



## Just One Individual

*By Rev. Yasuhiro Yano  
Head Minister*

"If there is one true believer in the family, then all of the family members will become believers. If there is one family in a village who truly believes in this faith, all of the villagers will begin to receive divine blessings. Practicing faith is like one seed becoming ten thousand. Therefore, those who initiate faith should sow a good seed. If the seed is bad, it will be a bad start, and it will be difficult to raise no matter how hard you try" (Gorikai III Jinkyukyogoroku 37).

This message has been one of the teachings I have been pursuing throughout my practice of faith.

I have served at this faith community in Wahiawa with my wife for 44 years after succeeding the founding minister, the late Rev. Haruko Takahashi. Nowadays I am happy I also have the assistance of my children who became ministers. From the very initial stage of our missionary work, I have prayed for the expansion of the faith community at our church and the entire state of Hawaii.

In corresponding to the given situation at the church in Wahiawa when we arrived from Japan, I witnessed less than 10 people in attendance at the regular church services. Sometimes two to three believers showed up. Virtually, it would have been impossible to operate the church with this number of believers in general. People said it would take at least fifty people to support the operation of a church, especially by Western church standards. To be truthful with you, in corresponding to this dire situation at the initial stage, I have earnestly prayed that we would have a new church member in our faith community at least one a month. I soon found out it was not feasible, and changed my prayer, that I we would have one new church believer a year. But then I soon found out it was also not feasible. Then I changed my prayer that we would have one new church member every ten years. This is the extent of my prayer for the expansion of the church. In doing so, we have spent 44 years hoping to get the faith

community expand as I have wished. However, there was no dramatic increase in members, and it has almost stayed at the same number of believers have attend the services since the beginning. As new people come in, a few will pass away or stop coming to church. But the number would always remain stable.

I have never complained about the situation though. Actually we enjoy this quaint plantation-style "house-church." Lately I learn to appreciate that, in some way, Kami-Sama has answered my extended prayer for the expansion of the faith community. Our children, two boys and one girl have evolved to become Konko ministers. And I have witnessed the church functions have been transforming in such a manner that I have been rendering some church responsibilities to our daughter Edna Sensei lately. English-oriented operation of the church has already been actualizing at this church. In a sense, I am already witnessing some potentials of the expansion of the church in the future.

The number of believers of the church does not mean much to me. Of course, the more members we have, the more powerful our community would be. With only a few church members, no matter how great the minister may be in his or her endeavors, the church will have little power.

It could be just one believer, or hopefully, five people who really believe in the Konko faith. Just a handful of true believers would be enough for the continued operation of the church. But it is important that these five faithful people should be united in their pursuit of faith. Actually, the number five can be the core believers that could be found in any religious faith communities that have enjoyed expansion in the past.

But it all depends on the minister. Whether we have the five strong faith believers or not are dependent on the sole minister who is responsible for the operation of the church.

The Konko Faith was born through the existence of the Founder Konko Daijin. If the Founder did not exist, there would have been no birth of the Konko Faith that took place some 162 years ago in Okayama, Japan.

What is distinctive about the nature of the Konko faith is that the Founder Konko Daijin was a simple, ordinary farmer who evolved to become Ikigami that symbolizes an achievement of gaining the absolute trust of Tenchi Kane No Kami, Our Divine Parent of the Universe. He was not a specially chosen individual unlike any other dominating global religious establishments.

One element that can be identical with the Founder is his absolute belief in the deity or deities he encountered early in his life under the given condition at a poor farming village in Otani in today's Konko Town in Okayama, Japan.

He never stopped to believe in the kami he started to believe in under any circumstances. And Tenchi Kane No Kami responded to his solid, unyielding belief in Kami. He let Kami respond to the way he lived in believing Kami in sincerity and single-heartedness. In corresponding to the ever growing spirituality of the Founder, Kami also evolved accordingly and revealed the true nature of Tenchi Kane No Kami.

The founding minister of Konko Church of Amagi the late Rev. Matsutaro Yasutake stated, "In pursuit of faith, what do we believe? We have to build a true sincere belief in Tenchi Kane No Kami. To believe in Tenchi Kane No Kami is to believe in the teachings of the Founder Konko Daijin. To believe in the teachings of the Founder Konko Daijin is to believe in Tenchi Kane No Kami. And our belief shall be absolute." The message was stated in a booklet titled, "Michi no Shiori."

