



KONKO MISSION BULLETIN

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Blessed Water



By Yasuhiro Yano
Head Minister

We were able to carry out a successful 4th Summer Ohana Camp at Camp HR Erdman from June 21-22. Seventeen people, including the local ministers, joined the program. Some of the participants have expressed their zealously to join this annual program soon after the last program was over. We have witnessed the same expression of opinions that they are sure to join the next year's program with much greater expectations.

The last year's theme for the program was "Blessed food." And the theme for this year was "Blessed water." Food and water are everyday elements we may take for granted, but are so vital that we simply cannot exist without them. Some people may wonder how food, water, air, earth and any other elements we use daily can be closely connected to our faith life. Those elements cannot be separated from the way we live as Konko believers.

I have been convinced that if we can partake of everyday food in the way the teachings of the religious faith dictate, we can be the believer of the religious faith. If we fail to follow teachings in handling these vital elements for our life, no matter how deep and broad knowledge we may have about those elements, or no matter how long we may get engaged in the practice of faith, we may not be living as Konko believers.

At the Headquarters Church at Konko Town and any branch Konko Churches, every morning, the first offering placed before the altar are a pot of water and bowls of

cooked rice both at the Kami and Mitama altars. They are referred to as "Go-shin-sui" or sacred or holy water and "Go-shin-pan" or sacred cooked rice respectfully as tokens of our appreciation for the blessed nature of water and food that sustain our life. This daily ritual is a sort of daily renewal of our mindfulness in acknowledgement and appreciation of blessed nature of not just a bowl of water and rice we consume but any other elements we use in our daily living for the sustenance of our lives.

To our church members, I have tried to share a teaching that Konko-Sama related to Toshimori Shino, "The light that the Sun shines upon us is a divine blessing. The rain that falls is a divine blessing as well. All humans are allowed to live in the midst of divine blessings. People are born amid divine blessings, live amid blessings and die amid divine blessings" (II Toshimori Shino 1). The blessed sunlight and blessed water shall remain blessed elements regardless of the surrounding circumstances. We refer to blessed sunlight as "oterashi" or euphoric expression of blessed sunlight, and "oshimeri" or euphoric expression of blessed moisture. Konko believers usually do not complain about the weather conditions.

The Founder related to Matsuhei Katsura, the founder of Konko Church of Kokura in Kyushu. "Though you think that water is bad, don't think so. Think of water as medicine. Then you won't have a stomach illness." He solemnly continued, "Don't say that water is the cause of your stomach illness. Without water, you cannot live even for a day. What is the earth made from? It's made from water. Don't they say that a single ear of rice needs a liter of water to grow? Be aware of the benefits of water." I felt so much gratitude that my body trembled while I bowed. When Konko-Sama returned to his *kekka* seat, he turned to me with smiling eyes and kindly told me, "Person from Suo, your doubts of I being a phony kami have been dispelled. This is good." I was so much in awe, and felt so ashamed by Konko-Sama's divine virtue, which could span across the nation, that I felt like crawling into a hole" (II Katsura Matsuhei 1-4).

How could Konko-Sama ever know the thoughts held by the Rev. Katsura he came from a far for the first time? Konko-Sama specifically identified that the problem of his stomach illness was because of his wrong perception for the water he used. Konko-Sama gave an answer how he could deal with the stomach illness by saying that he should develop a heart that can appreciate the water he

used as medicine and he shall have no stomach ailments thereafter.

The Founder Konko Daijin didn't say anything commanding, such as "You shall not waste water or you shall be punished." But he used such an expression, "Think of water as medicine. Then you won't have a stomach illness." But he tried to modify the heart that could be in line with the heart of Kami, Our Divine Parent of the Universe. He used the expression of "kokoro-ninare" or to have the heart that could be accepted by Kami.

To Sato Norio, the Founder related, "In an emergency, drink whatever water that is on hand, even from a nearby crock. Pray to kami before drinking, then you will receive the same blessings you would receive after drinking sacred sake or sacred water" (I Sato Norio 5-3).

To Fukushima Gihe'e, the Founder stated, "In this world, there are austerities of fire and water, and people who practice various taboos. But in my Faith, you need not practice such austerities. Instead of donning a white robe and going on a pilgrimage, think of your everyday work as practicing religious austerities. Then receive divine blessings" (II Fukushima Gihe'e 8-2).

