



KONKO MISSION BULLETIN

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“Kokoro-ni-nareba” or If you have the heart to do so . . .

*By Yasuhiro Yano
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Konko-Sama used the expression, “...kokoroni nareba” or “if you have the heart to do so...” For example he stated, “People will receive divine blessings if they pray to the earth while picking their vegetables, also if those vegetables are boiled and eaten with a grateful heart, there will be no illness.” In my understanding, the original Japanese statement can be interpreted, “If a housewife goes into the vegetable field to harvest vegetables for cooking, and have the heart of extending appreciation for the wondrous work of the Earth, she is going to enjoy blessings through the vegetables being harvested. Also, if she cooks and serves them to the family members with the heart of extending thanks to Kami-Sama, the food will benefit our bodies and cause no illness.”

Konko-Sama was a farmer and quoted many teachings in reference to the practice of farming. I can picture the image of the quoted episode. I believe you may also be able to see a picture in which a woman in a farm goes out into the field and extends her prayer toward the plants and the land in appreciation of the work of Kami-Sama.

In our family, we have established a tradition of extending a prayer for every meal. We also do “Gohan Gokinen,” in the worship hall before dinner. I have started this tradition in response to a difficult situation regarding meals in the beginning of our missionary work in Hawaii. We were newly-weds soon after arriving in Hawaii. I was not able to enjoy or appreciate the foods prepared by my wife, even after reciting the grace before meals in appreciation. Back in the days, all the food items we used for cooking were mainly “osagari” food items that have once been offered in the altar. We always made food with the ingredients we had. Usually, people purchase ingredients to make food that they prefer. The only kind of meat we occasionally purchased was frozen chicken thighs. Being that we were financially limited, my wife had to try to make savory meals by using the limited food items available. Although I tried not to complain for the food served by my wife, my body simply rejected the food she made. I simply could not enjoy the meals; this became our dilemma. The situation became so bad that both my wife and I had to argue over food. Once in a while, I felt our marriage would end if the situation didn’t improve. We both had to deal with the situation. To somehow improve the situation, we got Kami-Sama involved as well. I began to

place the cooked meals before the Kami altar and extended a prayer in appreciation. Still the situation didn’t improve much. I asked my wife to join in extending a prayer before we partake of the food in the evening. We recited the Divine Reminder or “Tenchi Kakitsuke” and recited teachings in regards to the blessed nature of foods we enjoy, namely in Japanese, “食物は皆人の命の為に天地の神の作り与え給うものぞ、大酒大食するは絶食の元になるぞ、何を食うにも飲むにも有難く頂く心を忘れなよ、体の丈夫を願え、体を作れ、何事も体がもとなり” or in English, “All food is provided by Tenchi Kane no Kami to sustain our lives; Over consumption of alcohol and foods will cause you to be unable to eat; Never fail to have the heart of extending appreciation for any foods we eat and drink; Pray for good health, take good care of our health, for good health is the foundation of all things.” We still keep the tradition for all these years. Eventually, we included our children to join the evening meal tradition. And we have extended the tradition for the Naorai meals served after the church services.

We have enjoyed good health and relationships of the family for all these years. I have discovered for myself that any irregularities in health and family relationships derive from the irregularities of our eating habits. After practicing one tradition for over three decades, I have come to appreciate the perpetual tradition of extending a formal evening meal prayer in the worship hall. At least we have tried to follow and appreciate the teachings of Konko Daijin in regard to the food we partake. The tradition became established only because I thought there would be no other alternative in dealing with this situation.

We also have a long lasting tradition of making a visit to our Parent Church, the Konko Mission of Honolulu after the regular monthly services we conduct at our church in Wahiawa. I started to make the monthly visits in responding to a dire financial situation in which the only offerings we were able to offer for the church service before the Kami altar was a bottle of “omiki” (sacred rice wine), “arai-yone” (purified rice) and one pumpkin that I harvested, which grew wild in the yard. I felt that being able to hold the regular church service was possible only because we have been blessed enough. Ever since then, I started to make a visit in appreciation of the blessings for being able to conduct the monthly services. Thankfully, through the blessings of Kami-Sama, we have never experienced a day without a meal because we could not afford it. We used to attend the monthly service held at the Honolulu Church while the Rev. Kikue Kodama was in service. I took my whole family to the visit. It was a good educational opportunity for the children to enrich their involvement in the practice of faith.

