KONKO MISSION BULLETIN

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By Rev. Yasuhiro Yano

Happy New Year! Thank you all for 2025. I hope you were able to welcome a pleasant 2026. Thank you for your great help with the Mochitsuki season and the many demos we have been going to. For this newsletter, I would like to share about the power of gratitude.

About half a century ago, when both my wife and I departed from the Konko Church of Amagi in Fukuoka and visited Konko-Sama for our missionary work in Hawaii, he gave us messages for our mission. One of the messages was quite simple. He said that he says thank you for the glasses he puts on, says thank you for the pen he uses, says thank you for the paper on which he writes, and so forth. This simple message clearly etched my mind, and I have tried to follow it since we arrived for our mission.

For some reason, I noticed something interesting about voicing "Thank you," "Arigato," in my life. When do you say "Thank you" in your daily living?

I say thank you when I wake up in the morning. Everything begins with the life I can be aware of first thing in the morning. I have witnessed several episodes of people who could not be awakened in the morning or were dead. When I use the bathroom, I naturally say thank you for the bathroom and for the natural functions of discharging my bodily waste. Usually, I check my stools and say thank you for normal bowel functions and talk to myself, "I can function today." When I shave with an electric shaving machine, I remember the message of the 4th Konko-Sama: "*Sewani naru subeteni rei wo iu kokoro, heiwa wo umidasu kokoro to iwan*," or the heart of saying thank you for anything you depend on will help yield peace in life. When I wash my face with water, I say thank you for the water I use.

When I say thank you in this manner, I notice that I am simply expressing my thanks for the elements I depend on in my daily life, and the elements of "I," "my," and "me" are minimized as I appreciate the meaningful presence of the elements that help me in one way or another.

When I was under spiritual training at the Konko Church of Amagi, Rev. Fumio Yasutake noticed that some of the student ministers smoked. He did not prohibit smoking, but simply said, "If you can say 'Thank you for the cigarettes,' you can enjoy smoking." That simple message is still etched in my mind. It can be true.

Basically, I am not engaged in gift-giving traditions because they could be endless. We exchange gifts at this time of the year, and it can be a natural way to acknowledge the contributions of those who help one another in one way or another.

The 4th Konko-Sama said, "To live is to depend on the elements that help support our lives. Without the elements of '*sewani naru*,' or life-sustaining elements, we simply cannot live."

By expressing "arigatou" or "thank you," we appreciate the contributions of others in one way or another. When we say, "Thank you, Kami-Sama," we acknowledge the sustaining force of the Life Force and minimize the elements of self—me, my, and I.

「父母も子供と共に生まれたり、育たねばならぬ子も父母も」 is a Japanese verse composed by the 4th Konko-Sama, Rev. Kagamitaro Konko. The message could be translated as follows: "Both parents are born in correspondence with the birth of a child; may both child and parents enjoy sound growth."

I have listened to this message many times and responded to it from time to time as a minister. In my understanding, parents are born into and enjoy parenthood by saying "Thank you" for the child, and eventually the child will say, "Thank you for the parents." Konko-Sama expressed that this eventuality of mutual expressions of "Thank you" would be fulfilled through the growth of both parents and child.

This formula could be related to the relationship between Kami-Sama and each of us. Kami-Sama expresses "Thank you" for the birth of each individual and prays that they will be able to say "Thank you" as they attain sound growth as children of Kami-Sama. This is one of the thoughts I have developed lately.

Just try to say "Thank you" for anything you can be aware of and its contribution to your life, and you may be able to witness some eventualities in return.

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 12.*
2. Heaven and Earth continue to live. Because Heaven and Earth are alive, all people can live. *III Jinkyu Kyogoroku 104*

Bulletin Board

January 2026

● New Year's Day Service 1/1 at 9 am *Ozoni
● Kagami-Biraki Mochi Toasting Sun 1/4 at 12 noon, after the regular Sunday Service at 9 am.
● KMH Kyōten Study Group via Zoom Voice of the Universe Join us: Wed., 1/7 at 5 pm on ZOOM.
● Monthly Volunteer Activity at St. Francis The next activity will be on Fri, 1/9 @ 10:30 am
● Mochitsuki at Moana Surfrider Sat., 1/10 at 10 am
● Mochitsuki at Sheraton Waikiki Sat., 1/10 at 2 pm
● Mochitsuki at JCCH New Year's Ohana Festival Sun., 1/11 at 10:30 am.
● KMH CEOC Mtg: Tue., 1/13 at 9 am on ZOOM
● KMH 100th Mtg: Thr., 1/15 at 5 pm ZOOM
● KMH BOT Mtg Sat 1/17 at 10:30 am at HNL
● Monthly Memorial Svc 1/25 at 10 am
● General Mtg 11:30 am and New Year's Party 12:30 pm, Sun 1/25. Bring $5 grab-bag per person.

