



KONKO MISSION BULLETIN

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Foundations of our blessed life

By Yasuhiro Yano
Head Minister



A Happy New Year. Year of the Horse.

How wonderful it is to be able to be here and extend our thanks to Kami-Sama, Our Divine Parent for all the blessings we have enjoyed thus far and enabled to continue to live our blessed lives.

Thank you for your extra support, hard labor and contribution of your time and resources for the New Year's Mochi Pounding we held on Monday, December 30, 2013. I was a bit worried because only one pounder arrived to help at past 9 o'clock. But as we started pounding, more helpers started coming, one after another. Pretty soon it was a full house, both upstairs and downstairs where they were preparing the mochi. More than 60 of all ages came to help. In blessedness of the good weather condition, and any and all elements of blessings, we were able to finish the job of pounding 355 pounds of mochi rice (600 lb cooked mochi). One person who joined our mochi pounding for the first time had expressed that she was impressed by being in an atmosphere where the word, "Thank you" was expressed so many times during the whole mochi pounding event. It is such a heartening compliment for our faith community. We would like to thank you all again for your extended support for the annual mochi pounding.

In Japan, at a time of jubilation, such as today's New Year's Day, they have celebrated the occasion by quoting an old verse that represents a blessed life in happiness. The Founder Konko Daijin also quoted the verse and related a message to Jiroshiro Kataoka.

"Congratulations! Congratulations! Oh, young pine. Grow you will with branches ever spreading and pine needles so lush." People recite this song on happy occasions. However, it is through the efforts of the growing trunk that the branches grow and the pine needles become thicker. Furthermore, it is through the efforts of the invisible roots spreading underneath the ground that the trunk gets bigger. If the roots at the base of the tree die, the stout trunk, the growing branches and thick needles will also die. If you have faith that spreads widely in everyday life like the roots of a tree, you will not fall down

even in desperate situations. You will prosper, like a tree with full branches and thick needles, through receiving divine blessings. This is a joyous thing. (III Jinkyukyogoroku 49)

The original English translation found in the Kyoten Scriptures stated, "However, it is through the efforts of the growing trunk that the branches grow and the pine needles become thicker. Furthermore, it is through the efforts of the invisible roots spreading underneath the ground that the trunk gets bigger." But in my understanding, the intent of the Japanese message implies that the reason why the leaves and branches thrive is due to the growing main trunk of the tree. In the same manner, the reason why the trunk of the tree grows can be attributable to the roots spreading in the ground that sustains the growth of the trunk. There exists an inseparable mutual interdependent relationship of those elements as one living tree.

The message is so concrete, not a reference of abstract. For example, I have been enabled to live and serve at this faith community in Wahiawa in the last 36 years with my wife and children. If I were a tree, I am probably just a leaf or a little stem, which has been supported by the larger branches—eventually becoming the trunk and the roots. The larger branches and trunk are my parents. And the roots include my ancestors, the founding ministers in Hawaii and the supreme spiritual heads in generations and all the way to our Founder, Konko-Sama. The sky and the ground that support the tree is our Principle Parent of the Universe. To become aware of all those contributing elements in life is the meaning of our engagement in the practice of the Konko faith.

The longer I live and learn about the teachings of Konkokyo, I feel overwhelmed with the truth and valid nature of the messages in today's world. Each and every message is not an abstract presentation of idea, but derived from the loving and caring heart of the Divine Parent for the sake of the sound lives of the beloved children. We can be branches and leaves and Kami-Sama, Our Divine Parent can be the foundational roots. Both the children and the parents shall enjoy good and thriving relationships.

Have you ever tried to understand the meaning of the calligraphic writing on the wall? The message reads, "神人共榮 (Shinjin Kyouei)" The message was given to the Rev. Haruko Takahashi, the founding minister of this church, by the Rev. Kametaro Nakayama, who lost his two hands and one leg by a tragic train accident when he was young. He wrote the calligraphy by putting a brush in his mouth. The message means both Kami and the children of Kami enjoy mutual upbringing and prosperity.

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. This message is a divine assurance for the believers. Follow the message and we shall enjoy the blessed lives as has been stated.

