



Living with Gratitude: Embracing the Invisible Support in Our Lives



*By Rev. Yasuhiro Yano
Head Minister*

Happy New Year! I hope you all had a wonderful year and 2024 and are looking forward to great adventures in 2025. I am grateful to be able to exchange New Year's greetings with you. If we can exchange greetings with our family members, friends, and so forth in our day-to-day life, that day will evolve into a good day. That simple act of exchanging greetings is to appreciate the presence of others and any elements that are identifiable and tangible. Without them, we can hardly sustain our lives, but most of them are hardly identifiable.

I still remember the message shared at the Toritsugi-Mediation Desk by the late 4th Konko-Sama, Rev. Kagamitaro Konko, when both my wife and I visited him on our way to Hawaii to begin our missionary work some 47 years ago.

Konko-Sama shared that he says, “Thank you for the glasses I wear, for the pen I use, for the sheet of paper I use, and for any other elements of ‘sewani naru’ in life.” “Sewani naru” simply refers to the elements we get help from, depend on, or

rely upon in our everyday life—elements that are reliable and trusted. These include the water we use, the house we live in, the land we live on, the oceans, the earth, the air we breathe, human relationships, governmental authorities, and many other visible and invisible elements in our daily living.

At the entrance area of the Konko Mission of Honolulu, we can find an engraved message on the surface of a large rock. It features a Japanese verse that reads, “How blissful I am that I find myself to be with nature today as I did yesterday! In my happiness, I exchange greetings with the plants in the garden.” He could identify the presence of the plants in the garden as well as his own life in blessedness.

He also shared the concept of “Inochi no shin no hataraki.” He explained, “When a baby is born, we share the joy and happiness of that special occasion by exchanging congratulatory greetings, saying ‘omedetou gozaimasu’ and ‘arigatou gozaimasu’ in Japanese. This function can be found in any living thing. Look at the tree in the yard. The roots of the tree take up the needed fluid and send it to the upper branches and leaves. In return, the leaves send nutrients back down to the roots. Konko-Sama said this inner, core function is called ‘inochi no shin no hataraki,’ or the core life-sustaining function of all living things.”

Greetings can be extended to any elements that help, support, or sustain us. Some of them are clearly identifiable, but they make up only a small fraction of the elements that fundamentally sustain our lives.

As I advance in age, I always try to be mindful of the message about the “sewani naru” elements in my daily living. Without the elements of “sewani naru,” we simply

cannot sustain our lives. To live is to be helped by “sewani naru.” This is the message the 4th Konko-Sama tried to convey to all people.

The Founder once shared with Takahashi Tomie: “If the babysitter is bad-tempered, the child will also be bad-tempered. Those who perform toritsugi for Kami must keep pure hearts and have proper conduct. Caretakers for Kami are the same as babysitters” (GII: Takahashi, Tomie:13).

Both my wife and I have spent 47 years in our missionary work. It is almost half a century. I am grateful for the fact that we have been able to engage in our missionary work without any major troubles in our human relationships as husband and wife, with our children, or in the day-to-day operation of the church.

One of the elements of fulfillment in our missionary work is witnessing the growth and evolution of our three children, who have helped in one way or another, and seeing the transition of the church operation to them. Not many ministers are able to enjoy or feel fulfilled in the way we have, with the presence and support of our children in our missionary work.

I appreciate the Founder’s message regarding his work:

“Konko-Sama, though you always talk about Kami-Sama, having no rice during dire times will be distressing for you. You also have many children, so why don’t you buy a rice paddy? It just so happens that there’s a paddy up for sale. Why don’t you buy it?” I suggested.

Konko-Sama answered, “Thank you very much for telling me. However, I am not prepared for the future. When I serve Kami-Sama in this way, He takes care of my family and does the worrying. Thus, I am relieved of any worries. If there’s no food, I just won’t eat.” (GII: Furukawa, Sansaku:1.2).

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

January 2025

- 1 Wed -New Year’s Day Service (9 am)
- 5 Sun -Sunday Service (9 am)
- 12 Sun -Monthly Svc-Ikigami Konko Daijin (9 am)
- 19 Sun -Sunday Svc (10 am)
-General Mtg (11 am) and New Year’s Party
(Lunch 12:30 p. Party after lunch)
- 26 Sun -Monthly Memorial Svc (9 am)

February 2025

- 1 Sat -Monthly Svc-Tenchi Kane No Kami (7:30p)
- Monthly Volunteer Activity at St. Francis The next activity will be on Fri, 1/10 @ 10:30 am
- KMH Kyōten Study Group via Zoom Voice of the Universe Join us: Wed 1/8 and 1/22 @ 5-6 pm
- KMH CEOC Meeting, Mon 1/27 at 9 am, ZOOM

In Loving Memory—January

Owari Kaneshige	1/2/1989
Tama Noguchi	1/17/1985
Tsuneko Takahashi	1/24/1997
Chikiko Hayashida	1/24/1940
Alesandro Caraballo	1/17/1985
Mitsuru Miyamoto	1/20/2007
Marc Perrone, Jr. (MJ)	1/27/2010
Clarence Olsen	1/3/2013
Paul Akita	1/13/2008
Karen Matsuoka	1/29/2012

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 Konkō Daijin" authored by the Rev. Mikio Seto and published by Konkōkyō Theological Research Center in 1980. Many biographies about the life of the Founder Konkō 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 163-167

Negainushi Toshigaki Oboecho

One year after Bunji initiated the work of Toritsugi-Mediation, during the New Year of 1860, Kami instructed Bunji to create the “Negainushi Oboecho,” or Record of Prayer, for the people who visited Hiromae. The title of the record book was later changed to “Negainushi Toshigaki Oboecho.” On May 1 (June 19), Kami-sama said, “Call it the Daily Record Book on Worshippers.” The record book listed the address, name, and birthdate of believers dedicated to pursuing the faith initiated by Bunji and allowed to pray in the form of “Shinmon Kashiwade,” which was not permitted for common people. It was akin to the Buddhist believers' record called “Monjincho,” which listed temple members.

