

KONKO MISSION BULLETIN

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You are cordially invited to attend the **Autumn Grand Ceremony**

Date: Tuesday, October 13, 2015

Time: 6:30 p.m.

Place: Konko Mission of Wahiawa

Sermon: Rev. Akinobu Yasutake (Waipahu Church)

Kibimai: Miss Ke'ala Takahashi

Naorai fellowship dinner will follow. Let's receive the divine arrangements of being able to worship on this very important day.

38th Anniversary of Missionary Work

*By Yasuhiro Yano
Head Minister*

Thirty eight years ago today, September 27, 1977, both my wife and I arrived in Hawaii for our missionary work. I still vividly remember the smell of plumeria flowers in the air, the smell of the airport and the sight of the many people who came to greet us at the airport, at Honolulu and Wahiawa Church. We were merely 26 years old. How reckless we were, now that I look back at those days. In Japan, they say "Mekura hebini ojizu" or a blind person shows no fear of snakes (because they can't see them). But both my wife and I were determined in our mission of being the next caretaker of the church. I had no idea of returning home. It was interesting that we heard no negative remarks about our departure from Japan for our engagement in the missionary work. The church had lost its residential minister, the Rev. Haruko Takahashi, five years prior to our arrival. The church could not have the resources to support a minister to live. The only financial resource was \$1,000 cash deposit in the bank prepared through the consideration of the Rev. Shoichi Okuno, who was Chief Administrative Minister of Konko Missions in Hawaii and worked to bring us over to Wahiawa. There was no church provided health insurance. We only had some cash from Japan. Our family members and some church members gave us some monetary gifts for our departure to Hawaii. Personally, I had a very limited financial resource. Prior to our departure, I stayed for three years at the Konko Church of Amagi where I was given a monthly stipend that could afford some personal items while living as a religious trainee. There could be no way I could save money for our missionary work. I had no idea of financial matters at the Wahiawa Church. I simply believed that Kami-Sama would provide whatever we would need for our missionary work. I could have researched about the condition of the church, the size of the congregation, the church premises, the population of the Wahiawa Town, the financial condition of the church, the ministerial compensations, the history of the church and so forth. But I simply ignored all those elements. I had a conviction that Kami-Sama would provide whatever we needed.

Interestingly, throughout our missionary work, the spirituality I held proved right for us. Before we were leaving for Hawaii, the Rev. Fumio Yasutake, Head Minister of the Amagi Church took me to the Konko Church of Kokura and introduced me to the Rev. Sueko Katsura about our departure for Hawaii for our missionary work. The Rev. Katsura only stated, "神様は見殺しにはされんからな" or "Kami-Sama will never let you die in vein." She could be well aware of the circumstance of my designated place of service. The Rev. Shoichi Okuno also made a similar statement to me for my preparedness for our missionary work by saying, "箸一膳、茶碗一つ、から始めると思つて" or "Be determined you would start your missionary work from scratch, with only a pair of chopsticks."

Strangely, I had little fears or worries for our missionary work. Our wedding service was held on September 24 at the Amagi Church and we left the church on September 25. We made a pilgrimage to see Konko-Sama at Headquarters Church at Konko Town and related our missionary work. Konko-Sama, the late Rev. Kagamitaro Konko gave us a moderately long message at the Toritsugi-Mediation Desk. I still treasure the messages given to us at that occasion. He related about the subject of "Inochi no shin no Hataraki" or the core vital life sustaining functions given to each and every living things and "Konnichichi made no orei" or extending thanks for any and all elements of sustenance and help that I have enjoyed thus far. These messages became foundations for our engagement in our missionary work.

