



# KONKO MISSION BULLETIN

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E-mail: [konko-wahiawa@hotmail.com](mailto:konko-wahiawa@hotmail.com) Rev. Yasuhiro Yano Vol. XXIII, No. 3 March 1, 2011

## Spring Memorial Service

**Date:** Sunday, March 13, 2011

**Time:** 10:00 a.m.

Through the service, we extend our sincere appreciation for the contributions, support and guidance of the deceased ministers, family members and our ancestors for our blessed lives we now enjoy. Please join us in commemorating this vital function of the Konko Faith in person in on time. Naorai Fellowship lunch will follow.



From L to R: Bryce, Trisha, Jayden Adkison, Edith Noguchi, Bruce Yamamoto, Mitsuko Suwa and Jane Suwa

From this year, for the first time ever in the history of Konko Mission of Wahiawa, we have scheduled monthly testimonials by our church members. The following is the second speech script contributed by Mrs. Mitsuko Suwa who shared her thoughts about her involvement in the practice of the Konko faith on Sunday, February 27, 2011. The script was composed by Mrs. Trisha Adkison, granddaughter of Mrs. Suwa, after conducting an interview with her.

## Testimonial of Blessings (2/27/11)

By Mrs. Amy Mitsuko Suwa

Shared by granddaughter Mrs. Trisha Adkison

Grandma and her family lived near the old Konko Church on Kilani Avenue in Wahiawa. Reverend Haruko Takahashi

invited her parents to come to the church in 1940. Since then, her parents encouraged her and her siblings to continue to attend the church.

After WWII and the Japanese attack on Oahu, grandma got a job working for the U.S. Army. She is thankful for getting the job as a GS-2 and for her rise in position in the many years that followed. When grandma was a GS-7, a management analyst GS-9 position opened. She asked the Reverend to pray for her so that she may get the job. There were three slots available and nine people applied. Thankfully, she received blessings and was given the job. She was the oldest of the three and the least educated, as the other two girls had college degrees.

Grandma is thankful for her husband and four kids. Although she has a nerve disorder that causes her hands to shake, she is thankful that this same disorder allowed her to give birth without any pain. She is thankful that her three sons returned home safely from their military service and that Jason (my husband) and I have also safely returned from many deployments.

Grandma is thankful for her health. She is also thankful that she recovered from her stroke and that her speech continues to improve. She is also thankful that she has lived a long life and is able to see her many grandchildren and great grandchildren. And last but not least, grandma is thankful that Aunt Sharon, my mom and I help with her daily errands and take good care of her.

*The following is an English translation of an article found in the publication of "Wakaba" issued in February, 2011. The publication is for the young Konko believers issued by the Konkokyo Shonen Shojokai Rengo Honbu. The article has been contributed by the Rev. Fumi Yasutake (daughter of the Revs. Michiyoshi and Sachiko Yasutake of Konko Church of Amagi, Japan). I translated this article for your reference because she has identified the most fundamental element of the Konko faith.*

## "Orei no Katachi" Appreciation in action

By Rev. Fumi Yasutake

"I hate the church!" I held this negative thought throughout my school days, through middle school and high school, despite the fact I grew up in a church.

The reason why I had this strong hatred about the church can be attributable to the many elements that naturally existed in the church-oriented environment. I had to deal with many

inconveniences for my own personal life; I had to always be consciously aware of the watchful eyes of the church congregation and any other people in any given situation. I felt so uncomfortable about this restrictive nature of church life. On the other hand, I envied my friends who seemed to be carefree.

From time to time, I argued and fought with my mom and declared, "I hate this church. I am going to leave this place!" In those days, I felt I was over-burdened with the restrictive elements associated with the church-oriented life.

Strangely, I have made a significant spiritual evolution from my rebellious life into becoming a minister of the Konko faith. I have now served two years as a minister.

In the past, I loathed the fact that I grew up in a church and hated it passionately. Now, I feel overwhelmed with the sense of happiness and joy and the "I hate church", turned into, "I love church! Yes, I positively love the church!" I can say it was quite a spiritual awakening.

What made me change? It was thanks to a remark by one of my friends.

