodney went to Amagi for summer training, and after high school, each of our children—David (3 yr), Rodney (3 yr), and Edna (2 yr)—spent a few years each training at Amagi and Gohonbu. During that time, I faxed them English transcripts of my sermons every week. After they returned, through Kami-Sama's blessings, they were able to graduate college, found work, and got married.

Rodney later joined a work-and-study ministerial program in San Francisco, which originally began as a three-year contract in 2004 but was eventually extended. He got married and often says how much he enjoys living there, and how grateful he is for the many people who have become like a second family to him. He has now made San Francisco his permanent home.

From January 2025, he began serving as the Head Minister of the Konko Church of San Francisco, and our prayers for him have never been stronger, especially considering the great responsibility he now carries.

Today, the church could not operate smoothly without the involvement and support of the next generation. In many ways, they are already helping guide the work here in Hawai'i. We are grateful to the pioneer ministers and believers who laid the foundation of the Konko Faith community in these islands.

From time to time, I think about Rev. Fumio Yasutake—how he knew the difficult situation of the vacant Wahiawa Church, which had been without a resident minister for five years, and still chose to send us. When I was still in Amagi, a senior minister who knew the situation well even asked me bluntly, "Omae wa baka ka? Are you out of your mind?" And after more than ten years in Hawai'i, someone else told me, "We expected you would give up and return to Japan within a year."

If Rev. Yasutake had been an ordinary person, I likely would not have come to Hawai'i at all. But because he accepted me as *Shinja no Osonae*—an offering of a believer—I have been able to serve here for 48 years. I later heard that he once told Rev. Masahiko Yoshino of Honolulu, "Let Yano do whatever he decides in his missionary work." I am truly grateful for that trust and support.

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.
2. Heaven and Earth continue to live. Because Heaven and Earth are alive, all people can live. *III Jinkyu Kyogoroku 104*

Bulletin Board for December 2025

● Monthly Volunteer Activity at St. Francis The next activity will be on Fri, 12/5 @ 10:30 am
● KMH Kyōten Study Group via Zoom Voice of the Universe Join us: Wed 12/17 at 5 pm, ZOOM
● JCCH Mochitsuki Demo Sat 12/13 (10 am-1 pm)
● Prince Waikiki Mochi Demo Fri 12/26 (10 am)
● Wahiawa Church Mochitsuki Tue 12/30 (8 am)

In Loving Memory: 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 Shougai" or "The Life of the Founder Konko Daijin" authored by the Rev. Mikio Seto and published by Konkokyo 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 195

Effects of the Nationalization of Shrines

In correspondence with *Hanseki-Hōkan*, which referred to the return of land and people from the feudal lords to the Emperor, the foundation of the Meiji Government was established in 1868. The government sought to build an autocratic system for managing shrines throughout the nation to create an image of the Emperor as a Kami. It established a propagation department to encourage people to believe in this new governmental perspective. In 1870, the government issued an imperial edict to promote "the Way of the Gods" and attempted to shape the nation according to Shintoism. From 1870 to around 1872, these governmental transformations significantly affected Bunji's life.

One major transformation was the policy of integrating Shinto shrines. This policy aimed to transfer ownership of shrine properties—except for the land on which the shrine building itself stood—to the government; assign rankings to shrines; eliminate the *Terauke* or temple registration system; and authorize Shinto priests to issue *morifuda* talismans. At that time, Bunji held the status of a priest responsible for the Konjin Shrine. However, this was only a formality to obtain a priest certificate from the Shirakawa Shinto Office. The actual Konjinsha shrine building did not exist.

According to the so-called *Gōsha Teisoku*, which dictated shrine rankings, the name "Konjinsha" was erased from the official list. The government confiscated Bunji's property, including his mountains. In 1871, likely due to the newly imposed laws, Bunji stopped using the hexagonal tatami mat in his *Hiromae*. Hexagonal tatami mats were commonly used at shrines, but Bunji's *Hiromae* was only an ordinary room in a farmer's house with a simple altar and no proper shrine furnishings, no inherited shrine tradition, and no official shrine status. Bunji had to remove all items associated with shrine practices from the *Hiromae*.