Konko-Sama told me, "Practice faith (shinjin). *Shin* means your heart, and *jin* means kami. Practicing faith means you direct your heart toward kami. Though you are surrounded by divine virtue, you won't receive blessings unless you have faith." This was a profound and blessed teaching. Thus enlightened, I realized that even a lamp full of oil cannot give light without a wick (shin). Without faith, the world would be dark as night with unlit lamps. (I Ichimura Mitsugoro 1-6)

Honoring Mitama Spirits

January

Owari Kaneshige	1/2/1989
Clarence Olsen	1/3/2013
Paul Akita	1/13/2008
Alesandro Caraballo	1/17/1985
Tama Noguchi	1/17/1985
Mitsuru Miyamoto	1/20/2007
Chikiko Hayashida	1/24/1940
Tsuneko Takahashi	1/24/1997
Marc Perrone, Jr. (MJ)	1/27/2010



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

Bulletin Board

Monthly Services for January 2014

- 1 Wed** -New Year's Day Service at 9:00 a.m.
- 4 Sat** -"Shingyo Kikan" Daily Devotionals during the month of January
- 5 Sun** -Sunday Service at 9:00 a.m.
- 12 Sun** -Monthly Service for Ikigami Konko Daijin at 9:00 a.m.
- 19 Sun** -No church services. Mochi pounding demonstration at the Ohana Festival at Moili'i Field by Japanese Cultural Center of Hawai'i (10 a.m. to 4 p.m.)
- 26 Sun** -Monthly Memorial Service at 10:00 a.m.
-Wahiawa Church General Meeting and New Year's Party after the service through 2:30 p.m.

New Year's Mochi Pounding

The annual community function of mochi pounding was held on Monday, December 30, 2013. Pounding began around 9 a.m. and everything ended around 6:30 p.m. We produced mochi in accordance with the authentic tradition from the beginning to end with the use of *usu* mortar, wooden *kine* or mallet and hand-shaped. This year, about 60 people of all ages, along with 10 members of Ehime-Kenjin Kai in Hawaii came to help with the program. We pounded 355 pounds of mochi rice, which amounted to 600 pounds of cooked, pounded mochi. Thank you very much for your hard work, support and contributions for the perpetual operation of the Mochi Pounding.

The New Year's Day Service was held on Wednesday, January 1, 2014 at 9:00 a.m. Delicious Ozoni and traditional Osechi Ryori were prepared by the church.

General Meeting & New Year's Party

We will hold the annual meeting of the members of Konko Mission of Wahiawa on Sunday, January 26 after the Monthly Memorial Service to be observed at 10:00 a.m. Please bring a \$3.00 minimum grab-bag per person.

"Shingyo Kikan" Daily Devotionals

In appreciation of the devoted services of Toritsugi-Mediation by the generational spiritual heads of the Konkokyo Religious Organization, we will observe the Shingyo Kikan or Daily Devotionals for the month of January. During the regular daily church services at 6:00 a.m., 9:00 a.m. and 7:30 p.m. believers are encouraged to attend the services and read Konkokyo Scriptures.

Monthly Volunteer Activity

We will make a visit to the Wahiawa General Hospital Long-Term Care Facility for our regular volunteer activity of interacting with the hospitalized people on Friday, January 10 from 10:00 a.m.

New Year's Ohana Festival

We will demonstrate traditional mochi pounding at the annual 21st New Year's Ohana Festival sponsored by the Japanese Cultural Center of Hawaii at Moili'i Field on Sunday, January 19 from 10:00 a.m. through 4:00 p.m. We will make a public demonstration of mochi making at three time frames: 10:30 a.m., 12 noon and 1:00 p.m. Please come and join us for this fun family day. The anko-mochi samples we make will be given away to the spectators at the festivity

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 Matsutaro Kōsaka contributed the insightful articles. The translation is provided by Yasuhiro Yano. (Reference pages 67, 68, and 69)

No. 67

When a person dies young, everyone grieves with sad hearts. Even for rice plants, there are early-, mid- and late-season types. Those who die young after having a child are like the early-season rice plant. Those who die childless are like an empty ear of rice. Death is like the separation of the rice kernel from its hull. When the time comes, the body and soul will separate.

(II Yamamoto Sadajiro 9-1, 2 Kyoten page 720)

The death of young people

We experience a deep grief when we encounter young people's death. "Young" may refer to people who have never experienced marriage; those who get married and blessed with children. It is a serious and difficult issue to deal with the death of young people.

We find it very difficult to provide adequate comforting messages to be forwarded to the people closely related to the deceased people. If we have ever experienced the death of our own children, we may be able to share some empathy and give some comforting messages to those people involved. But without such grief experiences, the message we forward to them can be unfulfilling.

