



KONKO MISSION BULLETIN

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The following is a speech script of the presentation made at the Grand Service for Tenchi Kane no Kami at the Konko Mission of Honolulu on April 8, 2012.

Always connected with Kami

*By Yasuhiro Yano
Head Minister*

Good morning everyone. Thank you for your presence here today for the annual observance of the Grand Service in Appreciation of the Work of Tenchi Kane no Kami, Our Divine Parent of the Universe. I feel grateful for this given opportunity to be able to share with you my thoughts about the faith tradition.

Konko-Sama believed in Kami-Sama and followed all the instructions and teachings in a manner that brought fulfillment to Kami-Sama to himself and his family members. Konko-Sama always found ways to get connected to Kami-Sama throughout his entire faith life. I understand that Konko believers are those people who believe in Tenchi Kane no Kami and practice those teachings in life. To believe in Tenchi Kane no Kami is to believe in the teachings, and in turn, to believe in the teachings means believing in Tenchi Kane no Kami.

In the past, I have quoted a particular episode related by the Rev. Matsutaro Yasutake, the founding minister of the Konko Church of Amagi in a booklet titled, "Michi no Shiori" or a short guidebook for the practice of the Konko faith. In the opening page of the booklet, the following is stated, "This booklet is a partial script of the speech presentation in which my grandfather shared what could be identified to be the vital elements of the practice of the Konko faith to the young ministers who were affiliated to the church on February 23, 1948. This time, in commemorating the 25th memorial year of the minister, the booklet is presented to you as a form of 'Shinobi gusa' or a memento honor of the deceased." Our church members in Wahiawa have been quite familiar with the episode.

An identical episode is also found in the biography of the Founder, "Kyoso-Sama" authored by the Rev. Shinsei Konko. I would like to quote the story from this book (Volume II pages 57 to 59) for your reference because it is more detailed in the account.

At one occasion, Kami-Sama instructed Konko-Sama, "Early tomorrow morning, get up and travel to Tamashima Town.

A sum of 500 yen is placed somewhere on the way. It is yours to keep. Bring the money back home . . ." Konko-Sama made an excursion by preparing a lunch bento box and traveled approximately four-kilometers and reached the town of Tamashima. He looked around the town here and there. But there was no trace of money as mentioned by Kami. At around noon, he enjoyed lunch and asked Kami-Sama, "I looked around the town for the money you mentioned, but I could not find it yet. Shall I return home now?" Kami-Sama instructed him, "Try to look around for the money till the sun sets. I am sure you can find it." It became dark. Konko-Sama asked Kami again, "I cannot find the money. Shall I return home now?" Kami-Sama responded, "Do you have your own money?" Konko-Sama answered, "Yes. I have mine." Kami-Sama responded, "If so, others also may not drop their money. Return home now." Even for those seemingly irrational instructions, Konko-Sama followed faithfully.

What can we learn in this episode? Apparently Kami-Sama tested Konko-Sama if he would get a monetary reward in following the instructions. But actually he gained no monetary reward. If we are in the same situation, what reactions we would take? We would feel fooled by Kami-Sama, confused and may get angry. These are the average believers' responses to a failed divine promise, aren't they? In my understanding, when we encounter a situation like this promise, the majority of us would fail to fulfill Kami-Sama and be instantly disconnected.

What if Konko-Sama responded to Kami-Sama in the same manner as we would respond in anger and disgust? What if Konko-Sama said, "Kami-Sama you have made promises so many times I deserve to be rewarded with monetary gain by following your instructions? However, your promises were all lies. I can no longer practice this kind of fake deity." Had he had doubt in Kami, this religion called Konkokyo would not have come into existence. This sort of negative response would instantly disconnect us from Kami-Sama and there would be no actualization of blessings in this state.