Another effect came from policies concerning Shinto priests. In 1871, the government issued the *Shinkan Shokumu Kisoku*, or bylaws for Shinto priests, which forbade hereditary succession of priesthood and prohibited personal ownership of shrine properties. Because of this law, Bunji had to give up the priesthood he had received from the Shirakawa Shinto Office four years earlier. By around November 1872, Bunji no longer held any priestly status. In response to this situation, authorities began to closely monitor his activities. Below are a couple of episodes illustrating this.

Kiyono Fujii related, "Bunji dealt with unwanted visitations from yamabushi and fortune tellers from time to time. They harassed him and demanded gifts, but he handled them by giving small items or money, and eventually they stopped visiting. However, beginning in 1871, the government imposed regulations that prohibited Bunji from engaging in any religious work. Police officers visited the house, sat at the edge of the room, and watched Bunji's behavior for about 100 days."

According to Haruzo Yamagata, "When five of us went to see Konko-Sama, we saw two police officers at the property. Konko-Sama treated them politely. One of the officers asked us, 'Why did you come here?' Konko-Sama answered, 'They came to get blessed.' The officer rebuked him, saying, 'Oyaji, what are you talking about? How could they get blessed from you—an ordinary person without any power?'"

The Yamabushi monks had visited Bunji to harass him and intimidate him into giving up items. But the police officers' main purpose was to force Bunji to abandon all engagement in religious work through the authority of the government. Believers could no longer visit the *Hiromae* freely, and the number of visitors drastically declined.

In addition, there was a rumor that "Bunji committed burglary with some of his colleagues from the branches of the *Hiromae*." This rumor may have been connected to Tokichi Takahashi, the husband of Tomie Takahashi, who was skilled in martial arts. The rumor coincided with an investigation by Tadaichi Terao, an assistant judicial officer of Temples and Shrines, who discreetly monitored Bunji's activities. At the same time, he interrogated Juemon Saitō of Kasaoka. Rumors circulated that the police would eventually summon Bunji for interrogation, as they had done in the past. In this way, Bunji had to endure drastic social and political changes and soon faced a second stage of difficult encounters with government authorities.

The authorities Bunji now faced were completely different from earlier ones. In the past, the Otani Village Head had treated Bunji with some leniency when imposing regulations. But these new officers showed no leniency at all. They were business-oriented, strict, and cold. They acted high and mighty, using their power without hesitation, imposing strict demands and attempting to force compliance.

Bunji had to endure this common attitude of police authority with patience. A few years later, he reflected on the situation while speaking with a believer. According to Seki Senda, a believer once asked, "The Kami-Sama we believe in—Tenchi Kane No Kami-Sama—is great and wonderful. I wonder why your *Hiromae* cannot receive official shrine rank?"

Bunji responded, "Well, all kamis except Tenchi Kane No Kami are kamis of Japan. The Emperor grants ranks to those kamis. But Tenchi Kane No Kami-Sama is the Kami of the entire world. No one can grant ranking to Tenchi Kane No Kami-Sama."

Through this, Bunji demonstrated his conviction that Tenchi Kane No Kami-Sama is fundamentally different from the Japanese kamis ranked by the government. Bunji had to face countless difficult encounters to establish and uphold this absolute conviction. *(To be continued) Page 198*

Updates on Church/Residence Electric Wiring Status:

Dear Church Members,

We wanted to update you on a recent electrical issue at our church and residence. On the evening of October 31st, the main electric outlets in both the residence and the church basement hall became dysfunctional. For a short time, we had to rely on extension cords connected to the few outlets that were still working in order to power essential items in the residence.

On Saturday, November 22nd, an electrician was finally able to come and replace the outdated breaker box at a cost of $1,100. Thanks to this repair, the outlets in both the residence and basement hall are now functioning smoothly again.

A full rewiring of the entire church and residence, which we had hoped to complete, is not financially possible for us at this time. We are truly grateful for the generous support so many of you have given to the Church Maintenance Fund. With your help, we will continue to make necessary repairs as issues arise, especially since our building is now over 80 years old.

Thank you always for your understanding, support, and prayers.