When Konko-Sama, the founder was adopted into the Kawate family at the age of 12, his adoptive father asked him about his likes and dislikes. In responding to the question, Konko-Sama honestly and straightforwardly stated, "I do not like 'mugi-meshi' or barely staple food." As for his likes, he stated, "Please allow me to make visits to shrines and temples in the village on holidays with your encouraging support" (Kyoso-Sama I, 13). His adoptive father promptly accepted his requests. He exchanged barley with expensive rice and gave it to Bunji (Konko-Sama). Bunji (Konko-Sama) also enjoyed making visits to temples and shrines on holidays. Sometimes I simply wonder how a mere 12 years old boy could ever hold such spiritual maturity. The Founder's fundamental spirituality can be noticed throughout his entire life.

After recovering from a grave throat ailment at the age of 42, Konko-Sama stated, "I still suffered from a weakened body until the end of 1856, when I was forty-three. But I felt thankful for being saved, and I wanted to be able to work normally with a healthy body. I decided to express thanks and pray to the kami-samas all day, from morning on the three days each month: on the first, the fifteenth, and the twenty-eighth" (Oshirasegoto Oboegaki 3-9).

It is one of the key elements in the practice of faith that we take something into actual practice, as has been demonstrated by Konko-Sama, the founder. It could be as simple as attending every Sunday Service, or attending the three monthly services of the church. This is dedication. It's our way to extend our thanks for all the blessings we have been given till this day.



Attending the Konko Church of San Francisco 80th Anniversary

The 80th Anniversary Celebration of the Konko Church of San Francisco as well as the annual observance of Tenchi Kane no Kami Grand Service was held concurrently on Sunday, June 5. Since my second son, Rodney Sensei has been engaged in the Work-Study Program sponsored by the Konko Church of San Francisco in the last seven years, I truly wished to be able to

attend the services in person as a token of my appreciation for the church's endeavor and investment in my son. My wife and I have been grateful in witnessing his spiritual growth as well as his academic opportunity provided through this ministerial education program.

This time, my visit was a bit short. I arrived at San Francisco on Sunday morning and attended the function and returned home the following day. I am grateful that I could attend the function in blessedness in good health, and meet many people, such as Mr. Kinya Matsuno, who came to pick me up at the airport, the Revs. Joanne Tolosa, Masato Kawahatsu, and my son Rodney, his girl friend, Fong and many other KCNA ministers and believers. Over 180 people, including pilgrimages from the Tokyo Church and other churches in Japan showed up to share the moment of celebration.

I understand that the great figure of the founding minister, the Late Rev. Yoshiaki Fukuda is still vividly alive even today. I simply feel overwhelmed with this spiritual giant in the Konkokyo faith community in America, along with other dedicated ministers.

I attended the 50th Anniversary Celebration of the church 30 years ago soon after I came to take charge of the Konko Mission of Wahiawa. I understand that the church has attained a complete transition to English-oriented operation of the services and functions in all these years, which could have been one of the primary goals of those pioneer ministers from Japan. I feel grateful that Rodney has also been contributing to that transitional movement in one way or another.

