



# KONKO MISSION BULLETIN

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## Mindfulness



By Yasuhiro Yano  
Head Minister

We have observed the annual Interfaith Peace Prayer sponsored by the Hawaii Conference of Religions for Peace and co-sponsored by The Interfaith Alliance Hawaii at the Gedatsu Church last Sunday, October 27, 2013. I am glad a few of our church members also responded to attend the function. It is an interesting and unique interfaith program which continued for 21 years.

The theme for this year's meeting was "Mindfulness for Peace." It was an appropriate subject which can be commonly understood among the attending faith oriented people. The presentation by the guest speaker, the Rev. Dr. Jonipher Kuponu Kwong of the First Unitarian Church of Honolulu was quite insightful.

Lately I have been sharing with our church congregation that the word "Shinjin" can be exactly expressed in English as "Mindfulness."

The 4<sup>th</sup> Konko-Sama, the late Rev. Kagamitaro Konko used to express the thought of "*Sewani naru subeteni rei wo yuu kokoro Heiwa umidasu Kokoroto iwan*" or to have the heart of wanting to express appreciation for any and all elements of blessings we enjoy is the heart that can contribute to promote peace. He used to say that he thanked for the pen for writing, for the sheet of paper he can write on, for the pair of glasses we put on and so forth. Actually I have been introducing his identical message in my prayer shared at the annual interfaith prayer meeting for all those years.

Actually, this religiously-oriented mindfulness is one of the ingrained elements of the broad Japanese culture we may not be much aware of. We enjoy Japanese TV programs in Hawaii

every day as we watch NHK World and programs on KIKU TV. In any day, there can be one or two episodes in which people enjoy meals. Whenever they show scenes of eating food, the person eating the food always shows the gesture of pressing their hands together and saying "Itadakimasu." The regular English caption of "Itadakimasu" is "Let's eat." But the expression of "Itadakimasu" is actually a religiously-oriented expression which has become part of the everyday expression for Japanese.

In accordance with the Konkokyo religious practice, we extend this thought of partaking foods in appreciation of the blessed nature of foods being nurtured and brought to be served at the dining table through countless elements, such as the work of nature, hard work of farmers, distribution systems and the people who cook it. Basically majority of the Japanese may understand that every grain of rice can have the potential of producing thousands of grains. The simple act of eating can be expressed by the word "taberu," but we use the expression of "itadakimasu" which holds the context of partaking food with the heart of appreciation and gratitude. I have never encountered the same nature of everyday expression that can be relevant to the word of "Itadakimasu." The thought of extending appreciation for food is not widely practiced in Western cultures.

There are many other mindful expressions in the everyday Japanese vocabulary, such as: "Mottainai." This expression takes into mind that one is appreciative for the given gifts, thus, no portion of it is wasted. In the Konkokyo faith community, we use the expression of "oshimeri" for rain. "Oshimeri" is a positively inclined expression in appreciation of blessed rain water. Oshimeri literally means "Moisture." Rain shall never be blamed, even if it may become torrential and hazardous at times. Blessed water shall always be blessed water under any condition. The same is true for the sunlight which is referred to as "oterashi."

While I was at the Konko Church of Amagi for my spiritual training before I came to Hawaii, the Rev. Fumio Yasutake always reminded his spiritual trainees to exercise the heart of "Kokoro-kubari" or trying to practice mindfulness in identifying blessed elements and respond accordingly in the daily living at the church. The shugyo practice at the church is training to hone the spirit of "Kokoro kubari" in a meticulous manner that helps in reminding the trainees of the elements of divine blessings in the very living condition of day to day living.

The Rev. Matsutaro Yasuake, the founding minister of the church showed extreme mindfulness in using anything at all. He only used one wash-basin full of water for bathing and used the wash-cloth carefully, so it would not wear and tear. He even tried to use paper for different purposes, thus, maximizing its life, which was otherwise supposed to be thrown away.

At one occasion, while he was on board a train, and was eating lunch. Some grains of rice accidentally fell down onto the floor. He picked up that rice and placed it on the window sill of the

train. When the train crossed a river, he flung the rice into the river. A person accompanying him asked why he did that. He responded that since the rice dropped on the floor is unsanitary for me to eat, but it can be fed to the fish in the river. It may sound extreme in today's world, but that was the extent of his mindfulness for the blessed nature of rice, so he tried to fulfill the divine intention.