On the day of departure from Tokyo, I also made a visit to the Konko Church of Tokiwadai. If I had not encountered the Rev. Michio Miyake, Head Minister of the church, I would not have become a Konko minister and would not have gotten involved in our missionary work in Hawaii. I would like to extend my thanks to the Rev. Michio Miyake of the Konko Church of Tokiwadai who gave me a message in celebration of our departure for our missionary work in Hawaii when we made a courtesy visit to greet him. He has provided a momentous opportunity for me to get engaged in ministry of the Konkokyo faith when I was in Tokyo. He jotted down a message on the cover of the wrapping of goshinmai sacred rice. The message reads, 「有り難きこの思召いつまでも忘れずに行け人助けの道」。I have interpreted this message in this manner, "Never fail to appreciate this wondrous divine mission granted to you for saving people" dated September 27, 1977. I have placed this Goshinmai sacred rice packet at the Toritsugi-Mediation Desk to serve as my daily reminder. Interestingly, the message has never faded away. The message has the same line of meaning of "Konnichichi made no orei" or extending thanks for any and all blessings I have enjoyed thus far. I have been deeply appreciative of the message as years pass by. Without the presence of my wife and her support and dedication for our missionary work, and the fulfillment of Edna's wish list for me, I would not have been able to share this thought with you today.

We arrived at the Honolulu International Airport on September 27, 1977. Many minister and church members and family members of

the Rev. Takahashi came to greet us at the airport. The sweet smell of pulmeria from the lei was the first impression of Hawaii. We were guided to the Konko Mission of Honolulu and greeted the Rev. Kikue Kodama, Head Minister of the church. We stayed overnight at the Honolulu Church. The following day, we arrived at the Wahiawa Church.

The first thing I did when I was introduced to the worship hall was to turn on the lights. The late Mr. Thomas Tadashi Takahashi, older brother of the Rev. Haruko Takahashi and his wife Mrs. Tsuneko Takahashi lived with us for several days while we could get oriented to the church. I look back and feel really grateful for their warm-hearted reception and thoughtfulness extended to us.

The first impression I developed about our missionary work was that everything we need was supplied. And I gave thanks for the given condition at the church. Since day one at our church, we tried to give thanks for the day that went by. I have been enabled to make a visit to the Honolulu Church every time we have held the regular church services as a token of our appreciation for the operation of the church. Even today, without any interruption, we have tried this tradition in blessedness.

For all those years, both my wife and I have been enabled to celebrate our engagement in our missionary work. Now it has been our pleasure that we have been witnessing one of the greatest endeavours, the operation of the church functions in English has been actualized at our Konko faith community at Wahiawa and the local faith communities at large.

September 29 marked the 201st birthday of the Founder Konko Daijin. In Konko faith community in Hawaii, we used to have celebrated the birthday of the Founder Konko Daijin through the annual service named “Yatsunami Festival” in the month of August. But the service ceased to function some 17 years ago due to various circumstantial elements. “Yatsunami” stands for the official eight-petal crest for the Konko Religious Organization. The Founder Konko Daijin was born on August 16, 1814 in accordance with the lunar calendar that is equivalent to September 29, the day of official birthday of the Founder we celebrate today. Accordingly, this year marks the 201st birthday of the Founder, we fondly address as “Konko-Sama.”

After the service we had a mini-celebration for the birthday of Konko-Sama, with a birthday cake specially inscribed with the date of celebration, a Happy Birthday song and a short trivia challenge about Konko Daijin and talking. I would want to see the expanded function of this annual celebration of the Founder Konko-Sama.

When I think of the Founder, the first thing I can associate with him is his nature of honesty or *sunao* in Japanese. He was the most trusted human being ever existed in the whole history of the humanity who gained the absolute trust and confidence of Tenchi Kane No Kami, Our Divine Parent of the Universe. It is because of Konko-Sama who helped to reveal the existence of Tenchi Kane No Kami to the world. For an ordinary person like me, it is beyond my perception to fathom the deep and broader trusting relationship ever developed between Tenchi Kane No Kami and the Founder Konko-Sama. It is this trusting relationship between the Founder and the deity, Tenchi Kane No Kami or Our Divine Parent of the Universe the whole Konkokyo Religious

Organization unfolded in today’s organizational establishment. Without this trusting relation there would be no birth of the Konkokyo Religious Organization. This vital relationship between the Founder and the deity Tenchi Kane No Kami evolved through the exhibited honesty and sincerity of the Founder Konko-Sama.

