



Get Connected to Kami-Sama



*By Rev. Yasuhiro Yano
Head Minister*

"Happy New Year!" is what we usually say to each other as the New Year arrives. Some people who have lost their loved ones may be offended by the expression of celebratory remarks in consideration of the active mourning they have to deal with. This is true even in Japan. Families who have experienced a death in the last year would not send New Year's greeting cards.

Both my wife and I would be celebrating our 70 birthdays this year. Personally, I have never imagined my life at the age of 70 when I was young. But I would like to celebrate the given life of 70 that has been possible only through the work of Kami-Sama. In one word, "Okage-samade." It can be so true. I have openly stated that I have tried to say thank you for the days spent ever since we arrived here in Hawaii for our services to Kami-Sama in the last 43 years.

Despite the ever expanding corona virus pandemic of COVID-19, I pray that we would be able to survive this grave global eventuality that have already inflicted unimaginable number of fatalities and economic hardship in the whole world.

The Founder extended his prayers daily, "When the people of the world pray to Ikigami Konko Daijin

with a sincere and single-heart, please fulfill whatever requests they have" (Gorikai II Unknown 7).

One thing for sure is that Konko-Sama believed in Kami-Sama and followed all the instructions and teachings in the manner that brought fulfillment to Kami-Sama, to himself and the family members. In other words, Konko-Sama always found ways to get connected to Kami-Sama throughout his entire faith life. I understand that Konko believers are people who believe in Tenchi Kane no Kami and practice those teachings in life. To believe in Tenchi Kane no Kami is to believe in the teachings, and in turn, to believe in the teachings means to believe in Tenchi Kane no Kami.

In the past, I have quoted a particular episode related by the Rev. Matsutaro Yasutake, the founding minister of Konko Church of Amagi in a booklet titled, "Michi no Shiori" or a short guidebook for the practice of the Konko faith. In the opening page of the booklet, the following is stated, "This booklet is the partial script of the speech presentation in which my grandfather shared what could be identified to be the vital elements of the practice of the Konko faith to the young ministers who were affiliated to the church on February 23, 1948. This time, in commemorating the 25th memorial year of the minister, the booklet is presented to you as a form of 'Shinobi gusa' or an item in remembrance and honor of the deceased." Our church members in Wahiawa may be familiar with the episode.

One day, all of a sudden, Kami-Sama instructed the Founder, "Tomorrow, I will let you pick up some money, so prepare a bento lunch and walk toward the west." The Founder prepared his bento lunch and went out toward the west as has been instructed by Kami-Sama. He asked for Kami-Sama's instructions occasionally if he should keep on going in the same direction. Kami-Sama directed him to do so. Then the Founder reached to a place near Kasaoka Town. It was almost noon, and he enjoyed lunch. After lunch, the Founder asked Kami-Sama again for further direction. Kami-Sama instructed the

Founder to go back home. As he reached home, he proceeded before the Kami altar and extended his prayer of thanks for his safe return home. Then Kami-Sama asked the Founder point-blankly, "Did you find the money?" "Yes, I did," responded the Founder. Kami-Sama asked again, "How much did you get?" The Founder responded by saying, "I have no idea." Kami-Sama further pressed to answer by asking, "What? You don't know how much you picked up?" Then the Founder answered back, "For the first time ever in a long period, I could have an opportunity to travel afar on foot, and got a great workout. The food I ate have been well digested and turned into blood and flesh. My circulation improved because of this and I have enjoyed bettering my health. The positives I received from the excursion is something more valuable that cannot be purchased with money."

What is distinctive about Konko-Sama was that he always tried to find ways to keep connected to Kami-Sama under any circumstances. There would be no right or wrong answers for the instructions forwarded to Konko-Sama by Kami-Sama.

What do we see in the episode? Apparently Kami-Sama tested Konko-Sama if he would pick up money in following the instructions. But actually, he gained no monetary reward. If we could be in the same situation, how would we respond to Kami? We would feel fooled by Kami-Sama, confused and may get angry. These are ordinary people's responses to a failed divine promise, aren't they? In my understanding, when we encounter a situation like this promise, the majority of us would fail to fulfill Kami-Sama's instructions and be instantly disconnected from Kami-Sama.