I have lived in Hawaii serving as a resident minister of Konko Mission of Wahiawa for 36 years and come to appreciate the very spiritual training I received at the Amagi Church during the span of approximately three years. I had an invaluable opportunity in witnessing the faith life exhibited by the late Rev. Fumio Yasutake (aka: Oyasensei). It is his spiritual mentoring that so many young and old student ministers have been educated in accordance with the Konkokyo faith tradition. When I reached age of Oyasensei, I can fully appreciate the remarks made by him as precious spiritual guidance and reminders during my ministerial career here in Hawaii. I feel convinced of the power of being mindfulness in my daily life.

In my understanding, this practice of mindfulness in the Konkokyo faith tradition can be based on the teaching, "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" (*Konko Kyoso Gorikai No. 3 in Kyoten Gorikai III*).

## Konko-Sama Says . . .

Konko-Sama told me, "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." This was a profound and blessed teaching. Thus enlightened, I realized that even a lamp full of oil cannot give light without a wick (shin). Without faith, the world would be dark as night with unlit lamps. (*Ichimura Mitsugoro 1-6*)

## Bulletin Board

### Monthly Services

- 11/1 Fri -Monthly Service for Tenchi Kane No Kami-Sama at 7:30 p.m.  
 11/3 Sun -Sunday Service at 9:00 a.m.  
 11/10 Sun -Monthly Service of Ikigami Konko Daijin at 9:00 a.m.  
 -Hilo Church Autumn Grand Service at 11:00 a.m.  
 11/17 Sun -Sunday Service 9:00 am  
 -Wailuku Church Autumn Grand Service at 11:00 a.m.  
 11/24 Sun -Monthly Memorial Service at 9:00 a.m.  
 -16<sup>th</sup> Memorial Service for the late Rev. Kikue Kodama at Honolulu Church at 9:00 a.m.

### December 2013

12/1 Sun -Monthly Service for Tenchi Kane No Kami at 9:00 a.m.

### HCRP Peace Prayer

A luncheon meeting was held at the Church of Perfect Liberty on Monday, November 4 at noon, in appreciation of the organizers and participants for the Interfaith Peace Prayer held on October 27, 2013.

### Volunteer Activity at Wahiawa General Hospital

The regular monthly volunteer activity at the Wahiawa General Hospital Long-Term Care Facility will be on Friday, November 8 at 10:00 a.m. Your participation to the program will be very much appreciated.

## Honoring Mitama Spirits

### November

Mr. David Suyeki Oka	11/8/2006
Rev. Takashi Inagaki	11/9/2004
Mr. Ronald Minoru Miyatake	11/14/2000
Mrs. Chieno Hirota	11/17/2009
Rev. Toshihiko Hosaka	11/20/2008
Mr. Crandal Ancog	11/21/2008
Mrs. Cecilia Asako Soma	11/24/2003
Rev. Kikue Kodama	11/28/1997

*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 Matsutaro Kōsaka contributed the insightful articles. The translation is provided by Yasuhiro Yano. (Reference pages 61, 62, 63)*

### No. 61

**A person who thinks he has reached the end of his life may actually have a longer life. However, some of them say that they can have peace of mind when they die, but that no messenger has come to take them to the other world yet. Thus, they decide for themselves when their lives should end and speak as if they want to shorten their lives. Isn't that such a silly thing? Those who think that they can receive peace of mind only after they die cannot receive it even after death. (III Omichi Annai 22-2 Kyoten page 755-756)**

## Do not hasten your departure.

We sometimes meet elderly people who jokingly say, “I can have peace of mind when I depart, but that no messenger has come to take me to the other world yet.” It may seem harmless to say such things with their close friends. But it would be a bit serious if they say such things while encountering a grave illness. Society today is quite different from the old days when they had to find ways to minimize the consumption of food for the whole family if they were too poor. People who are aged and confined to limited mobility had to limit their food consumption and tried to shorten their lives voluntarily.

No matter how difficult one’s circumstances are—those who wait for their own departure is not acceptable because such people are preparing for death as has been discussed in the previous page 60. They can maintain their own dignity by not being succumbed to the given circumstantial force, but by trying to find ways to overcome imposed hurdles and try to survive as long as they can.

In the quoted teaching, the Founder showed two elements that give some clues on how to deal with and overcome such pressing difficult circumstances.

