



KONKO MISSION BULLETIN

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“Kami-agari” (Departure in divine arrangement)

By Yasuhiro Yano

Head Minister of Konko Mission of Wahiawa

Early in the morning of May 27, I opened my e-mail and found a message from Japan. I was informed of the sudden passing of my youngest brother, Takahiko Yano. The service called “Shuusai” or the final service related to the passing of a person to Tenchi Kane No Kami was held on May 30, and “Kokubetsushiki” or the formal funeral service followed by cremation was held on May 31. I could get on board a jet to Narita on May 29 and arrived at Konko Church of Maruko in Kanagawa Prefecture in the afternoon of May 30. I could attend all the funeral functions, including cremation. All of my five living siblings were able to attend the ceremony, except for my younger sister who came early and had to return home.

In January of this year, all of the family members got together for the observance of the 10th Year Memorial Service for my father held at Konko Church of Kawanoishi in Ehime. That was the final meeting with Takahiko.

Edna made a brief account about Takahiko who got re-connected to Kami-Sama through divine arrangement in the Children’s Newsletter. Please refer to that article for details.

In my understanding, Kami-Sama gave him five years of extended life under the spiritual care, guidance and Toritsugi-Mediation of the Rev. Mitsuo Yokoyama, Head Minister of Konko Church of Maruko in Kanagawa. During the five year period, Takahiko attained spiritual transformation. He was deeply moved by the concept of “Okage no tsutsu” that implies a cylindrical chamber filled with elements of divine blessing, and we live in that given condition of blessedness of Tenchi Kane No Kami. This concept is one of the signature expressions of the Rev. Yokoyama. He also served as “Hokyo” assistant to the minister at the Konko Church of Maruko.

Takahiko passed away peacefully. But the day of his passing coincided with my brother’s birthday and his niece’s wedding. While my brother and the other siblings were heading for the wedding function, they were informed of the emergency condition of Takahiko. After the wedding, they headed to Yokohama where he passed away. The day of his departure would never be forgotten by his family members and the people who were close to him.

In the Konkokyo religious faith, a minister has been advocating the concept of “Kami-agari” that implies departure from the physical existence into the spiritual world through divine arrangement. I believe Takahiko also departed in the form of “Kami-agari” and became of service to Kami and act as the guarding Mitama Soul for the family and the faith community people.



The following is an English translation of an article found in the Konko Shinbun issued on March 17, 2013. The article was based on true story contributed for publicity from a believer. In consideration of privacy, only the name of the person involved was changed. In memory of my brother, Takahiko Yano, the following article is re-printed from Konko Mission Bulletin issued on April 1, 2013. The English translation was provided by the Rev. Yasuhiro Yano.

A divine guidance to get re-connected to Kami-Sama

A person named Kazuhiko-san, aged 54, was deeply afflicted with anxiety and uncertainty for his future life because of his encounter with a grave circumstance. He was absent-mindedly wandering along the street in the shopping arcade in a town. Incidentally his eyes were drawn to the Konkokyo Religious crest called the “Yatsunami” which represents the eight petals around the Kanji character “Kin” or gold on the wall of a building.

His parents and many siblings have been deeply involved in the family religion of Konkokyo. But Kazuhiko-san alone hasn’t followed the family tradition and lived apart from the religious way of life for some reason.

After graduating from high school, he went to town and got a career as a construction contractor. He once got married but eventually got divorced. One of those days, he suddenly collapsed while he was working in Nagano Prefecture. He was hospitalized for four months thereafter.

In corresponding to the disabled circumstance, he asked one of his colleagues to take over the responsibility of the construction project in place of him. But he failed to handle the work and Kazuhiko-san had to take over a huge financial debt. Overwhelmed with the prohibitive financial debt, the only way he could cope with the troubled situation was to drink excessively. After he was released from the hospital in Nagano, he returned to

his residence in Tokyo. At that stage, his dormant hepatitis-C he contracted years ago afflicted his liver with cirrhosis, which turned into liver cancer. His body and mind were excessively tormented.