I understand that the Konko Church of San Francisco will lead the KCNA faith community through its own transition as has been stated by Rev. Joanne Tolosa, Head Minister of Konko Church of San Francisco in the 80th Anniversary Booklet, "More than the physical church building, it is the people, the congregation who makes the church. It is the people, each of us, who are the church. More than riding on the coattail of an extraordinary minister, I believe it is important for each of us to develop and nurture our own deep spirituality – our own deep, honest, sincere relationship with our Divine Parent of the Universe. We need to ask ourselves the question, 'Do I believe in blessings or do I believe in Kami?' If we believe and trust in Kami, I believe we can face and embrace any situation we encounter with a positive attitude, appreciation and peace of mind. Whether or not we perceive something to be a blessing, all depends upon our own heart"

I also extended my leg of journey to make a visit to the South San Francisco Outreach Center operated by the Rev. Masato Kawahatsu on my way to the airport. He is working hard and gaining some positive movements around him for his missionary work. His strong thoughts and prayers for other people have never changed ever since he was engaged in his missionary work at the Konko Mission of Waipahu. Both my wife and I feel indebted to the Rev. Kawahatsu and Mrs. Jean Kawahatsu who helped us a lot soon after we arrived

from Japan to take care of the Konko Mission of Wahiawa. I have been extending my prayer that the South San Francisco Outreach Center will grow into a full-fledged Konko Church some day. I felt moved in witnessing many dedicated followers of the Rev. Kawahatsu have been helping to actualize that endeavor.

Konko-Sama Says . . .

After being saved from a desperate situation or misfortune, everyone says that they will never forget the blessings they received. However, people tend to be unaware of the divine blessings that they receive daily. Regardless if people are alive or dead, they are always receiving Kami's blessings. (III Jinkyu Kyogoroku 90-1, 2)

People talk about blessings, but blessings are merely the shadows cast by the sincerity of each person. Therefore, if you show great sincerity towards Kami, you can receive great blessings. You cannot receive great divine blessings with a little sincerity. The shadow cast by sincerity will follow the shape of sincerity. (III Jinkyu Kyogoroku 21)

Bulletin Board

Regular Church Services for July 2011

- 1 Fri -Monthly Service for Tenchi Kane no Kami at 7:30 pm
- 3 Sun -Sunday Service at 9 am
- 9 Sat -Wahiawa Church Ohana Camp from 10 am
- 10 Sun -Wahiawa Church Ohana Camp to 2 pm
- 17 Sun -Monthly Service for Ikigami Konko Daijin 7:30 pm
- 24 Sun -Monthly Memorial Service & Back to School Service at 9 am
- 31 Sun -Sunday Service at 9 am

Monthly Volunteer at Wahiawa General Hospital

We will make a monthly visit to the Wahiawa General Hospital Long-Term Care Facility on Friday, July 8 at 10:00 a.m. by means of offering entertainment for the people cared for in the facility. The program is in Japanese.

Volunteer Activity at Kuakini Medical Center

Three local Konko churches on Oahu will provide a second volunteer activity this year at the Hale Pulama Mau Auditorium in Kuakini Medical Center on Sunday, July 17 at 9:30 a.m. We will meet at the Honolulu Church at 9:00 a.m. and join the opening prayer for the program and move

to the site. After the program, we will meet again at the church for lunch. You are encouraged to join this public community program as a way to practice the Konko faith.

Summer Ohana Camp

For the first time ever in the history of Konko Mission of Wahiawa, we are planning a Summer Ohana Camp at YMCA Camp HR Erdman on Saturday, July 9 from 10 a.m. through 2:00 p.m. Sunday, July 10. The main theme of the camp is the **ABC's of KONKOKYO**. This is a family oriented camp, please try to join the function and enjoy natural beauty and deepen your understanding about our religious tradition. Twenty five people have responded to participate in the program. We are trying to hold the program annually from this year.

HCRP Meeting

The regular meeting will be held on Monday, July 18 at 1:30 p.m. at the Church of Perfect Liberty.

KMH Missionary Women's Meeting

The annual KMH Missionary Women's Meeting will be held on Wednesday, July 13, 2011 at the Konko Mission of Wailuku. "Communication" is the main subject of the meeting.

Back-to-School Service

We will observe the annual Back-to-School Service on Sunday, July 24 in conjunction with the monthly memorial service at 9:00 a.m.