As for this distinctive character, the Founder stated as follows: The original teaching in Japanese reads, “変人になれ、変人にならと信心はできぬ、変人とは、直ぐいことぞ。” In English translation, “Do not be afraid to be different from others. You cannot practice faith without being different. A person who is different is one who has a pure heart” (III Konko Kyoso Gorikai 73).

Here’s a trivia question for you: “What did the Founder enjoy on holidays and day off in his young age?” The answer is he enjoyed visiting shrines and temples on his days off and on holidays. Actually, when the Founder was adopted into the Kawate family at the age of 12, the adoptive father asked him what were his likes and dislikes. The Founder honestly extended his heart by saying, “I have a favor of request.” I like to visit shrines and temples. Please allow me to go out on holidays and my days off to do this.” This episode is one of the typical examples that showed the honest and receptive nature of the Founder which can be different from ordinary people of his age. How can a mere 12-year old boy ever make such a request of making a visitation to temples and shrines? At the same stage, the Founder requested another strange request by saying, “Since I don’t like barley, please let me eat white polished rice.” The reason why the Founder wanted to eat could be his physical condition, that barley didn’t agree with him physically. In those days, it was against social norm for even adult farmers to eat polished white rice. The price of the rice was more than twice as much for barley and the rice was paid as a form of tax to the government. But the adoptive father warmly accepted the extended request and fed his adoptive son white rice for his daily meals. This episode also showed another aspect of “henjin” or different from ordinary social norms.

Adoptive father also might be “henjin” or different from other villagers in warmly accepting the conditions expressed by his adoptive son. If the adoptive father refused to accept the extended preferences of the son like an ordinary person in that age, it could be possible we might not have witnessed the emergence of the Founder. The same pattern of relationship could be found between the Founder and the deity Tenchi Kane No Kami.

Have you been aware of your “henjin” elements as Konko believers? It would be “henjin” to attend church regularly regardless of your other prioritized daily scheduled preferences and tasks. Just try to be a “henjin” to deepen your relationship with Kami-Sama. Practicing faith can be our relationship with the deity we believe. For this purpose, the church is there and the ministers are there to help deepen your relationship with Kami-Sama.



Konko-Sama Says . . .

After my physical form disappears, I, Konko Daijin will go wherever I am asked. (III Naiden 13-14)

Konko Daijin said, "Everybody asks me to come to their homes, but since I cannot be absent from Kami's Hiromae, I do not go. However, I have never failed to help save a person who asked me for help with a single heart."
(Jinkyukyogoroku 55)

Bulletin Board

Monthly Services for October 2015

- 1 Thur -Monthly Service for Tenchi Kane No Kami
(7:30 pm)
- 4 Sun -Sunday Service at 9 am
-Honolulu Church Autumn Grand Service at 11 am
- 11 Sun -Sunday Service at 9 am
-Waipahu Church Autumn Grand Service at 11 am
- 13Tue -**Wahiawa Church Autumn Grand Service at 6:30 pm**
- 18 Sun -Sunday Service at 9 am
- 25 Sun -Monthly Memorial Service 9 am
-Wailuku Church Grand Service 11 am
-HCRP Peace Prayer at Gedatsu Church 4 pm

November 2015

- 1 Sun -Monthly Service for Tenchi Kane No Kami
(9 am)
- 8 Sun -Sunday Service 9 am
-Hilo Church Grand Service 11 am

Hawaii Conference of Religions for Peace

Through the coordination of Japanese Cultural Center of Hawaii, the members of HCRP and their friends will make a tour to the Honouliuli Monument National Park on Friday, October 2 at 8:15 a.m. The founding minister of our church, the late Rev. Haruko Takahashi was also interned at the Sand Island Internment Camp and also was transferred to the Honouliuli Internment Camp in 1943 and was released in 1944. This year marks the 70th anniversary of the ending of WWII.