What if Konko-Sama responded to Kami-Sama in the same manner as we would respond in anger and disgust by saying "Kami-Sama you have made promises so many times that I was sure I would be rewarded with monetary gain by following your instructions. But your promises were all lies. You must be kidding. I can no longer practice this kind of fake deity," then this religion called Konkokyo would not have come into existence. This sort of negative response would instantly disconnect us from Kami-Sama and there would be no

actualization of blessings in this state of disconnectedness. But most of us would be responding in that manner as we get involved in the practice of faith. We would be glued or joined by the work of Toritsugi-Mediation even if we distance from Kami-Sama from time to time. We should be grateful for this wondrous divine virtue of Ikigami Konko Daijin who has been always connected to Kami-Sama.

But Konko-Sama stayed connected to Kami-Sama under any given situations. This is very vital and quite difficult to follow in reality. Some people say that this episode of the empty promise was to test the depth of the belief held by Konko-Sama. Konko-Sama always found ways to keep connected with Kami-Sama.

Konko-Sama Says . . .

Because we have vaccinations today, it may seem that the deity of smallpox (Yaku-gami) has fewer responsibilities. But if you say "Yobo, yobo" (which in Japanese means prevent, but also sounds like the word the calls) the illness might say, "Here I come." So you must receive divine blessings from Tenchi Kane No Kami in order for the vaccination to work. (*Kyoten Gorikai III Jinkyukyogoroku 72*).

Konko Daijin said, "When practicing faith in Kami, let those who are sick eat what they want. You need not put restrictions on what they eat by saying that this food is like medicine and that one is like poison. You should remember that there are no poisons within Tenchi Kane No Kami's ground. It is good to follow a diet and take care of our health. However, if it were true that people could only be healthy by following a doctor or a special diet, there would be no healthy beggars. There are many who are rich or powerful and yet suffer from poor health. Needless worry about the future is the strongest poison of all and with it you cannot receive Kami's blessings. (*III Jinkyukyogoroku 165*)

Bulletin Board

Church Services for January 2021

- 1 Fri -New Year's Day Service (9 am) No osechi this year due to COVID-19 (Facebook Live)
- 3 Sun -Sunday Service (Facebook Live 9 am)
- 4 Mon -Shingyo Kikan, daily devotionals for one month
- 9 Sat -Mochitsuki demo at Sheraton Waikiki (11 am)
- 10 Sun -Monthly Service for Ikigami Konko Daijin (Facebook Live 9 am)
-Mochitsuki demo at Moana Surfider (3pm)

17 Sun -Sunday Service (Facebook Live 9 am)
-General Meeting following the service, no New Year's Party

24 Sun -Monthly Memorial Service (Facebook Live 9 am)

31 Sun -Sunday Service (Facebook Live 9 am)

February 2021

1 Mon -Monthly Service for Tenchi Kane No Kami
(Facebook Live 7:30 pm)

Mochi Pounding was a great success

In blessedness, we were able to hold the 29th Annual Mochi Pounding event on December 30, 2020. We were able to pound 85 pounds this year, and were able to raise \$905.00 for the church. Thank you very much for your help and support.

General Meeting

The annual church general meeting will be held on Sunday, January 17, 2021 after the regular Sunday Service which starts at 9 am. There will be no lunch or New Year's Party this year due to the continuing pandemic.

The Church Door is Open

We welcome you to make a visit to our church and church services. Please wear your face mask for Covid-19 precautionary measures.

You can make an appointment for your personal visit to church anytime of the days.

KMH

- KMH Zoom Conf. planning mtg on Skype at 5pm on Friday, January 15, 2021 at 5pm using Skype.
- Community Engagement and Outreach Committee meeting will be held on Friday, January 22, 2021 at 5 pm using Zoom.
- Board of Trustees' Meeting will be held on Saturday, January 23, 2021 at Konko Mission of Honolulu and via Zoom from 10:30 am.

Honoring the 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
Tsuneko Takahashi	1/24/1997
Chikiko Hayashida	1/24/1940
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.