Under that circumstance, he became re-connected to the Konko faith. His parents and siblings encouraged him to get engaged in the practice of faith by saying, "Do not ever get disengaged with Kami-Sama. You've got to go to church." But he showed little response to the forwarded concerns and prayers for him. Through the incidental encounter with the familiar Konkokyo "Yatsunami" crest, shining on the building, he got reminded to "Go to church and get engaged in the practice of faith." He followed the calling in mind and opened the entrance door of the church gingerly.

Kazuhiko-san proceeded before the minister serving at the Toritsugi-Mediation Desk and began to state, "I have assumed that I worked very hard for my professional career for all those years. But my friend betrayed me and I was trapped with a huge financial debt. I have assumed that I had done whatever I could to get healed of my illness through my practice of faith and prayers." The minister abruptly interrupted his talk and responded to Kazuhiko-san by saying, "You can assume that you are doing the right thing, but if you are serious for your own salvation, you should get engaged in the practice of faith with a resolved heart. You should demonstrate your single-heartedness in your belief in Kami-Sama."

The message forwarded by the minister enlightened Kazuhiko-san in such a manner as he recalled, "I was wrong in the way of living based on a false assumption or 'tsumori' that bring nothing in fruition." He became resolved and asked desperately for help, "I want to be saved. I need Kami-Sama's help."

He resolved he would start his life anew from scratch. He declared personal bankruptcy and cleared off his financial burden. As for his illness, he surrendered his life to Kami-Sama and received care from his doctor unconditionally.

He now makes a daily visit to church. Eventually, he responds to provide some building maintenance work at the church and in request from the believers. When he came to church for the first time, he looked so ill with a weak physical posture and pale color of the skin. Several months later, the doctor told him "Your hepatic function test showed some improvement in numbers." Kazuhiko-san regained his smile.

Kazuhiko-san stated in conviction, "Kami-Sama makes no mistakes." He has devotedly engaged in the practice of faith. One year later, his physical strength improved to be able to receive surgery for his liver cancer.

Because Kazuhiko-san was alienated from the practice of faith, his relationship with other siblings became weak. The minister encouraged many of his siblings to extend their help for the troubled Kazuhiko-san who was scheduled to get surgery for the cancer. They responded by extending prayers at the time of his scheduled surgery at their own localities. The surgery was successful.

Soon after the surgery, the minister shared his thought to Kazuhiko-san, "I have been praying that you will serve as a 'Hokyo' in appreciation of the blessings you have enjoyed

through the virtuous work of Heaven and Earth." "Hokyo" is a lay volunteer who helps spread the Konko faith through being actively involved in local church and official organizational functions. Kazuhiko-san responded to the offered invitation in gratitude and took an orientation training session called "Hokyo Shigansha Koushuukai."

In reflection of the drastic development, he stated, "I feel so grateful and appreciative for all of the blessings I have enjoyed as I have become re-connected to the way of life based on the Konko faith." He continues to get involved in the practice of faith even more devotedly and tries to offer any services at the church as much as possible.

Konko-Sama Says . . .

Few have a heart that Kami can accept. Those whose hearts can be accepted by Kami will be blessed with good health, wealth, and wisdom for three generations, resulting in a strong family lineage. Those whose hearts are not accepted by Kami may have wealth as well as wisdom, but will get sick. Those who have wisdom and good health will lose their wealth. If they do not lose their wealth, their beloved children will die, leaving no heirs. Since these people are not aware of Kami's blessings, they are always lacking one thing or another. If you practice faith and understand Kami's blessings, you will live a peaceful and stable life. You will have descendants and gain wealth. You will receive divine blessings from year to year, and then from generation to generation. (III Konko Kyoso Gorikai 78).

Bulletin Board

Main Services for May 2016

1 Wed -Monthly Service for Tenchi Kane No Kami (7:30 pm)
5 Sun - Sunday Service (9 am)
12 Sun -Monthly Service for Ikigami Konko Daijin (9 am)
18 (Sat) to 19 (Sun), no church service due to the Ohana Camp
26 Sun -Monthly Memorial Service (9 am)

July 2016

1 Fri -Monthly Service for Tenchi Kane No Kami (7:30 pm)
3 Sun -Sunday Service (9:00 am)

Kumamoto Earthquake Disaster Fund-raising

We have been accepting monetary donations for the Kumamoto Earthquake disasters that has occurred on April 14, 2016 Japan time and caused great damages to the areas. As of May 31, the amount deposited into the relief fund box totaled \$261.56. Some of the members responded to send their donations to KMH directly. Along with the amount in the collection box, the total amount of \$300.00 will be forwarded to KMH. The money collected will be sent to Konkokyo Headquarters Kumamoto

Earthquake Relief Fund in Japan via the Konko Missions in Hawaii. Thank you very much for your extended thoughts and prayers.