The annual Inter-faith Peace Prayer coordinated by the Hawaii Conference of Religions for Peace and co-sponsored by the Interfaith Alliance Hawaii will be held at Gedatsu Church of Hawaii on Sunday, October 25, 2015 at 4:00 p.m. The theme of the meeting is "One Heart-One Mind in Gratitude." The guest speaker is the Rev. Dr. Todd Zenji Takahashi of Konko Mission of Honolulu.

"Peace cups" were also painted on Sunday, on September 27. They will be displayed at the church hall of the Gedatsu Church.

Volunteer Activity

The regular monthly visit to the Long-Term Care Facility at Wahiawa General Hospital will be made on Friday, October 16, 2015 at 10:00 a.m.

Kaka'ako Ehimemaru Memorial Clean up

The Ehime Kenjinkai members will conduct regular care for the Mikan trees and clean up of the Ehimemaru Memorial at Kaka'ako on Saturday, October 31 at 9:00 a.m.

Itsukushimi No Inori Prayer for Peace

A group of local young ministers scheduled a peace-oriented function called "Itsukushimi No Inori Prayer for Peace" on

Saturday, October 24, 2015 at the Konko Mission of Honolulu at 10:30 a.m. Followed by the Joyous Gathering from 1:30 pm. Guest speaker will be the Rev. Mitsuko Yasutake of the Chikushi Hongo Church, Japan.

Honoring the Mitama Spirits

October

Janet Kimie Faggard	10/3/2012
Hiromi Ishii	10/4/2003
Shizue Yamamoto	10/6/2008
Kazuyoshi Kidani	10/?/ 2006
Richard Mankichi Hirota	10/8/1990
Founder Konko Daijin	10/10/1883
Henry Yoshiichi Uyehara	10/10/2007
Francis Toshiji Suwa	10/12/1996
Saku Hasuo	10/12/1996
Isamu Tokumoto	10/14/1995
Pasqualine Webber	10/21/2010
Donald Takeshi Katsura	10/31/1953
Edith Hisayo Tamabayashi	10/31/2014

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 128, 120 and 130)

Section 2

Divine Blessings (Okage)

No. 128

A heart of true gratitude is the beginning of divine blessings.

(III Shinkun 2-3 Kyoten page 774)

A heart of true gratitude

This message reminds me of the olden days of the Konkokyo history. In the past, the ministers frequently quoted this message for their sermons. They usually recite the passage, "A heart of the gratitude is the beginning of divine blessings" as they began their speech. I remember I was deeply impressed by the deep and solemn tone of reading made by speakers in those days.

The speakers showed many lively episodes of how they could have enjoyed blessings through the exercise of the heart of true and sincere gratitude. One of those days, a person came to see me at the Toritsugi-Mediation Desk and asked point blankly, "Are you sure I can get blessed? Let me see the evidence of Kami's blessings. If you show me blessings, I will get engaged in the practice of faith." I extended my left arm and pointed toward him with the index finger, and asked, "Can you see this index finger is a blessing. Can you really appreciate the blessed nature of your own index finger? Each finger on your hand is different in length.

Each of them has its own unique functional roles. Do you see the wondrous nature of your own hands? Can't you appreciate the blessed nature of your hands? If you cannot appreciate the blessed nature of your fingers, no matter how much I talk about blessings, you may take them for granted and find little appreciation for those things I would show you. There is a saying that goes, 'Pearls before swine.' If you do not have the heart that can identify the blessed elements in ordinary things around you and show deep gratitude, there would be no way you would be able to learn to appreciate blessings."

We would be able to appreciate the message, "A heart of true gratitude is the beginning of divine blessings" and learn the enjoyment of ever-expanding blessings through the actualization of the message in our faith life.