Invitations from Konko Mission of Honolulu

Mr. Gary Shimabukuro will be making a presentation about drug education on Sunday, August 7, 2011 from 11:00 a.m.

Honoring the Mitama Spirits for July

Shimeno Iwasa	7/1/1966
Yasuwo Hayashida	7/5/1968
Masao Yoshihara	7/12/2002
Asa Miyamoto	7/23/1933
May Shima	7/30/2004



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

Kyoso-Sama Volume 2 (#27)

The following is 27th of the series of the English translated excerpts from the second of the two volumes of "Kyoso-Sama" a biography of the Founder of the Konkokyo Religion, authored by the Reverend Shinsei Konko for young readers. The publication is a compilation of articles in series featured in the monthly publication, "Wakaba" or "Young Leaves" issued

by the Administrative Office of the Konkokyo Youth Organization. The first article was published in 1950. Translation by the Rev. Yasuhiro Yano. (Reference to "Kyoso-Sama Volume 2" pages 269-277)

The Rev. Masajiro Sugita

The founding minister of Konko Church of Shimabara in Kyoto was deeply engaged in the practice of faith while Konko-Sama was still actively serving. He also made frequent visits to see Konko Shijin-Sama, who succeeded Konko-Sama for the service of Toritsugi-Mediation, and received many teachings from him. Here are some of the teachings he received from Konko Shijin-Sama.

In those days, the Rev. Sugita was engaged in the practice of faith under the guidance of the Rev. Fujimori Kondo of Konko Church of Nanba in Osaka. He also helped the minister for his daily operations of the church as a lay believer. He made a pilgrimage to see Konko Shijin-Sama about two months after the passing of Konko-Sama. Konko Shijin-Sama asked Sugita-san, "When you come to this place of worship, can you tell the good from the bad?" Sugita-san responded, "Yes, Konko-Sama, I can identify both the good and the bad." Konko Shijin-Sama responded, "If you can tell the good from the bad, try to put aside the bad and devote yourself in the practice of faith devotedly." Sugita-san treasured the message and returned home to Osaka. Later, he described the overwhelming sense of gratefulness for that occasion, "I felt like I was high up in the air and flew back home being filled with great happiness."

One day, dedicated church leaders held a meeting in which they discussed how much each attending member can burden the share of contributions for the church operation funds. In those days, Sugita-san had experienced financial difficulties for himself, but he never mentioned about the constricting situation to others. He responded by donating any amount of money to the church. Sugita-san held a strong conviction for his service to the church by expressing, "I would provide whatever services I can afford for this church. I shall help Rev. Kondo who has dedicated himself to the faith community so devotedly."

One of those days, Sugita-san made a pilgrimage to see Konko Shijin-Sama. Konko Shijin-Sama asked him, "When you get involved in your pursuit of faith, do you have to deal with solicitations for compulsory monetary donations?" He replied, "Yes, Konko-Sama. They sometimes solicit monetary donations." Konko Shijin-Sama related, "If they ask for your monetary donation, try to respond to the request only to the extent you can afford. There may be some believers who wish to make donations, but their financial condition may prevent them. You should feel blessed as long as you can respond to those solicitations. The other day, an owner of a boat encountered a storm off the coast of Kasaoka. He pleaded for help to save the ship by make a promise to the deity by saying, 'This ship will sink in no time at all! Please save this ship by all means. If you save this ship, I shall offer a banner in