KMH Calendar Missionary Women's Meeting

Konko Mission of Wahiawa will host the annual meeting of Missionary Women's on June 8 and 9, 2016. On the second day, they will visit Kahuku Beach for clean up and extending prayers for the victims of the Tohoku Earthquake on March 11, 2011. Debris from the affected areas in Japan has been arriving on the shores of the beach.

KMH Ministers Gathering

The Rev. Hideko Konko, director of Konko Library at Konko Headquarters building will make a presentation on the title of "My endeavor as a Konko minister" on Friday, June 24 at Konko Mission of Honolulu from 10:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

KMH Faith Enrichment Meeting

The Rev. Kideko Konko will share her thought on the theme of "A happy elderly woman who helped other people to enjoy happiness" on Saturday, June 25, 2016 at Konko Mission of Honolulu 1:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. She will elaborate about the reason of getting engaged in the practice of faith and what we can contribute in society as Konko believers.

90th Anniversary Celebration of Konko Missions in Hawaii

We will be commemorating the 90th Anniversary Celebration of the Konko Missions in Hawaii on Sunday, September 4, 2016 at the Konko Mission of Honolulu at 9:30 a.m. The registration forms are available at the church.

Hawaii Conference of Religions for Peace

The regular meeting will be held on Monday, June 20, 2016 at Gedatsu Church of Hawaii at 1:30 p.m.

Volunteer Activity

The regular monthly visit to the Long-Term Care Facility at Wahiawa General Hospital will be made on Friday, June 10, 2016 at 10:00 a.m.

Konko Mission of Wahiawa 6th Summer Ohana Camp

We will hold the annual 6th Summer Ohana Camp organized by the Konko Mission of Wahiawa from June 18 to June 19 at Camp Erdman, Mokuleia. The theme for this year's gathering is "The Power of Prayer." The Rev. Dr. Todd Zenji Takahashi will make a presentation. Attending day-time activities including the lecture alone will be recommended if you hesitate to stay overnight. This time, we will enjoy the beautiful night sky with a telescope we got. We will also hold the usual camp fire and crab hunting.

Honoring the Mitama Spirits

June

Florence Tamaribuchi	6/10/1997
Clara Kimiko Hiromasa	6/10/2014
Edith Suzuyo Noguchi	6/14/2014
Harry Ching	6/19/2007
Matsu Suzuki (興語)	6/2008

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 151 and 153)

No. 151

I don't tell people to come to worship. But those who do, end up receiving more of Kami's virtue (Shintoku). For example, learning under a teacher or from a school for a long time brings much knowledge. Those who come to worship often and listen to Konko Daijin's teachings receive more wisdom. Of those who come to worship often, there are people who just give their requests and then hurry home. These people have selfish faiths and don't understand the teachings that Konko Daijin hands down. (I Yamamoto Sadajiro 67-2, 3 Kyoten page 400 to 4001)

Church visitation and acquiring Kami's virtue

The Founder stated, "Those who come to worship end up receiving more of Kami's virtue." What is Kami's virtue?

The quoted message is a partial excerpt from the much longer original statement. The first paragraph of the original statement reads, "There are people who come to this Hiromae, request to be cured, and come to give thanks after complete recovery. That's all. Rather, if you have been completely cured by Kami-Sama's blessings, tell those in distress about my teachings. Spread my teachings so more people will start to practice faith sincerely. This is giving true thanks to Kami-Sama."

The term "Shintoku" in the quoted message implies believers who acquires "Shintoku" Kami's virtue through their devotion in practicing of faith and develop enough knowledge and spiritual power to help them to be able to share the teachings of the Founder to those people in distress.