The Founder shared with Sadajiro Yamamoto his thought about the meaning of the death of young people. He stated that those who die young after having a child are like the early-season rice plant. Death is like the separation of the rice kernel from its hull. When the time comes, the body and soul will separate.

The Founder experienced many deaths of his own children. The message stated by the Founder can give different meanings depending on the circumstantial elements of the audiences. The message of sympathy and encouragement can be mistaken in just the opposite depending on the listeners.

At the beginning of this quoted message, there is an additional statement, "The Yamamoto family had a string of misfortunes. Prior to this, Konko-Sama imparted." It is assumed that the message was given to him as a form of premonition for the death of the family member. Based on that assumption, we can appreciate the quoted message. We can assume that the message forwarded by the Founder might have helped him and the family to deal with their encounter with the death in the family.

No. 68

Immortality is important for humans. Immortality is when others keep praying for you after you die.

(II Kondo Tsuru 1 Kyoten page 524)

Immortality is important for humans

The Founder stated, "Immortality is important for humans." The message is closely related to the statement,

"the soul keeps on living" (II Nanba Ko 13-2) and "Konko Daijin shall live forever" (II Fukushima Gihe'e 22-1). The message implies to the objective of getting involved in the practice of faith and the purpose of our human life.

In the original statement, prior to the quoted message, the Founder stated, "Since I am a human being, I won't live forever." The meaning of the statement is that the life of our physical body has its own limitations, but there is a concept that our human life would continue to exist perpetually.

The Founder stated that "immortality" is when others keep remembering and extending respect even after we depart from this world. Who could gain such a respectful treatment from others?

Those who could enjoy such a respectful treatment after death are not necessarily the people who enjoyed wealth, good social standings and honor in society. Some people without those elements of general social recognition also enjoy respectful treatment from others after their passing.

These are the people who contributed for the well being of other people; especially, those people who devoted themselves in helping others. Sometimes we witness something divine in the people who dedicate and sacrifice themselves for the sake of others. We can identify some sacred nature in those people who devote themselves in helping others. On the other hand, we can hardly validate any deities and religious entities which do not help people.

In conclusion, it could be safely stated that whether we become evolved to such individuals who would gain perpetual remembrance and respect from others even after death, what matters most is how much we have contributed in helping others while we exist in this world. To help others is such a virtuous work we can pursue.

No. 69

People are masters of all living things. After one dies, you will be worshipped as a kami. Look forward to become a kami and practice faith.

(III Konko Kyoso Gorikai 44 Kyoten page 786)

Look forward to becoming a kami after departure

Similar to the previous page 68, the message implies that through our pursuit of faith, we evolve to such individuals to become kamis and enjoy perpetual remembrance and respect from others after death.

The Founder initially stated, "People are the master of all living things." This statement implies that people are unique for the given spirituality. The message can be understood in the following manner. First, people are not just supreme than other living creatures because of the given spirituality. More to it than that, we should be mindful of our given supreme nature as human beings and respond accordingly.

When we appreciate the wondrous powers we enjoy in various form, and the fact of our given life as human beings, we naturally would respond in attaining fulfillment of our blessed nature of existence. What would be that something we want to pursue?

What can relevantly be remembered for this subject is the message, “To be human is to help others” as we discussed in the previous page 49. Because of the nature of human being, what we can do and what we should do is to help others in accordance with the Founder.

The message of helping others stated in page 49 is so closely related to the quoted message of this page 69, “After one dies, you will be worshipped as a kami. Look forward to becoming a kami.” It would be more appropriate to say that both messages are inextricably linked together.

Because the Founder stated that the vital element in pursuit of becoming a kami is to help others. It is validated in the statements made by the Founder, “Save others and have yourself become a kami” (II Fukushima Gihe’e 1-6) and “Save one person, and you will be a kami to that person” (II Shirakami Shinichiro 1-1).

In conclusion, the message implies that the most vital element as a human being allowed to live is to help others, and helping others also contribute to the enjoyment of blessing after our departure from this world. One of the distinctive features of the Konko faith is that helping others is the indispensable element that links between life and death, and what we pursue through our practice of faith while we exist in this world and even after we depart from this world.

Pictures from Mochi-prep day 12/29/13 and Mochitsuki day 12/30/2013