In the original episode quoted by the Rev. Yasutake in the booklet, there was a dialogue between Konko-Sama and Kami-Sama. Upon his return from the excursion in search of money, in corresponding to the extended prayer at the house altar, Kami-Sama point-blankly asked Konko-Sama, "Did you find the money I mentioned?" Konko-Sama responded firmly, "Yes, I did." Then Kami-Sama asked, "How much did you find?" Konko-Sama responded, "I cannot tell you the exact amount." Kami-Sama further questioned, "Why can't you tell the exact amount of money you have picked up?" Konko-Sama responded, "Because

of the extensive walking, I got good physical exercise and good blood circulation and have been rewarded with overall good health which cannot be bought with money.” Konko-Sama always found ways to bring fulfillment under any circumstances. We should be grateful for this wondrous divine virtue of Ikigami Konko Daijin who has been always connected to Kami-Sama.

Konko-Sama stayed connected to Kami-Sama under any given situation. This is vital and quite difficult to follow in reality. Some people say that this episode was to test the depth of the belief held by Konko-Sama. Konko-Sama always found ways to keep connected with Kami-Sama. Another good example can be the episode of the “waraji straw sandals.”

Kami-Sama instructed, “Practice training during autumn. When you get up in the morning, change into formal robes, proceed to the worship hall, engage in your daily offering of prayers; upon your completion of prayer offering, let your wife bring breakfast for you; as soon as you finish your breakfast, change into your work-clothes, and walk to the field for work on bare feet.”

Bunji followed the instruction faithfully and underwent the training. It was the first time Kami provided a specific instruction for his spiritual training.

In reference to the matter, there is an implication in “Konko Daijin On-Oboegaki” or the memoirs of Konko Daijin that reads, “My wife knows blessings received but has not yet learned to appreciate true blessing of Kami. She just becomes concerned only about other people’s thoughts and responses. But I don’t care about what others say. I faithfully follow the instructions of Kami. I never go against Kami.” Konko-Sama was persistent and constant in this manner of being connected to Kami-Sama regardless of the circumstances.

Kami-Sama could have been giving us instructions in the same manner by promising sure blessings as we get involved in the practice of faith. Have you ever wondered why this local Konko Church in Honolulu has been in operation in the last 83 years? Have you ever wondered why the church conducts regular functions such as Grand Services, seasonal memorial services, monthly services and Sunday Services? These services and functions are not intended to raise monetary offerings from the church congregation. The services and functions are divinely intended Points Of Salvation, it could be abbreviated as POS, not point of sale, but point of salvation where you are to get blessed, while fulfilling Kami-Sama in the same manner as Konko-Sama responded. In other words those church services and functions could be divine instructions extended to each member of the congregation. We are to get blessed through this physical presence of the church and the presence of the ministers who have served here.

In my understanding, this church and any other local churches are the actualization of the divine message, “Tenchi Kane no

Kami wo tasukete kure” or “Please bring fulfillment to Tenchi Kane no Kami.” My only concern is to help save people through the perpetual Divine-Mediation of Ikigami Konko Daijin. At this Honolulu Church, the founding ministers, the Revs. Masayuki and Kikue Kodama, the succeeding ministers, the Revs. Masahiko and Sugako Yoshino and the associate ministers the Rev. Koichi Konko and other ministers have served as mediums through the work of the founder Ikigami Konko-Daijin-Sama.

If you find the seemingly empty divine promises given to Konko-Sama as nothing but empty promises, then you would view all the church services and functions in the same manner. Even if you attend church and seek Toritsugi-Mediation, you would find nothing but unfulfilled results if you do not exercise your heart in identifying blessed elements in your life. Your enjoyment of blessings to be received will be very much limited. And some of those people who felt unfulfilled might have left this faith community in one way or another.

If you find church services and functions as meaningful divine instructions, you are to enjoy unlimited blessings. Ministers may have encouraged you to come to church, seek Toritsugi-Mediation for any of your concerns in life and get engaged in any church services and functions as much as possible because ministers know it would maximize your quality of life.

I have witnessed some believers who expressed, “I don’t think I have enjoyed blessings through the practice of the Konko faith.” They become disengaged from church even if some of them say they have been in contact with Kami-Sama on their own. It could be my fault as a minister for their failed engagement in the practice of faith because each and every church believer has been guided to attend church through divine guidance. If each of us has the spirituality of being able to identify blessedness in any given situation, we are to get connected to Kami-Sama without interruption.