The Founder Konko Daijin stated, "I am not an ikigami. I am a manure carrier. Pray to Tenchi Kane No Kami-Sama. I just mediate requests to Kami-Sama," said Konko-Sama. When he went in front of the altar, Kami-Sama immediately gave a revelation, "Konko Daijin says that he is a manure carrier and that people should pray to Tenchi Kane No Kami. But through Konko Daijin, Tenchi Kane No Kami's blessings can now be received. For thousands of years, Kane No Kami has been called a fearful kami. But through Konko Daijin, Kami has been revealed to the world. Konko Daijin is Kami's savior. Even for people, through Konko Daijin, they can now receive

Kane No Kami's blessings. He is the people's savior as well. Konko Daijin is the savior for Kami and people. Give your requests to Konko Daijin. Listening to and obeying what he says is the same as obeying Kami. Follow the words of Konko Daijin well, and practice faith" (II Kondo Fujimori 3-1, 2, 3).

## **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 78-1, 2, 3)

## **Bulletin Board**

### **Church Services for May 2021**

- 1 Sat -Monthly Service for Tenchi Kane No Kami (Facebook Live 7:30 pm)
- 2 Sun -Sunday Service (Facebook Live 9 am)  
-Wailuku Church Grand Service (11 am)
- 9 Sun -Monthly Service for Ikigami Konko Daijin (9 am)  
-Hilo Church Grand Service (11 am)
- 16 Sun -Sunday Service (Facebook Live 9 am)
- 23 Sun -Monthly Memorial Service (Facebook Live 9 am)
- 30 Sun -Sunday Service (Facebook Live 9 am)

### **June 2021**

- 1 Tue -Monthly Service for Tenchi Kane No Kami (Facebook Live 7:30 pm)

### **The Church Door is Open**

We welcome you to make a visit to our church and church services. Please wear your face mask for Covid-19 precautionary measures. You also can make an appointment for your personal visit to church anytime of the days.

### **Volunteer Activity at Wahiawa General Hospital**

The monthly visit to provide a volunteer activity at the Long-Term Care Facility at Wahiawa General Hospital will be held on

Friday, May 21 at 10:00 am. One year and two months later after the last visit, we have been requested to resume our monthly volunteer activities once again. Volunteers are limited to two people at the most due to the COVID-19 restrictions.

### KMH

•The Community Engagement and Outreach Committee initiated the bi-monthly KMH Kyoten study group via Zoom. The main reference book will be "Voice of the Universe." Please join the study session and deepen your understanding about the messages of the Founder.

-May 5 Wed. (5 pm)

-May 19 Wed. (5 pm)

•KMH Zoom conference 2021 zoom mtg. (5 pm) will be held on Friday, May 14, 2021

•Community Engagement and Outreach Committee meeting will be held on Friday, May 21, 2021 (Zoom at 5 pm).

•We will visit the Punchbowl cemetery on Monday, May 31, 2021. We will meet at the Honolulu Church at 8 a.m.

•KMH Ministers' Gathering will be held via Zoom on Sunday, May 22, 2021 from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. The guest speaker will be Chief Administrative Officer of Konkokyo Organization, the Rev. Michiyo Iwasaki.

•KMH Board of Trustees' Meeting will be held on Saturday, May 15 from 10:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at Konko Mission of Honolulu and via Zoom.

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### **Mitsuemon Ono**

In those days, it was rare to find an individual like Mitsuemon Ono who was an administrator as well as the learned in the village community. At the age of 17, Mitsuemon was appointed to serve as the Village Head of Otani. Later on, he also was promoted to expand his duties to manage the neighboring villages as well. In this manner the local lord gave him much responsibilities. He also managed the water resources in the village and contributed to enhance the economy of the region. In his advanced age, he served as the Grand Village Head who administered the entire villages in the region for some ten years. He had advanced knowledge about astronomy, and mathematics and published many books on those academic subjects. He had deep practical knowledge about land survey, Rules on Days and Directions. He also showed deep interests in the practice of Zen and haiku Japanese verse composition. The presence of Mitsuemon in the village worked preferably for the well being of the people in the Otani Village.

Because of his favorable personality and administrative skills, Otani Village enjoyed some lesser imposition of the local governmental duties. He enjoyed the respect and popularity of the village people. During Bunsei Era, the Ono family encountered very serious situations. The family had to deal with the shortage of village financial resources, unrecoverable loans, unable to pay off the loans from loan sharks and driven to the state of near bankrupt. The family was contemplating to abandon the village. In responding to the crisis of the family, the entire village people tried to help them to stay in the village and helped revive the household.