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. 2 Page 8 to 11

The father of this boy, named Juhei, was an honest and warm-hearted person. In addition, he was a deeply religious person. In accordance with the stories of Kandori family, managing his family business as a farmer, he took time off from his work to visit shrines and temples in the village. He used to carry his son on his back for his regular pilgrimages. It was said that his clothes became rugged from the back. His mother, named Shimo, married to Juhei from the Kobashi family located at a nearby village of Masusaka-mura. She was compassionate and clever. They were blessed with eight children, five boys and three girls.

It could be a blessing for the boy nurtured by such parents who were deeply spiritual. It is true that a child who was exposed to many elements of respect and the sacred nature of things would find his life quite enriched. Naturally, he learned to appreciate intangible elements of respect and the nature of something great that was beyond his own personal powers. Acquired spiritual awareness may get inactivated in the course of his life, but when he encounters some eventualities in life, that hidden spiritual awareness would become activated again to help deal with given situations.

Early Childhood

In those days in history of Japan, the life as the second son of a farmer was almost destined. The same was true for this second son. Namely, the second son was given only three alternatives in life for survival. First, he would become a mere servant at another household; second, he would be adopted into another household; third, he would stay at his birthplace and accept the status as a servant in the household for the rest of his life. There were no other choices for the second son. In addition to these limited choices for his entire life, unfortunately, this second son happened to be physically weak from the birth. His future perspective looked even more bleak. He was afflicted with many illnesses frequently.

Regarding his early childhood, his mother related stories about this boy. When he reached the age of five, some

particles of hot pepper accidentally entered his eyes. He experienced torturous pains in his eyes. The family members became so scared in witnessing their son suffering from the pain of chili pepper powder in the eyes, while they could do nothing for him to ease the pains. At the age of six, he was afflicted with smallpox. At the age of nine, he was infected with measles. In those days, they referred to the illness "Kiryou-sadame" which implies that the illness could change the face of the patients to become horrible-looking because of the scarring lesions, even as they heal. Everyone got infected with both smallpox and measles in their lifetime. They believed the illnesses were inflicted by an evil deity.

The boy also experienced stomach irregularities from time to time. He suffered from stomach pains for a prolonged period of time while he was young. He was born physically weak, which affected his personality, the way he perceives things and his behaviors. He was quiet and inactive in his childhood. He was rather inclined to spend time alone.

The people in the village remembered this boy as he tried to mimic prayer gestures and made homemade shrines and temples to which he would pray. Those children who are physically weak are apt to find their own fulfilling way of life. They could find their own paths in life in corresponding to their given physical conditions. In his case, his weak physical condition could have contributed him to develop humbleness and honesty.

In corresponding to the boy's physical weakness and quiet personality, the parents responded to wish him to become strong and healthy. At one point in childhood, he was given the name "Kumauemon." "Kuma" implies strong power of a bear. This boy would eventually evolve to become Konko Daijin, the Founder of the Konko Faith later in his life.

Given Names

How should this boy be addressed in this writing? His given name changed many times during his entire span of life. It can be possible to refer to this individual in corresponding to each stage the name was changed. But it can be confusing at the same time. His last given name was Konko Daijin. The name Konko Daijin holds a religious context and it would not be proper to use the name Konko Daijin when he was young. The use of the Founder for this individual can also be inappropriate when he was young. The author would like to refer to this individual as "Konokata" which implies "this individual", except on some special occasions.

This individual ended his life in 1883, at the age of 70. Nine years prior to his departure, at the age of 61, in responding to a divine instruction, he started to take record

of remembrance of his life, such as the chronological journey in pursuit of the faith. This autobiographical record showed his plain writing styles without any decorative expressions. He used the local dialects of the village in his writing. The main elements of the writing were focused on his interactive relationships with Kami that took place in his daily living. The writing was referred to as "Konko Daijin Oboe" or "Memoirs of Konko Daijin." Hereafter, in this writing, the book is referred to as "Oboe" in a short form. This book is the main resource for the composition of a biographical record of the Founder Konko Daijin.
(to be continued to the next issue)

29th Mochitsuki Pictures