It could be a divine promise that we are to get blessed through the practice of Toritsugi-Mediation and attending church services and functions because all those functions are divinely oriented. But it would all depend upon how we exercise our own hearts, namely in the same manner as has been demonstrated by Konko-Sama.

When you come to attend today’s Grand Service for Tenchi Kane no Kami, Our Divine Parent, Kami-Sama has already made a promise to each of us that we would be blessed by attending the function. We can be here today because of many elements of blessings we can identify and some blessings we may not be able to identify specifically. I can be here in attendance because I have been blessed in all aspects of life, such as my good health, good relationships at home and any other communities I belong, financial stability and so forth. Today’s Grand Service provides us the best opportunity to look back at our own engagement in the practice of faith and sums up all the blessings we have enjoyed from Kami-Sama till this day. With this review of

blessings received, we can continue to get blessed hereafter.

Konko-Sama believed in Kami-Sama and followed all the instructions and teachings in the manner that brought fulfillment to Kami-Sama to himself and the family members and followers. In other words, Konko-Sama always found ways to get connected to Kami-Sama throughout his entire faith life. Normally, we do not hear divine voices and get direct divine instructions and teachings in the same manner as Konko-Sama did. There can be some believers and ministers who may say they do communicate with Kami-Sama in the same manner as Konko-Sama did. But in general, we can believe in the teachings of Konko-Sama in the same manner as Konko-Sama believed and followed divine instructions and teachings. Konko believers can be defined as people who believe in Tenchi Kane no Kami and practice those teachings in life. To believe in Tenchi Kane no Kami is to believe in the teachings, and in turn, to believe in the teachings means believe in Tenchi Kane no Kami. I enjoy witnessing the emergence of such believers from this faith community in Hawaii. The same could be said for your respectable local ministers here at this Honolulu Church.

Throughout my missionary work at our local church in Wahiawa in the last 35 years, I have constantly tried to share the thought of extending thanks and appreciation for any and all the blessings that help us to sustain our lives. The best reward your ministers can ever enjoy through their missionary work is to witness a strong faith community whose members appreciate the religious principles of the Konko faith as has been demonstrated by Konko-Sama, the Founder.

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)

Practice faith (shinjin). “Shin” means your heart, and “jin” means Kami. Practicing faith means you direct your heart toward kami. Though you are surrounded by divine virtue, you won’t receive blessings unless you have faith. (I Ichimura Mitsugoro 1-20-1)

Bulletin Board

Official Announcement

The Rev. Mitsutoshi Sato, who served as Chief Administrative Officer of Konkokyo Religious Organization passed away on April 29, 2012. We extend our deep appreciation for his dedicated services for the entire Konkokyo organization and extend our deepest sympathy for the family members and the church congregation of Konko Church of Kaho in Hiroshima where he served as Head Minister.

Grand Service Schedule

Sun, May 13 Hilo Church at 11 a.m.
 Sun, June 17 Wailuku Church, 50th Anniversary Celebration at 11 a.m.

Volunteer at Wahiawa General Hospital

We will make a visit to the Wahiawa General Hospital Long-Term Care Facility on Sunday, May 6 after the Sunday Service at 9:00 a.m. Please help us to keep this volunteer activity through your participation and prayers. Curry rice will be served at the church basement after we return from program. In addition, the monthly visitation to the Wahiawa General Hospital will be held on Friday, may 11 at 10:00 a.m.

H.C.R.P.

The Hawaii Conference of Religions for Peace will holds its regular monthly meeting on Monday, May 7 at the Konko Mission of Honolulu at 1:30 p.m.

Fundraising for the 2nd Ohana Camp

We will make a fundraising for the Second Ohana Camp scheduled for June 23 and 24 at the Camp Erdman. Some Zippy’s Chill tickets will still be available. The deadline for the application of the 2nd Annual Ohana Camp at Camp Erdman will be Sunday, May 20.

Memorial Day Visitations to the Cemeteries

We will make a visitation to the Punchbowl National Cemetery and the Mililani Memorial Park on Monday, May 28. We will gather at the Honolulu Church at 8:00 a.m. and shuttle services will be provided to the Punchbowl. If you are interested in the program, please join us.