The power to influence other people can parallel earned academic knowledge by attending school. The more they get educated at school, the more they gain knowledge. The same can apply to the practice of faith. Those who frequented to listen to the teachings from the Founder accumulated much knowledge about the elements of religious faith.

Those believers who just make a visit to the Hiromae and return home quickly would not be given much opportunity to hear teachings from the Founder. The Founder stated, "Of those who come to worship often, there are people who just give their requests and then hurry home. These people have selfish faiths and don't understand the teachings that Konko Daijin hands

down.” They could not have developed much knowledge about deeper elements of practicing faith.

The Founder compliment Sadajiro Yamamoto by saying, “As for you, you take the time to listen quietly, and you believe that you will receive divine blessings. This is good.” Sadajiro Yamamoto was one of those few believers who enjoyed listening to the teachings from the Founder. The quoted message sounds like a grief held by the Founder that many people could not fully appreciate the deeper meaning of practicing faith.

No. 152

There are people who worship at the entrance of the hiromae because they just want to pay a short visit here on their way home. Since they consider coming here to worship as secondary, the divine blessings are not so much as they expect them to be. Even if you come here on your way elsewhere, worship at the hiromae believing you were able to come because Kami has arranged it. Then Kami will arrange for you to receive enough blessings. (III Jinkyu Kyogoroku 155 Kyoten page 870)

Prioritized church visit

Occasionally I witness believers who come to church by extending their greetings that they just came across to the corner and just dropped by. Some of them stand at the entrance and extend their short prayers and leave the place without extending their greetings.

Through the quoted message we could assume that even while the Founder was serving, there were some believers who acted in the same manners I just introduced. There seems to be some universal aspects in human behavior from the time unknown. Even those church believers who say they are different from those people could commit the same pattern of behaviors as they try to take a closer look at the life in the past. It could be a common spirituality of the Japanese that they believe they could be blessed even if their visit to church was secondary—that’s it’s better than not visiting at all. It could be just one of the casual engagements to feel better.

Through the quoted message, the Founder didn’t degrade the casual visitation to the hiromae. He stated, “Even if you come here on your way elsewhere, worship at the hiromae believing you were able to come because Kami has arranged it. Then Kami will arrange for you to receive enough blessings.”

Even if you just happen to be in the vicinity of the hiromae, your mindfulness of the church and the fact that your heart was directed toward Kami in the act of visitation is the heart that can reach Kami. You are to get blessed accordingly. A church visitation without your pure and sincere heart will not be much appreciated by Kami. You should be mindful of those elements when you make a visit to church.

No. 153

When in pain, come to worship for a cure. When there’s no pain, come to worship for faith. (I Ichimura Mitsugoro 2-28 Kyoten page 227)

Come to church when you enjoy your normal life.

The message is short, but shows a drastic message that could have changed the perspective of getting engaged in the practice of faith held by common people in those days.

In Japan, they say, “Call on Kami only when one is in need.” Those who have gotten engaged in the practice of faith assume that we are not like those people who call on Kami only when we are in need. But we could be wrong in the assumption.

An old adage reads, “Only when we encounter difficulties, we call on Kami, while we live a peaceful life, we live in pursuit of our own self-centered fulfillments.” While we enjoy a peaceful life, we become less mindful of everyday elements and take them for granted. We may become less disciplined in our daily living. Our engagement in the practice of faith, such as visitation to church, worshipping may become less serious. But once we have to deal with some difficult issues, we become serious in pursuit of faith. We try to attend church seriously. The old adage, “Call on Kami only when one is in need” reflects the exact nature of human beings.

While we practice faith in dealing with some difficult encounters, our focuses have been directed on for the resolution of the issues alone. And we develop wrong assumptions that we have practiced faith devotedly. The Founder referred to that kind of engagement in practice of faith as “They are not practicing faith, but they are extending prayers just for the fulfillment of personal wishes.”

Then what would be a faith-based visitation to church? One such example would be to go to church while we are living a normal,, smooth life without major encounters, and we are attracted to church in pursuit of true faith. The Founder related to Ichimura Mitsugoro, “Faith is without a goal. This means there are endless goals to attain” (I Ichimura Mitsugoro 1-9).