In Loving Memory: January

Chikiko Hayashida	1/24/1940
Tama Noguchi	1/17/1985
Alesandro Caraballo	1/17/1985
Owari Kaneshige	1/2/1989
Tsuneko Takahashi	1/24/1997
Mitsuru Miyamoto	1/20/2007
Paul Akita	1/13/2008
Marc Perrone, Jr. (MJ)	1/27/2010
Karen Matsuoka	1/29/2012
Clarence Olsen	1/3/2013
Alan Yuzuru Katsura	1/13/2025

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 Rev. Mikio Seto and published by the Konkokyo Theological Research Center in 1980. Many biographies of the life of the Founder Konko Daijin exist. I would like to introduce this article for your reference in your pursuit of faith. The English translation was provided by Rev. Yasuhiro Yano. (Continued from the previous issue) Page 198

The Effects of the Emperor System and the Civilization and Enlightenment Policy

Haihan-chiken, or the feudal domain system, was abolished, and the prefectural system was introduced in 1871. The new government gained authority over Japan and sought to liberate people from the control of the feudal domains. Beginning in 1872, the government attempted to educate the people about its concept of the Emperor System and introduced the Civilization and Enlightenment policy to empower the populace.

The government's initial policy of theocracy gradually faded, and it attempted to introduce *senkyōshi*, or propagation agents, in place of *kyōdōshoku*, or evangelists. Priests were used to help educate the people about the Emperor System. The government allowed only evangelists to engage in religious work. Bunji, who lost his title as a Shinto priest, could have applied for the title of "evangelist" if he wished to continue his religious activities. However, Bunji rejected this idea, saying, "I do not lecture people about writings authored by someone else," implying his refusal to teach the Emperor System ideology based on *San-jō-no-kyōsoku*, or the Three Fundamental Articles of the Creed.

Bunmeikaika, or the Civilization and Enlightenment policy, was based on the concept of enlightening ordinary people who adhered to feudal traditions. The government promoted *shimin-byōdō* (equality of citizens), *zanpatsu* (cutting off the topknot), and emphasized that occupations should be based on individual discretion. It established a public education system and pursued other reforms intended to liberate people from restrictive feudal lives. However, the basic concepts of this new policy also introduced capitalism, exclusive economic policies to enrich national wealth, empowerment of the populace, the introduction of conscription, and the strengthening of military power.

The Civilization and Enlightenment policy negatively affected Bunji's religious work. At first, the newly introduced calendar system affected him. In September 1872, the government abolished the practice of the *Shugendō* religious sect, based on the belief that it was inappropriate for priests to make pronouncements about the good and bad of days and directions. As a result, the *yamabushi* stopped troubling Bunji in his work, and what Bunji advocated regarding days and directions gained some popularity. However, Bunji soon faced new difficulties one after another.

The government prohibited the printing of what it deemed groundless theories concerning *Saitoku*, *Konjin*, and the good and bad of days and directions. It also prohibited the use of the name "Konjin" in calendars.

The name of the deity Bunji believed in was *Kane no Kami*. When Bunji attempted to obtain certification for his religious work from the Shirakawa Shinto Office, the name of the deity evolved into *Kimon Kane no Kami Daimyōjin = Shinriki Myōga no Mikoto* and *Nitteshi, Gattenshi, Kimon Kane no Kami*. These names implied a deity whose nature pertained to the universal workings of Heaven and Earth. Bunji's intention in adopting these transformed names was to help the public understand the nature of the deity he believed in. In this sense, the transformation of the name from *Kane no Kami* was natural. However, Bunji continued to use the name "Konjin" when communicating with people who visited the Hiromae.

The people of Japan feared the nature of "Konjin," even though the newly introduced governmental calendar contained no references to Konjin. Bunji made drastic efforts to retain the shell of "Konjin" while instilling a new concept to replace the persistent fearful image associated with the name. Generally, people tend to take advantage of a non-fearful deity to fulfill their own self-centered desires. Interestingly, many people remained drawn to the fearful nature of Konjin. They responded to Bunji's teachings, which infused a new understanding of Konjin as a deity who saves those in need of help. It became a wondrous opportunity for Bunji to help people in distress through the power of Konjin. However, with the introduction of the Civilization and Enlightenment policy, the name of Konjin faced the danger of eradication.

The wave of Civilization and Enlightenment policy continued to affect Bunji's religious work. In January 1873, the Control Office for Otani Village in Oda Prefecture issued a notification announcing an investigation into people who practiced healing of the sick through *Shin-Butsu Konko*, or the syncretism of Shinto and Buddhism, and who made use of alcohol sales and offerings. In February of the same year, the office issued another notification prohibiting practices such as *Azusamiko* (female fortune-tellers), certain irregular forms of supplicatory prayer, exorcism of fox spirits through fortune-telling, and the channeling and manipulation of people.

The manner of prayer Bunji practiced, following the divine message "Extend your prayer for anything with a single heart" received in 1857, could be perceived as falling under the practices described in these notifications. The government attempted to investigate Bunji as someone potentially engaged in heretical practices. At the same time, influenced by government actions, people began to view Bunji with suspicion. Some individuals submitted accusatory articles to newspapers, calling for investigations and restrictions on Bunji's religious activities.

In addition, the newly appointed village head of Otani, Iseki Kawate, faced difficult issues concerning Bunji's family registry, including questions of his social status and how his case should be handled. *Page 201. To be continued.*

Ritz-Carlton Mochitsuki Pictures 1.3.26
Mahalo for your great help!