When I attended school, I didn't want to tell anybody that I am from a minister's family. I had a primal fear that my friends would reject me. But when I revealed that fact, none of my friends left me. Yet I still had a strong hesitation to let anybody know I was a minister's daughter. At one occasion, one of my friends shared her thought with me by saying, "Fumi, you may not be happy you are a daughter of a minister. But I am actually interested in learning about your faith and would like to visit your church one day. I notice that you always place your pair of shoes in an orderly manner; you always eat the last grain of rice on your plate; and you always take good care of things. When I see your everyday actions and interactions, you are unique from ordinary people."

My friend's remark made me so happy. At the same time, her remark reminded me of the many teachings that have been naturally instilled into me through attending the Youth Association gatherings and through my parent's words. That message is to "Express our heart of thanks and appreciation for anything at all that help us in any way, and show our thanks and appreciation in action." "If we have the heart of thanks for anything, we would be able to handle and treat them with the heart of thanks and appreciation."

I put my shoes together nicely after removing them; I eat every grain of rice on a tray; and try to take care of anything with care, not because I am going to be scolded by someone. The way I act could be based on a teaching that goes, "Show your heart of thanks and appreciation in action." For some reason, the teachings have been subconsciously ingrained in my daily living.

At this turning point in life, I was able to reflect on myself deeply and extended my appreciation for the nurturing church

environment. Then I was convinced, "Yes! A church is a school that teaches how to exercise one's heart."

At the initial stage of learning about living the faith, I might have practiced whatever I did with the heart of thanks and appreciation. But eventually, I have gotten used to such a way of life and have begun to take things for granted and failed to maintain being thankful and appreciative. This sort of living may not reflect the teaching. For a while I have lost the most important element in life.

The life without the heart of thanks and appreciation clouded my heart. I became self-centered and became overwhelmed with negative thoughts about the church. I didn't acknowledge anybody else's help for my own upbringing.

I truly appreciated my friend's remark that helped me to extend my deeper thoughts for my own existence. It made me aware of how indebted I am to so many people around me. I have also learned to appreciate my limited powers.

When I extended my thoughts to this extent, I felt so appreciative of the fact that I grew up in the church. At the same time, I felt sorry for those people out there who have no sense of thanks and appreciation for the blessings they enjoy through Kami-Sama.

I became a Konko minister based on my conviction of wanting to extend my thanks to Kami-Sama and Mitama Spirits who helped me to be what I am today, as well as want to help as many people to develop their appreciation for the great nature of Kami-Sama.

The Konko church is a wonderful place. In appreciation for the teachings that polish our hearts, let us try to bring joy to Kami-Sama. Let each of us find ways to extend our thanks to Kami-Sama.

I am convinced that the joy and happiness of Kami-Sama will become greater in proportion to the increased number of people who learn to appreciate the great work of Kami-Sama.

I pray that I could learn as much as a Konko minister and can be of service to Kami-Sama accordingly.

### **Konko-Sama Says . . .**

Divine virtue will be with you even after death and passed down to future generations. It can be received by anyone who practices faith. Divine virtue is never exhausted. (Gorikai III Konko Kyoso Gorikai 2)

Although people live between heaven and earth, they are unaware of Kami's blessings. Shrines, temples, and houses all stand on Kami's land. Without realizing this, people

consult the Days and Directions and are disrespectful to Kami. They suffer hardships due to these offenses. Tenchi Kane no Kami has sent Ikigami Konko Daijin to provide blessings and teachings so that mankind may prosper. Kami is Kami because of man, and man is man because of Kami. Both are fulfilled through this mutual relationship. (Gorikai III Konko Kyoso Gorikai 3)

## Bulletin Board

### Regular Church Services for March 2011

- 1 Tue -Monthly Svc. for Tenchi Kane no Kami at 7:30 pm
- 6 Sun -Monthly Service for the Founder at 9 a.m.
- 13 Sun -Spring Memorial Service at 10:00 a.m.
- 20 Sun -Sunday Service at 9 a.m.  
-Honolulu Church Spring Memorial Service at 10 a.m.
- 27 Sun -No Sunday Service  
-Volunteer Activity at Kuakini Medical Center at 9:30 a.m.

### Monthly Volunteer Activity at Wahiawa General Hospital

We will make a monthly visit to the Wahiawa General Hospital Long-Term Care Facility on Friday, March 11 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

The local churches in Oahu have coordinated to hold a volunteer activity at the Kuakini Medical Center on Sunday, March 27 from 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. You are encouraged to participate in this community function. We will meet at the Honolulu Church at 9:00 a.m.

### HCRP Meeting

The regular meeting will be held on Monday, March 7 from 1:30 p.m. at the Church of Perfect Liberty.