Through personal interactions with Mitsuemon Ono, this person acquired some basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic's. But more to it than that, this person learned to appreciate some basic elements for life. Mitsuemon Ono helped to withdraw some untapped elements of potential deeply kept within him. For this person, encountering an individual like Mitsuemon Ono, who displayed the utmost confidence in his life could have influenced this young person to help him to enjoy sound growth as he got older. To get exposed to an individual who attained a full-fledged life, like Mitsuemon Ono,

## **Honoring the Mitama Spirits**

### May

Rev. Koji Hiramoto	5/1/2018
Kiyoka Takahashi	5/5/1999
Rev. Masahiko Yoshino	5/9/2013
Saichi Eguchi	5/9/1997
Rev. Hidejiro Hosaka	5/16/1972
Fernie Furusho	5/26/2001
Hideo Fujimoto	5/26/2005
Hiroshi Katsura	5/26/1959
Takahiko Yano	5/28/2016

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

金光教祖の生涯 瀬戸三喜雄

金光教学研究所 紀要別冊 教学叢書 2

**The following is an English translation of a book titled, "Konko Kyoso no Shougai" or "The Life of the Founder Konko Daijin" authored by the Rev. Mikio Seto, and was published by Konkokyo Theological Research Center. The publication was made in 1980. There are many biographies about the life of the Founder Konko Daijin. I would like to introduce this article for your reference in your pursuit of faith. An English Translation was provided by Rev. Yasuhiro Yano.**

could also help him to pursue a full-fledged endeavor in life.

### **Bunji's youth (When Konko Daijin was a youth)**

Bunji experienced lingering health issues in his young age. He had occasional episodes of stomach ailments. At the age of 15, he suffered from stomach pains. His adoptive father took him to see a doctor in the village. The doctor instructed him to get a moxibustion treatment for the symptoms. But his condition didn't improve at all. Bunji later on, referred to this episode of moxibustion treatment in "Oboecho" in such a manner. "When I was fifteen, I developed stomach pains. My adoptive father took me to a doctor named Hori Mondo in Sagata Village for treatment and applied cautery, causing intense pain" (Oboecho 1-6-2). When he was 10 years old, he suffered from the stomach pain. Later he wrote about this matter, "When I was ten, I suffered from stomach pains. I took five packets of medicine prescribed by a pediatrician from Sugi. But my stomach pains didn't subside" (Oboecho 1-3-5). His tone of writing in both episodes showed some elements of doubts. There can be several interpretations why he used such an expression of doubts for both episodes. It could be related to his prolonged illnesses, his lack of confidence in the doctors, awareness about his physical vulnerability. In regard to this matter, he referred to many episodes of illnesses he encountered in the "Oboecho." He may have referred to many episodes of illnesses because it may have been his deep lasting memories about his physical conditions, or his amazement in witnessing that he had lived in overcoming those illnesses as he got advanced in his life.

Bunji had to deal with the physical vulnerabilities to illnesses, but he displayed outstanding diligence in whatever he did while he was always consciously aware of his status as an adoptee in the village. In those days, young people earned some allowances for themselves in such a manner as to collect firewood material in the mountain and transported some clay materials and supplied them to the tile-maker in the village. Bunji worked so hard and got an extra cash compared to others. The earned cash was used for his pilgrimages to the temples and shrines in the village.

Bunji had to deal with many difficult elements in the village community life. An adoptee from other village was treated as a sort of alien adoptee in the family and in the whole village community as well. The village people used the expression of "50-yooshi" that implied an adoptee from other village remain an outside alien adoptee even if he reached at the age of 50. Bunji might also have dealt with such a harsh treatment in the village. They did not accept an adoptee from other villages as an integral member of the community. At one occasion, this young Bunji was not allowed to reject a game of gamble called "boubiki". Bunji lost the gambling and could not pay back the money loaned from the others. The adoptive father repaid the debt in place of young Bunji. He was sternly admonished at that occasion. Bunji could be tempted to join the gambling reluctantly because of his innocence or some curiosity. But more to it than that it could be apparent that he tried to get accepted into the group of young people through peer pressure.

As an adoptee, he was seriously felt sorry for the expressed stern admonishment by his adoptive father. The deep scar from that episode etched in his heart kept lingering throughout of his entire life. Later in his life, he stated, "Gambling is a serious offense. Taking people's money through deception is an offense that will lead to one's ruin. Falling victim to such deception is also an offence as serious as deceiving people since it is rooted in avarice" (Oboecho16-2-2-3).

But at one occasion, when Bunji had to deal with insufficient cash on hand, he revealed to a person named Teijiro Morimasa, "I once was tempted to gamble and get one bale of fertilizer called 'hoshika by a cash earned.'" Some traces of evidence showed that young Bunji was tempted to get rich by gambling and was tormented by the aroused temptations. He had to deal with occasional impulses over monetary affairs. It could be assumed that through his dealings with eventualities that took place in his heart, he learned to find a way to get them settled.