appreciation of your divine intervention.' Kami-Sama accepted the extended desperate plea and saved the ship. He fulfilled his promise by making a visit with an offering of a banner in appreciation. Sugita-san expressed, 'That is a wonderful blessed story.' Konko Shijin-Sama responded with a smile and pointed his hand toward the direction of the entrance door, and said, 'That banner in appreciation is placed over there. Take a look at it.' A 'nabori' or a banner in appreciation usually represents a large rectangular decorative cloth regularly displayed for some special occasions like a grand service. But Sugita-san could not find the banner shown by Konko Shijin-Sama. He asked Konko Shijin-Sama, 'Konko-Sama, where can I find the banner?' Konko Shijin-Sama pointed at a spot in the entrance door. He found a miniature paper slip attached to a short slender bamboo branch. On the surface of the slip, a message of '大願成就' or "In appreciation of a big blessing received" was just scribbled in black ink. Sugita-san responded, 'Konko-Sama, it is a bamboo chopstick with a paper slip.' Konko Shijin-Sama responded, 'That's right. It is made of paper. That's the extent of his promised offering in appreciation of his ship being saved. Kami-Sama is so unconditional. Even if the extended promise to offer thanks in appreciation for the blessings received is deceptive, Kami-Sama responds to the distressed calls for help.'" Sugita-san felt so appreciative of the fact that he could have helped the church financially even in such a dire condition.

Later on, the wife of Sugita-san developed a lump in one of her breasts. The condition became so acute that she became bedridden. Because of the domestic circumstance, Sugita-san could not accompany the Rev. Kondo for the pilgrimage to Otani Village. One day, after the Rev. Kondo left for Otani Village, a person from Terada Village in Kyoto came to church and expressed his intention of joining the pilgrimage to the Main Church in Otani Village with the Rev. Kondo. He found out that Sugita-san stayed in Osaka. He went to see Sugita-san at his working place and asked him to join the pilgrimage to Gohonbu (Headquarters). Sugita-san responded to him by saying, "As you may know, my wife has been bedridden. We have to take care of two infants. It would be hard to join the pilgrimage to the Gohonbu." Tabata-san refuted, "Sugita-san, I have never expected your devotion to the faith to be so weak." Sugita-san asked back in confusion for the degrading remark. Tabata-san stated, "Can't you take that it is not I, Tabata, but Ikigami Konko Daijin, who has come to help you to accompany the pilgrimage to Gohonbu? If you could have that thought, you would appreciate my solicitation as a divine invitation." Sugita-san extended his thoughts for a while and replied, "Tabata-san, I truly appreciate your thoughtful message. I should admit my poor devotion to the practice of faith. I will follow your message and accompany you to the Gohonbu. I leave everything in Kami-Sama's care. Ikigami Konko Daijin-Sama." Tabata-san responded with great joy and said, "You took my extended thought for the message of Ikigami Konko Daijin-Sama. I will regard you as Ikigami Konko Daijin and accompany you to the pilgrimage." The two shook hands in gratitude and shed tears of happiness.

Sugita-san explained the development and persuaded his wife. He went out of town for shopping for the pilgrimage. Upon his return from shopping, he was surprised at his wife who was cooking for his bento box lunch. She spoke, "I was truly moved by your extended thoughts and felt like I should make a bento for you at the least. Then I felt no pain in the breast and could get out of the bed." Upon his arrival at the worship hall in Otani Village, even before he could utter a word, Konko Shijin-Sama stated, "If you devote yourself to the practice of faith single-heartedly, your family will be relieved. Look forward to fourteen days after you returned home, your wife will have an open wound on the left side of her breast."

Upon his return home, he shared with his family members many blessed episodes he experienced during his pilgrimage. His wife, who experienced no pain in her breasts while her husband was away from home, began to feel pain again and became bedridden. As has been predicted by Konko Shijin-Sama, there appeared to be an open wound in the left breast and a large bowl-full of blood-stained pus was discharged. She regained her good health thereafter.

In responding to an earnest encouragement from a believer named Kichisaburo Arashi and extended wish of the Rev. Fujimori Kondo, the Rev. Sugita initiated his own missionary work in Kyoto in June, 1885. Three months prior to his initiation for his missionary work, he earned the credential of "Kyodoshokuho" religious license from the Administrative Chief of Shinto Office, the Rev. Masakuni Inaba, which qualified him to get engaged in his religious work. In those days, Shimabara was a desolate town. The Rev. Sugita held a strong prayer to revitalize the down through the virtue of the Konko faith and wished to help many people in need. Through his dedicated services, many people in town were saved. He might have communicated to Konko Shijin-Sama for his missionary work in Shimabara. Konko Shijin-Sama encouraged and supported the Rev. Sugita for his missionary work by extending a message, "You shall attain such fame that people would find identical glory both in Shimabara and Konko."