### KMH Strategic Planning Committee Meeting

The final meeting of the committee will be held at the Konko Missions in Hawaii office on Saturday, March 26 at 1:30 p.m.

### Spring Grand Service for Tenchi Kane no Kami

We will observe the annual Grand Service for Tenchi Kane no Kami on Wednesday, April 13 at 6:30 p.m.

## Honoring the Mitama Spirits for March

Richard Tamabayashi	3/7/1999
Thomas Toshito Yamamoto	3/16/1991
Matsuyo Arikawa	3/8/1995



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

## Kyoso-Sama Volume 2 (#23)

*The following is 23<sup>rd</sup> 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 230 to 240)*

Konko Shijin-Sama and the Abe family were filled with overwhelming joy and happiness for the birth of the son (Setsutane).

A memo recorded by Konko Shijin-Sama stated, "(A baby boy) born on June 30, 1880. Named him Setsutane on July 7 in lunar calendar." A photocopy of the memo was featured in the opening page of "Konko Kyoho" published in August of 1901. A notation was made to the copy in the following manner: The time was summer of 1880. Konko-Sama was 67 years old and his wife was 62 years old. This photo copy of the memo shows the record about the birth of the first child to Konko Shijin-Sama. The birth of the child was one of the three biggest developments in life followed by the pilgrimage to Ise Shrine in April of 1873 and his own marriage in September of 1878. June 30 in lunar calendar corresponds to August 5 in today's calendar. On the seventh day after the birth, the child was named as Setsutane. He also made a list of the donor and the items received for that occasion of celebration. Nine people, including the Abes who lived in the next village and those familiar believers who lived in the neighborhood, who forwarded gifts were listed in the memo. The Furukawas, the Ohashis and the Fujiis were relatives of Konko-Sama. The Abe family, which was the native family of the wife of Konko Shijin-Sama, the Furukawa family who opened a tea house named Doteya, just across Konko-Sama's house. The family of Sanpei Abe was closely related to the family of Konko-Sama from long time ago. One of the aunts of Konko-Sama married into the Abe family. They all engaged in the practice of faith devotedly. The descendants of Sanpei Abe, such as the third Konko-Sama (Setsutane Konko), the Rev. Kisaburo Abe, and the Rev. Mitsuemom Fujii, and many other numbers of them have gotten engaged in serving Kami-Sama.

In winter of that year, Konko Shijin-Sama made a "yagura kotatsu" or a hand-warmer heat box. A notation was recorded on the wooden framed heat box, "Made on December 24, 1880. Carpenter, Ieyoshi Konko. For my son, Setsutane." December 24 in lunar calendar equals January 23 of the following year, 1881. They were using the lunar calendar in those days. Konko Shijin-Sama also followed the tradition of the lunar calendar. The crafted item was so finely produced as if it were made by a professional carpenter.

They said Konko Shijin-Sama was really good at his carpentry skills. The hand-made kotatsu heat box supports that reputation. He also crafted a candle stand about six

years ago before the production of the heat box. The item was well made, although it did show signs of novice carpentry skills.

But the kotatsu heat box looked so good that it seemed to be crafted professionally. We can witness the advanced carpentry skills of Konko Shijin-Sama.

There are some other stories that showed Konko Shijin-Sama's excelled carpentry skills. One of his friends, Takeji Kawate built his new main house. Konko Shijin-Sama helped him to build the house. He chiseled interlocking holes in the wooden posts that were used for the pillars for the house. They were all amazed in witnessing that the posts interlocked so perfectly.

The house built with the help of Konko Shijin-Sama was intact till recent years. At the occasion of commemorating the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the founding of the Konkokyo Religious Organization in 1959, the house was destroyed to make room for the expansion of the church yard. The current location the house was located is in the open space south of the Main Service Hall.

At the end of summer in 1881, the Rev. Setsutane Konko suffered from grave symptoms of dysentery. He sought help through Toritsugi-Mediation of Konko-Sama. Konko Shijin-Sama also made a portable house shrine and extended his single-hearted prayer for his son's recovery.

### **Birth of Hifuno**

Kiyo, wife of Konko Shijin-Sama, gave birth to a girl on December 21, 1881. She was given the name of Hifuno. While she was young, she was adopted to the family of the Rev. Seishiro Tsutsumi who founded the Konko Church of Takamiya in Shiga Prefecture. Later she got married to Seijiro Fukushima, who also was adopted to the family from Konko Church of Masago in Osaka. She gave birth to nine children, six sons and three daughters. She passed away on July 19, 1952, at the age of 70.