Exercising mindfulness in acknowledging blessed nature of water, food, air, earth and anything else in our daily living is the way of life we pursue in the Konko faith.



*Rev. Dr. Todd Takahashi's workshop during the camp
And blessed water-balloon tossing!*



Konko-Sama Says . . .

If you are on the top of a mountain and your stomach begins to ache, think of the soil as *Goshinmai* (sacred rice), then have some. People are born out of the soil. Think of the water you wash your face with as sacred sake and then drink it. You will receive divine blessings. (II Ishida Tomosuke 6)

Konko-Sama imparted, "When drinking water, thank Kami. When eating, pray that the food will make your body healthy. If your stomach hurts while you are in the mountains, consume soil. When near a river, drink the river water. If your stomach hurts while you are pulling weeds in the paddies during the heat of summer, scoop some paddy water with your hand and drink it. Then sit on the footpath and pray to kami-Sama. Keep this teaching in mind every day. Apply soil or water if you get hurt or break your arm or leg. Rely on Kami, and there will be divine blessings" (I Saito Sojiro 3-2).

Bulletin Board

Monthly Services for July 2014

- 1 Tue -Monthly Service for Tenchi Kane No Kami (7:30 pm)
- 6 Sun -Monthly Service, Ikigami Konko Daijin (9 am)
- 13 Sun -Monthly Memorial Service (9 am) and Back to School Service
- 20 Sun -Sunday Service (9 am)
-KMH Oahu Volunteer Activity at Kuakini Medical Center Auditorium (9:30 am)
- 27 Sun -Sunday Service (9 am)

August 2014

- 1 Fri -Monthly Service for Tenchi Kane No Kami (7:30 pm)
- 3 Sun - Sunday Service (9 am)

HCRP

The monthly meeting of the Hawaii Conference of Religions for Peace will be held at the Gedatsu Church on Monday, July 14, 2014 at 1:30 p.m.

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 long-term care patients on Friday, July 11 from 10:00 a.m.

Back-to-School Service

The Annual Back to School Service will be held on Sunday in conjunction with the regular Monthly Memorial


Service on July 13, 2014 at 9:00 a.m. Fill out the enclosed Back to School Prayer form and come to join the service in person and on time. Your prayer forms will be placed before the Kami altar and your minister will pray for your successful school life.

The Little Star Dance Group from Tokyo

The volunteer church members on Oahu will hold the annual activity at the Kuakini Medical Center Hale Pulama Mau Auditorium on Sunday, July 20, from 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. The troop members from the Little Star Dance Group from Tokyo will make a presentation during the program. Following the program, a potluck lunch will be served at the Konko Mission of Honolulu.

Honoring the Mitama Spirits

July

Shimeno Iwasa	7/1/1966	
Yasuo Hayashida	7/5/1998	
Masao Yoshihara	7/12/2002	
Rev. Yoshie Yoshino	7/21/2005	
Asa Miyamoto Iratsume	7/23/1933	
May Shimaō	7/30/2004	

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



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 Matsutarō Kōsaka contributed the insightful articles. The translation is provided by Yasuhiro Yano. (Reference pages 85, 86 and 87)

Section 3

**Meguri
(Accumulated Offenses)**

No. 85

Those who practice faith eliminate their offenses. But those who do not practice faith and idle away their time, accumulate offenses. (II Kondo Fujimori 25 Kyoten page 538)

Meguri (Accumulated Offenses) and Practice of Faith

A new section focused on the subject of “meguri” or accumulated offenses begins from this page.

We have a common understanding about concept of “shinjin” or practice of faith and “okage” or divine blessing in the Konkokyo faith community as a whole. But the subject of “meguri” is controversial. There are two main arguments about the subject. One group of people adheres to their conviction that to deal with the issues pertaining to “meguri” helps the believers to get engaged in the practice of faith more actively, while the opposing group of people insists that those who cope with the issues of “meguri” are likely to experience depression and become hostile to others.

Despite the fact we use the term quite often in the faith community, but no clear definition of the term has been established. In this writing, we would like to provide a conventional understanding of the term that is basically based on the commonly held perception of “In-ga” or cause and effect. Accordingly, the term “meguri” can be defined that prolonged accumulation of elements of negativity will cause negative results. The quoted teaching in the page 86 gives us an impression that “meguri” is something that can be cleared away, can be accumulated and can hardly be identified in a concrete manner.