In this manner, the Rev. Sugita's missionary work gained popularity in town. In corresponding to the wide spread influence of the Rev. Sugita, there appeared some ill-natured and envious elements who tried to disturb his missionary work. For example, many affiliated Shinto priests submitted their applications to the Main Shinto Office for their advancement in the status and were granted a rite of appointment to higher ranking. But the Rev. Sugita's application was kept on hold, and he stayed at the same original ranking. The Rev. Sugita who operated his church successfully were slow to advance in the rank, while those in charge of less active shrines enjoyed swift advancement in their status. Being frustrated by the unreasonable situation, the Rev. Sugita made a pilgrimage to see Konko Shijin-Sama and related, "Konko-Sama, those Shinto priests in Kyoto have enjoyed their advancement in their rank, but I have been ignored to make advancement in my status." Konko Shijin-Sama responded, "Sugita-san, which do you prefer, either the human-oriented 'Daikogi' rank or Kami-

assured 'Daikogi' rank?" The Rev. Sugita answered, "I would prefer the status of 'Daikogi' assured by Kami-Sama." Konko Shijin-Sama stated, "You are right. You should appreciate the Kami-oriented 'Daikogi' status, rather than the human-oriented one. From today on, you are granted the status of a Kami-assured 'Daikogi' status" and laughed off the forwarded complaint of the Rev. Sugita."

The following day, when there was nobody else in the worship hall, the Rev. Sugita proceeded to see Konko Shijin-Sama at the Mediation Desk. Konko Shijin-Sama forwarded, "You know, about 'Ujigami-Sama' or village deities, they do not save people. That is the shortcoming. Konko Daijin saves people. Everyday, when you encounter believers, try to teach them that they extend their courteous greetings whenever they pass in front of the gate of shrines for 'Ujigami-Sama'. In witnessing the Konko believers who extend their courteous greeting, 'Ujigami-Sama will praise them by saying that the teachings of Konko faith is thoroughly considerate.'"

The Rev. Sugita accepted that message in gratitude and returned home by boat. On his way home, he stopped by at the Konko Church of Nanba in Osaka. He related the Rev. Kondo of the church that he conveyed the rendered message from the minister to Konko Shijin-Sama and extended his appreciation for his safe pilgrimage tour. He also shared the message forwarded by Konko Shijin-Sama and returned home to Kyoto.

Soon after the return from the pilgrimage, five members of the family, including the Rev. and Mrs. Sugita and three children were all afflicted with illness. The condition of one of the children deteriorated to a critical stage that the Rev. Sugita was contemplating for a probable death of the child. In corresponding to the grave circumstance, the Rev. Sugita remembered a message given by Konko Shijin-Sama, "If you devote yourself to the practice of faith single-heartedly, Kami will let you learn new things every day." The Rev. Sugita interpreted the grave situation in the following manner, "The grave illness that our family had to deal with is a divinely given opportunity for me to learn the practical application of the teachings." And he developed a conviction that the matters in regard to life and death are beyond human power and perception, but belong to the realm of the divinity. The family survived the great crisis. And the Rev. Sugita gained much confidence and vigor in pursuit of his faith thereafter. Later, he recalled in memory that he experienced an inexhaustible surge of courage day and night.

Soon after the recovery of the family members from the illness, he made a pilgrimage to see Konko Shijin-Sama in appreciation of the blessings received by boat. The pilgrimage entourage was headed by the Rev. Fujimori Kondo. The number of the pilgrims exceeded more than 100. They landed at the Kasaoka Port and traveled on foot to Otani Village. The Rev. Sugita extended his thanks to Konko Shijin-Sama for the recovery of the family from the illness.
(To be continued.)