The record was maintained for seven years, from 1860 to 1866. The number of people recorded totaled 475, with 155 names from Asakura Village County. The largest number of believers came from Bitchu Province, followed by Bizen and Bingo. Some were also from Kii (Wakayama Prefecture) and Sanuki (Kagawa Prefecture). These recorded believers were deeply dedicated to pursuing faith, and it is assumed that the number of unlisted believers could have been many times greater. The number of people listed in the record book expanded to 136 in 1860. This growth could be attributed to Bunji's practice of Toritsugi-Mediation and the emerging religious phenomenon referred to as “Hayarigami,” or a

temporary fad. This phenomenon was commonly known as “Konjin-mairi.”

Among these dedicated believers were Juemon Saito and Tomie Takahashi, who became so absorbed in their faith that they quit their occupations and devoted themselves to Toritsugi-Mediation. They were referred to as “deyashiro,” or branch Hiromae.

In this evolving context, some members of the Furukawa family, who had once vehemently opposed Bunji's way of life, changed their attitudes and began following the faith initiated by him. Sansaku, Bunji's younger brother, became involved in pursuing faith. Additionally, Yaozo, his father-in-law, began following Bunji due to illness in May 1861. Shortly thereafter, Jiro, Bunji's younger brother and a lay leader (sendatsu) of the Ishizuchi Shrine, also became a believer. At Bunji's birthplace in Satomi Village, his younger brother Hikosuke embraced the faith in January 1860. Bunji's elder sister, Tomie, and her husband became followers in November of the same year.

In 1862, responding to Bunji's requests, the Furukawa family began accommodating the increasing number of visitors to Hiromae for lodging, effectively supporting Bunji's religious work.

A New Perspective on Taboos

As the number of visitors to Hiromae grew, the housing capacity became inadequate. Kami instructed Bunji to renovate the property's housing to include an open space for family members. Later, this space was renovated again to serve as a resting place for regional feudal lords and other dignitaries.

The renovation of the longhouse on the eastern part of the property was particularly notable. Kami specified the dimensions of the building: the frontal wall size was to be 4-ken, and the depth of the house 2-ken. This “shi-ni-ken” (four-by-two-ken) format was taboo among

carpenters. Kami also instructed that the main house post should be “1-jou by 1-shaku,” another dimension believed to bring misfortune. The central pillar was to be 11-shaku high. Kami reassured Bunji, “As for the construction of the building, I do not designate the days. When the carpenter is ready, he can begin his construction work. It is up to the convenience of the carpenter.”

Regarding the ridgepole-raising ceremony, Kami instructed, “Even if you hold the ridgepole-raising ceremony, it would be meaningless if the ground becomes unstable. There would be no way to make excuses if the building collapsed. My way of the pole-raising ceremony is to pray for the solid foundation of the building.” Kami’s instructions challenged traditional rules and regulations concerning Days and Directions. Kami aimed to demonstrate a way of life free from fear of taboos and rooted in divine blessings.

Despite Kami’s guidance, some elderly villagers cautioned Bunji, saying, “Bunji, if you behave in such an unusual manner and ignore age-old traditions, you will be cursed.” However, Bunji later remarked, “If you have any doubt, try and build your house in the ‘Kimon’ direction. If I say that Konjin won’t punish, He does not punish. Let go of all fears. You will receive divine blessings” (I Ichimura Mitsugoro, Volume 1, 40-3).

In 1862, Bunji added a four-and-a-half-tatami mat space to Hiromae to accommodate visitors. Around this time, a measles outbreak severely affected neighboring villages. According to the Village Head of Otani, many households suffered losses, including his own daughter and granddaughter. Bunji’s household was also impacted, with Asakichi and three other children falling ill.

Contrary to common practice, which included avoiding certain foods believed to be harmful, Bunji followed Kami’s instructions and fed the children whatever food was available. By July 1

(July 27), all his children had recovered. Bunji expressed gratitude not only for their recovery but also for the opportunity to set an example for others. He stated, “Kami-sama had me put forth a good example for people to follow” (Oboecho 6-2-5).

Bunji’s faith extended to helping six pregnant women who contracted measles. All of them were saved through his prayers (I Saito Sojiro 5-1). Kami revealed that human-oriented perceptions of taboos, including food taboos, differed greatly from Kami-oriented perspectives.

In another instance, Kami guided Bunji through his wife’s childbirth in 1863. Kami revealed, “Through divine blessings, women undergo physical changes such as pregnancy and morning sickness without pain. Even without a maternity belt, they will have excellent physical condition prior to giving birth. After childbirth, the mother need not lean against anything. Before and after giving birth, women may lead normal lives” (Oboecho 7). Bunji’s wife followed Kami’s instructions and experienced a safe and smooth delivery.

Through these encounters, Kami sought to challenge societal taboos and demonstrate a new way of life rooted in divine guidance. These experiences marked a distinctive period in which Kami’s presence became more apparent in society.

Mabalo for your great help with our 33rd Annual Mochitsuki at the Konko Mission of Wabiana! It could not have been possible without everyone’s support and blessings from Kami-Sama.