Konko Shijin-Sama and his wife raised eight children, namely, Setsutane (3<sup>rd</sup> Konko-Sama), Michiaki, Kuniharu, Miyotaro, and four girls, Hifuno, Himeko, Nenose, and Shiono. Konko Shijin-Sama placed much emphasis on educating the children. When Setsutane was born, he made a "yagura kotatsu" hand and feet warmer box for his son. He copied the entire book of "Meirin Satsuyou" for his son when he reached the age of four. The book was a guidebook for moral education. He also prepared school texts for his son one year before his admission to the elementary school. He presented a "Shime-Daiko" or rope-fastened taiko drum for Miyotaro a few months after he was born. Through these articles of remembrance for Konko Shijin-Sama, we can appreciate his deeper and enthusiastic concerns for the sound academic growth of the children. He allowed Setsutane to enroll at a higher school called "Koutou shogakko." The school was established through monetary contributions collected from 12 neighboring village communities. In those days, usually only one student from each village could afford to send their children to that school.

Setsutane was one of those blessed students. But Konko Shijin-Sama strictly disciplined Setsutane to perform household chores and to babysit other siblings. His wife, Kiyo, expressed her sympathy toward Setsutane by saying, "Kawaiso datta" or "I felt so sorry for him" because of over-burdening chores he had to do one after another.

### **(8) Passing of Konko-Sama**

Konko-Sama passed away in 1883. Let's try to see the circumstantial features around that time.

Konko Shijin-Sama was 30 years old, and his wife was 25 years old. And their children, Setsutane was 4 years old, Hifuno was 3 years old. In addition, Konko Sanjin-Sama and his family also lived together. Konko Shijin-Sama's mother, Isshi Daijin, was 65 years old. They all lived under one roof.

His elder sister Kura Fujii (Shosaijin) and her family, his younger sister Kono Furukawa and her family also lived nearby. They all catered lodging services for the pilgrims besides their main family occupation of farming. They responded to operate the lodging services in response to the request from Konko-Sama.

The main housing unit was built 33 years ago by using the materials yielded from a dismantled old house Konko-Sama purchase from the neighboring village in Sue. The house was designated to be the "Hiromae" or the service hall used by Konko-Sama for his sacred work of the Divine-Mediation or "Toritsugi-Mediation." The "Hiromae" service hall was divided into three rooms: two six-matted rooms and one four-matted room. The total space of the rooms combined was 16-matt. The alcove was dedicated to the sanctuary. The six-matted room in front of the altar was dedicated for the service of Toritsugi-Mediation by Konko-Sama. The room behind was Konko-Sama's private living space. Regularly Konko Shijin-Sama stationed in this room and assisted Konko-Sama. Konko-Sama served at the "Hiromae" service hall from "Asa-Mutsu (6)" or dawn to "Kure-Mutsu (6)" or dusk.

On the east of the main house, there was a tenement house which was built 22 years ago. Originally, there were two rooms of which one was eight-matted and the other was six-matted. Later on, the eaves of the eastern edge was extended and made to accommodate extended rooms of four-matted and three-matted rooms. The family members used those rooms for their living quarters as well as a resting place for the pilgrims. Boiling water was always ready to be served for the pilgrims who ate their bento boxes. It was this house that the Rev. Norio Sato gave his first sermon.

At the south of the main house, there was a barn attached to the gate which was built 40 years ago. As it has been stated in the divine instruction, the threshold of the entrance door was deformed that it prevented the door from closing properly.

## **Internal environment of the faith community**

The overall village community environment showed little change from the time when Konko-Sama was primarily engaged in farming. But some of the farmers began to engage in pilgrimage-oriented businesses such as tea houses. Lodging services for the pilgrims became popular. Konko-Sama's house began to emerge as the center of "monzen machi" or a town catered to the needs of the pilgrims. When Konko Shijin-Sama began to serve, this characteristic of "monzen machi" became more obvious.

In those days, many believers who received outstanding episodes of blessings through Konko-Sama's Toritsugi-Mediation became engaged in ministry and helped others through the means of Toritsugi-Mediation at their own private houses. The "Hiromae" at Otani Village branched out to many regional places in Japan. Those branches were established not only in Okayama region, but also in the eastern regions such as Kyoto and Osaka, and in the western, Hiroshima and Yamaguchi prefectures.