Now put aside the subject of “meguri” and try to understand the meaning of the message.

The Founder stated that those who practice faith eliminate their offenses, while those who do not practice faith and idle away their time, accumulate offenses. The vital factor that determines whether we take away “meguri” or continue to accumulate “meguri” depends upon whether we get engaged or not engaged in the practice of faith. On the other hand, the factor of “meguri” contributes in such a manner that a believer becomes awakened to the necessity and become more actively engaged in the practice of faith.

I believe you would get enlightened and encouraged to get engaged in your practice of faith more actively.

No. 86

No matter how high your pile of offenses are, it can be cleared away through faith. Kami will clear away the offenses and curses accumulated since your ancestors. (II Konko Hagio 2 Kyoten page 515)

Clearing away of Meguri (Accumulated Offenses) (1)

The Founder firmly stated that through our engagement in the practice of faith, no matter how high our piles of offenses are, it can be cleared away. He convincingly stated that even if we may experience an impasse through the influence of any offenses and curses accumulated through our ancestors without our knowledge, we can find ways to dissolve issues imposed by those elements of “meguri.” There would be no such “meguri” that cannot be cleared away through our engagement in the practice of faith.

But to Konko Hagio, the Founder stated, “It is fine as long as your illness is cured by practicing faith. You need not refer to your accumulated offenses and faults. Just practicing faith is fine” (II Konko Hagio 1). The quoted message implies that we should not be concerned with “meguri” seem to conflict with the previously quoted message. What would be the true intent of the Founder?

The “meguri” found in the quoted message, “You need not refer to your accumulated offenses and faults. Just practicing faith is fine,” are foreign elements to the practice of faith. The Founder showed us that when we have to deal with our illnesses, we should not be bothered with the foreign elements of “meguri” accumulated offenses and faults, but try to get healed of the illnesses through our engagement in the practice of faith.

Both quoted messages emphasized the importance of our engagement in practicing faith to clear away accumulated offenses and faults. In this respect both teachings do not conflict each other.

What we can conclude through the study of the seemingly conflicting messages pertaining to “meguri” is that if we try to deal with the issues of “meguri” exclusively apart from practicing of faith, we may get lost in pursuit of faith. We have to deal with the issues of “meguri” through our exercise of practicing faith.

No. 87

People ask Kami to take away their accumulated offenses. But when Kami starts to do so, they run away because it is too painful. Kami then has to withdraw His hands, which were so kindly extended. (I Kondo Fujimori 28 Kyoten page 282)

Clearing away of Meguri (Accumulated Offenses) (2)

The Founder showed how to deal with the issues of “meguri” in a different perspective.

People ask Kami to take away their accumulated offenses in corresponding to persistent difficulties in their life. But taking away “meguri” also seems to require them to undergo a great deal of hurdles in their engagement in the practice of faith.

Taking away “meguri” can be likened to taking away roots of unwanted weeds. Even if we cut off the visible upper portion of the weeds, they still continue to thrive because of the strong root system underneath. The same can apply to the “meguri” we have. Taking away “meguri” is likened to take away the whole weed, including the root system. It requires a great deal of endurance and efforts. We can succeed to take away “meguri” with endurance and effort or succumb to prolonged difficulties in failure to take away elements of “meguri.”

The Founder stated in such a cynical manner, “People ask Kami to take away their accumulated offenses. But when Kami starts to do so, they run away because it is so painful.” Through the extended statement, we can assume that Kami’s true heart is to

bring fulfillment of happiness to those people in suffering by taking away “meguri.”

The similar elements in dealing with “meguri” can be found in practicing faith, such as spiritual training, testing of one’s belief in Kami and so forth. We can assume that we can get beneficial fulfillment in life if we could overcome severe spiritual endurance, imposed testing and get engaged in practicing of faith single-heartedly. But quite often, we fail to deal with those imposed challenges in life and give up and run away from the difficult encounters. Consequently, Kami also has to withdraw His extended hands for help. How pitiable we can be.



The 40th KMH MWSS Seminar was held at Konko Mission of Honolulu on June 12-13, 2014.



Revs. Yūichi and Miwa Tanaka, newly-weds of Konkokyo Maebaru Church, Fukuoka visited our church on June 20, 2014. They are Gakuin Seminary classmates of Rev. Edna Yano.