There is a statement, “A person who thinks he has reached the end of his life may actually have a longer life.” This statement implies that through the virtuous powers of wholehearted prayer to Kami in request, one can affect even a seemingly impossible matter such as impending death and can prolong his/her life.

In another statement, “Those who think that they can receive peace of mind only after they die cannot receive it even after death.” Those who surrender themselves for their approaching death should also give up on enjoying peacefulness after passing. Those who intend to enjoy the peacefulness after passing should never give up on life and just try to overcome any hurdle with a strong conviction.

### No. 62

**I asked Konko-Sama, “They say that after death, one will either go to hell or to heaven. Tell me, where will we actually end up after death?” “Since I am still in training, I don’t know what is beyond death. But while you are living in this world, be at peace everyday and follow the right Way. Then you needn’t worry about what is beyond death.”** (II Unknown 10 Kyoten page 737)

## The Souls of the Dead

What is beyond death? This is a universal question we want to know the answer for. We have been influenced by the religions which have strongly advocated the existence of “Jigoku” or Hell, “Gokuraku” or Paradise, “Tengoku” or Heaven and so forth in their teachings. At the same time people in general also have demanded to know about the subject.

One of the reasons why we want to know about what is beyond death lies is because of the fundamental assurance that even after death some elements of our life, such as the soul, shall be perpetuated. Without this assurance after death, we cannot endure the unbearable sadness and can hardly accept death peacefully. The other is that we want to find ways to ensure peacefulness after departure.

In the quoted message, someone who could not be identified by name, asked about the matter to the Founder. The Founder responded as has been shown in the quoted passages. The Founder opened his statement by saying, “Since I am still in training, I don’t know what is beyond death.” But actually, the Founder made some statements about what is beyond death in some of the scriptures. It could be assumed that the Founder intended to convey a message through that statement of denial. The statement may reflect the modesty of the Founder. But the context of the passage implies that we should not be tempted to know much about the world after death.

The Founder stated with affirmation, “While you are living in this world, be at peace everyday and follow the right Way.” The initial impression of the extended thought sounds like the founder didn’t seem to take the subject of death too seriously. The Founder showed us the most convincing message—that while we are living in this world at peace everyday and following the right Way is the best indicator of how we can transfer into Mitama Spirits peacefully.

### No. 63

**I inquired, “Konko-Sama, since there are many religions and different teachings, so will our souls go in various ways after death?” Konko-Sama imparted, “Those things do not occur. The souls of those who die, having nowhere to go, hover and play like gnats between Heaven and Earth. They exist and play at the household altars and at the graves where their bodies are buried. While people live in this world, if they did wrong to others or go against the heart of Kami, their spirits will be admonished by Kami after death.”** (II Sato Mitsujiro 28-1, 2, 3 Kyoten page 580-581)

## The Souls of the Dead

The quoted message is Question and Answer session over the subject of the soul of the dead between the Founder and Mitsujiro Sato.

Mitsujiro Sato asked, “Konko-Sama, the Shinshu sect advocates that we will go to the Pure Land after we die, and the Shinto priests say that we will go to Takamagahara. There are many religions and different teachings, so will our souls go in such separate ways after death?” The Founder replied, “Such a thing will not happen. We will neither go to the Pure Land nor to Takamagahara. The souls of those who die, having nowhere to go, hover and play like gnats between Heaven and Earth.”

The Founder used such vague expressions, such as “the souls of those who die, having nowhere to go, hover and play like gnats between Heaven and Earth” and “They exist and play at the household altars and at their graves.” If we try to understand the teaching in an attempt to identify the condition and place of the souls through theological point of view, we will not be able to appreciate the intended message of the statement. Rather, we should try to understand the message in understanding the manner in which the Founder tried to communicate effectively to the commoners of those days. Simply put, the Founder tried to relate that the souls of the departed do not go to some place far, but they promptly respond whenever, and wherever we request their presence, and they rest peacefully in the heart of Kami-Sama.

In comparison to a tranquil tone of the dialogue in the first half of the message, the Founder stated about the souls of those who departed in such a serious tone in the latter half. The Founder stated, “While people live in this world, if they do wrong to others or go against the heart of Tenchi No Kami-Sama, their spirits will be admonished by Kami-Sama after death.”

The Founder’s concept for the souls of those departed is consisted of two elements. One is that the souls will be embraced in the warm heart of Heaven and Earth. The other is that we should be responsible for the due consequences the souls have to encounter after death depending on whatever we do while we live.