In corresponding to the wider spread of the religious influences in those regions, more serious problems emerged in the operation of the religious faith. The government imposed a restriction that those who did not have the authorization of "Kyodo-shoku" or the government affiliated clergies designated for the governmental propaganda were to be barred from performing their religious work. Konko-Sama practiced his religious work by tacit permission of the regional authority of Okayama Prefecture. But other religious practitioners were not vested with the tacit governmental permission. It was against the governmental regulation for those without the certification of "Kyodo-shoku" to get engaged in their religious work and help others through their religious means.

There was an alternative for Konko-Sama to receive the title of "Kyodo-shoku" under the umbrella of another established religious tradition. But he firmly refused the option and stated, "This religious faith cannot be conceived as one of the other religious traditions." His determination prompted devoted believers at many local faith communities spread around the country to take an initial action to build a formal religious organization that could be recognized by the government.

Leaders of those young ministers, such as the Revs. Shinichiro Shirakami, Norio Sato and Fujimori Kondo tried to find a way to actualize their will under the spiritual guidance of Konko-Sama through the work of Toritsugi-Mediation. The whole faith community became motivated for that goal.

## **(9) Succeed the work of Toritsugi-Mediation**

At the break of dawn on October 10, 1883, Konko-Sama passed away. His funeral service was observed on October 13. No assurance was made who would succeed Konko-Sama for the work of Toritsugi-Mediation after the passing of Konko-Sama. During the first 50 days after the passing of Konko-Sama, Konko Sanjin-Sama, Fujii and his son served at the designated

desk of Toritsugi-Mediation. The 50<sup>th</sup> Day Memorial Service for Konko-Sama was held at the residence of Konko-Sanjin-Sama. The Rev. Shinichiro Shirakami officiated the service. After the service, Konko Sanjin-Sama declared to Kami-Sama that he would succeed Konko-Sama for the work of Toritsugi-Mediation. On that day, the Revs. Norio Sato, Shinichiro Shirakami and Fujimori Kondo conferred with Konko Sanjin-Sama for a project of establishing a formal religious organization of the Konko faith. The Revs. Shirakami and Kondo expressed that they would primarily get engaged in their missionary work. While the Rev. Norio Sato expressed he would get engaged in external affairs for the establishment of a valid organization of Konko religious faith. Konko Sanjin-Sama played the role of managing the entire process of the project. Konko Shijin-Sama was designated to succeed Konko-Sama for the work of Toritsugi-Mediation. The Rev. Norio Sato detailed about those matters.

## **For the work of Toritsugi-Mediation**

In this manner, after the observance of the 50<sup>th</sup> Day Memorial Service, Konko Shijin-Sama began to serve as the Principal Toritsugi-Mediator succeeding Konko-Sama. They revered Konko-Sama by addressing, "Ikigami-Sama" and stated, "Because Konko-Sama is an Ikigami-Sama, he could never die." Some of those believers lost their faith in Konko-Sama in witnessing the passing. Under those transitional circumstances, Konko Shijin-Sama perpetuated the work of Toritsugi-Mediation in the same solemnity and dignity as had been done by Konko-Sama. He served day and night as Toritsugi-Mediator. The whole faith community responded to him by yielding a sense of confidence for the work of Konko Shijin-Sama as the Principal Toritsugi-Mediator. The Rev. Kinoe Akiyama stated, "(Konko Shijin-Sama) was quite similar to Konko-Sama, who was always gentle and showed some distinctive air of dignity. I felt overwhelmed with the sense of awe for his presence." The vigor of the entire faith community emerged once again under the spiritual leadership of Konko Shijin-Sama.

Though many disciples of Konko-Sama were defeated in the sense of loss after the passing of Konko-Sama, they were encouraged by the surge of new hope and expressed, "The glory of 'Ikigami-Sama' has shine highly and brightly than ever before. And the religious faith has been expanding to influence as many people in the world."

Konko Shijin-Sama, who always attended closely to Konko-Sama, learned to appreciate the manner of serving Kami-Sama exhibited by Konko-Sama. He began to serve as the Principal Toritsugi-Mediator. The believers flocked to see Konko Shijin-Sama for his Toritsugi-Mediation and enjoyed blessed lives. The Konko religious faith has spread to the east and south of Japan, and many people have enjoyed blessed lives through their involvement in the practice of faith.

(To be continued.)