Honoring the Mitama Spirits for April

Mrs. Toshiko Yogo	5/2/2010
Mrs. Kiyoka Takahashi	5/5/1999
Mrs. Helen Yoshie Eguchi	5/9/2006
Mr. Saichi Eguchi	5/9/1997
Rev. Hidejiro Hosaka	5/16/1972
Mrs. Fernie Furusho	5/26/2001
Mr. Hideo Fujimoto	5/26/2005

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 followings 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 Matsutaro Kōsaka contributed the insightful articles. The translation is provided by Yasuhiro Yano. (Reference pages 11 and 12)

#11

People may think ten years is a long time, but to Kami, it is as short as the time it takes to look from left to right. (II Kondo Fujimori 13-4, Kyoten pages 533-4)

Kami’s perception of 10 years

In the teaching No. 10, the primary focus is placed on the ability of human-oriented perception of open space. But the message in this page shows how Kami sees the human-oriented perception of time.

The Founder Konko Daijin shared this message in response to a believer who stated that during the ten years he stopped to get engaged in the practice of faith, his debts substantially ballooned. In corresponding to the agonizing financial situation, he started to get engaged in the practice of faith again. Consequently, all of the debts he had to deal with had been paid off in a very short period of time. This background information about the believer may help us to relate to the teaching.

Konko Daijin stated, “People may think ten years is a long time.” But the believer who gave up in practicing faith might have experience prolonged torturous life in dealing with the ever-expanding debts from day to day for the period of ten years long.

But the Founder Konko Daijin stated the time span of ten years was nothing but a short time it took to look from left to right. This believer took a decade to get blessed from the suffering of debt hell and get relieved of the debts. But from the perspective of Kami, those ten years is just as short as the time for the movement of head from left to right.

They say that ten years isn’t a long time or “10-nen hito mukashi.” Through divine perspective, that ten years is just a blink of an eye. While we cannot visualize what would take place ten years ahead of time, but through the divine perspective, ten years is just as short a period of time. Kami can see through what would evolve in this short period of time. In other words, what we can see is limited only to the immediate future only. Though we believe we can perceive a lot about our future, what we see is so limited, almost nothing, compared to what Kami sees. The only alternative choice being provided for us is either to believe in our limited selves and suffer from nervous state of mind being affected by the

day-to-day developments in life; or to believe in Kami and to enjoy life in happiness and broadmindedness.

#12

Because Kami can neither be seen nor heard, the room for doubt has no limits. This is a very frightening thing. Abandon all doubts. (III Shinkun 2-49 Koten page 777)

Eliminate all of your doubts about Kami

This teaching is directed about our belief in Kami.

As has been stated in this quoted teaching, “Kami can neither be seen nor heard.” Because of this fundamental nature of Kami, it would be quite difficult to identify the work and presence of Kami through our physical sensory functions such as seeing and touching.

Since we can hardly identify the presence of Kami through our physical sensory functions, the alternative way for us to identify the work and presence of Kami is through the appreciation of blessed episodes we may get in response to our extended prayers to Kami. But there would be no sure way to get blessed in corresponding to our extended prayers. At the same time, it could be possible that we are not ready to appreciate blessings received as such. If our belief in Kami is clouded with any trace of doubt, we may fail to appreciate the true nature of blessings received and may end up in a secularized perception such as the blessings received happened to be coincidental or the time for the preferable results just happened in luck. Those reactions for the blessings received are just the denial of the true nature of divine blessings.

If we respond in such a conventional rational oriented perception for the blessings evolved, there would be no way for us to be able to identify the work and presence of Kami.

How can we identify Kami’s work and presence? The answer is to just do away with the conventional manners of perceptions based on the reliance with our sensory functions of seeing and touching as has been stated before; and reasoning-oriented perceptions.

There are so many vital elements which cannot be identified through our normal visions, such as love, trust, courage, human life and so forth. The same can be said to Kami. It could be true that more vital elements in the whole world exist in invisible forms rather than in concrete forms.

Corresponding to the previous statement, it is not necessarily true that what can be rationally explained hold truth. The whole world is not made up of only the elements that can be rationalized. It is vital for us to present ourselves before Kami with the heart of solemn reverence and sincerity without any trace of doubts.

(To be continued.)