No. 129

After being saved from a desperate situation or misfortune, everyone says that they will never forget the blessings they receive. 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 Kyoten page 843)

Ubiquitous nature of Kami's blessings

The Rev. Fumio Yasutake of Konko Church of Amagi related an interesting episode. The episode took place before WWII. When he was young, the Rev. Masayuki Kodama of Konko Mission of Honolulu made a visit to Japan and extended his leg of journey to the church at Amagi as well. At that particular occasion, the Rev. Kodama brought a very special gift of a baseball glove for the Rev. Fumio Yasutake as a souvenir from Hawaii. In those days in Japan, it was quite exceptional for an ordinary young boy to get a baseball glove. The Rev. Yasutake was so much impressed and developed a permanent impression on the Rev. Kodama that he was such a wonderful person.

Years later, the Rev. Fumio Yasutake expressed his thought in contemplation. It was true that the Rev. Kodama was such a generous person who gave a boy like himself a hard-to-get baseball glove as a souvenir all the way from Hawaii. While he admired the Rev. Kodama, he became aware that he should have extended his deep gratitude for his parents and grandparents who extended their thoughts and prayers for his sound growth throughout his entire life, more than the person who gave him a treasured baseball glove.

We are likely to take for granted the generosity and help from the people close to us and fail to extend appreciation for their contributions.

The same can be said that we would never forget the indebtedness from others in time of suffering and distress. But we should have the spiritual mindfulness in identifying elements of blessings that help sustain our normal life. Unless we have developed a conviction that the blessings we enjoy from Heaven and Earth have no limitations whether we are alive or dead, we may get confused in facing our own imminent death.

Even when Konko believers encounter deaths in their families, they always respond to contact the church and extend their appreciation and gratefulness for the blessings the deceased enjoyed throughout their given lives.

No. 130

When practicing faith, there are more blessings which cannot be seen than those which can be seen. The blessings you unknowingly receive number more than the blessings you knowingly receive. If you think about it, you will come to realize the many divine blessings that you have received. If you can do this, you are a true believer. (II Tsugawa Haruo 14 Kyoten page 631)

Unidentifiable blessings received

The Rev. Haruo Tsugawa, the founder of Konko Church of Ishimori, was born as a son of merchant who was granted the privilege of doing business in the Ashimori samurai clan. Here is an episode he experienced soon after he got engaged in the practice of faith. "When I asked for an amulet, Konko-Sama replied, 'There are no amulets. People make amulets their object of worship, but amulets don't give divine blessings. Though Kami-Sama cannot be seen, Kami is all around you. You are walking within and right through Kami. I will give you this goshinmai, so when praying, you can even present your request to a wall'" (II Tsugawa Haruo 3). He might get confused of the message given by the Founder. He depicted the impression of the Founder, "He was not articulate in his talking" (*Konko Daijin Jinbutsushi page 58*).

In corresponding to his advancement in his way of practicing faith, the Founder gave him deeper messages such as "There are more blessings which cannot be seen than those which can be seen. The blessings you unknowingly receive number more than the blessings you knowingly receive."

Majority of us are only concerned about tangible blessings which can be visually identified. We may not care for any intangible blessings we cannot identify through our own physical eyes.

The Founder stated, "The blessings you unknowingly receive number more than the blessings you knowingly receive." He did not mention there could be some blessings we receive unknowingly, but stressed that the blessings we receive unknowingly number more than the blessings we knowingly receive.

We respond in jubilation for any blessings actualized in corresponding to our extended prayers of requests. But through the course of our engagement in the practice of faith, there could be such occasions that we could not appreciate elements of blessings in encounters we have to deal with. But years later, and looking back at those once negatively perceived elements could be appreciated through the spiritual eyes acquired through our prolonged engagement in the practice of faith. This is the true appreciation of blessings we enjoy as Konko believers.

The original Japanese expression of "後で"(pronounced "atode") does not imply a couple of years, but can refer to the generation of children or grandchildren. In this manner, Kami-Sama's vision is far greater than ours.

