



KONKO MISSION BULLETIN

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We will observe the annual Autumn Memorial Service on Sunday, September 14, 2014 at 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 to commemorate this vital function of the Konko faith in person and on time. A fellowship lunch will follow the service.



A group of the local young Konko ministers named “AKD” a shortened form of Apostles of Konko Daijin, initiated and organized the Second “Itsukushimi No Inori” for offering prayers for peace on Sunday, August 17, 2014 at the Konko Mission of Wahiawa at 4:00 p.m. The following is a speech script courteously contributed by the guest speaker, the Reverend Blayne Higa of Moili‘ili Hongwanji Mission. This is the first time we have ever introduced a formal religious presentation delivered by a Buddhist minister in Hawaii. We can find many universal elements that can be shared by all for the advancement of peace in our personal, social and global environments. We would like to extend our sincere appreciation to the Reverend Blayne Higa for his presence at the gathering and an enlightening presentation for peace.

The Practice of Peace

By Rev. Blayne Higa

Good Afternoon and Aloha! Thank you for inviting me to share with you today as we take time to reflect on peace and to offer prayers for peace in our world. The theme of today’s gathering is quite fitting as we recognize the truly interconnected nature of our lives. From the strife in Gaza in the Middle East to the turmoil in Ferguson, Missouri, these conflicts also affect us here in Hawaii. They offer lessons on how we often view our lives

in a self-centered way—not realizing that at the most basic level we are all the same and that our perceived differences are just that—illusions that we place upon ourselves and on others. But if we look deep within ourselves and realize the basic goodness of our shared humanity, we can live with greater compassion and respect for one another.

In times of difficulty, we often look for someone or something to blame. However, in my tradition, we are taught that all definitions like good and evil, while useful, can be arbitrary. As Shinran Shonin, the founder of Shin Buddhism reflects, “I do not know what the two, good and evil, really mean. I could say I know what good is, if I knew good as thoroughly and completely as the Tathagata [Buddha] And I could say I know what evil is, if I knew evil as thoroughly and completely as the Tathagata [Buddha]. But in this impermanent world, like a burning house, all things are empty and vain, therefore untrue. Only the Nembutsu is true, real and sincere.” Shinran contrasts the limited nature of human concepts and understanding with the Nembutsu, the Name of the Buddha, by which we understand ultimate reality or Truth. And this spiritual Truth enables us to see our ego-self at work in the light of boundless compassion.

Isn’t this true for all religions and philosophies? They are ways of understanding our lives in this often chaotic world and awakening to our true and real selves.

Religion does not always offer us simple and easy answers in life. Good teachings should push us to go deeper into our own human experience and understanding to realize the complexity of situations and their underlying causes and conditions. Good teachings should challenge us to think critically about our lives and about every situation we encounter.

In a commencement speech some years ago, the writer David Foster Wallace said the following: “There is no such thing as not worshipping. Everybody worships. The only choice we get is what to worship. And the compelling reason for maybe choosing some sort of god or spiritual-type thing to worship – be it JC or Allah, be it YHWH or the Wiccan Mother Goddess, or the Four Noble Truths, or some inviolable set of ethical principles –is that pretty much anything else you worship will eat you alive. If you worship money and things, if they are where you tap real meaning in life, then you will never have enough, never feel you have enough. It’s the truth. Worship your body and beauty and sexual allure and you will always feel ugly. And when time and age start showing, you will die a million deaths before they finally grieve you. On one level, we all know this stuff already. It’s been codified as myths, proverbs, clichés, epigrams, parables; the skeleton of every great story. The whole trick is keeping the truth up front in daily consciousness.

Worship power, you will end up feeling weak and afraid, and you will need ever more power over others to numb you to your own fear. Worship your intellect, being seen as smart, you will end up feeling stupid, a fraud, always on the verge of being

found out. But the insidious thing about these forms of worship is not that they're evil or sinful, it's that they're unconscious. They are default settings.

They're the kind of worship you just gradually slip into, day after day, getting more and more selective about what you see and how you measure value without ever being fully aware that that's what you're doing. And the so-called real world will not discourage you from operating on your default settings, because the so-called real world of men and money and power hums merrily along in a pool of fear and anger and frustration and craving and worship of self. Our own present culture has harnessed these forces in ways that have yielded extraordinary wealth and comfort and personal freedom. The freedom all to be lords of our tiny skull-sized kingdoms, alone at the center of all creation. This kind of freedom has much to recommend it. But of course there are all different kinds of freedom, and the kind that is most precious you will not hear much talk about much in the great outside world of wanting and achieving. The really important kind of freedom involves attention and awareness and discipline, and being able truly to care about other people and to sacrifice for them over and over in myriad petty, unsexy ways every day.

That is real freedom. That is being educated, and understanding how to think. The alternative is unconsciousness, the default setting, the rat race, the constant gnawing sense of having had, and lost, some infinite thing."

It is precisely in times of chaos and conflict that we need to look within ourselves to find the deeper answers on how to cultivate peace. We have to ask ourselves the difficult question of whether we could do such horrible things? And the answer is...Yes. Each of us has the capacity for both good and evil. I am reminded of the words of Shinran Shonin, "If the karmic cause so prompts us, we will commit any kind of act." This is not justification for committing evil but rather is a profound realization of my own potential to commit such acts. In noted American Shin Buddhist Scholar, Rev. Dr. Taitetsu Unno's book *River of Fire, River of Water*, there is a chapter on Hitler and Mother Teresa. In it he states, "In contemporary history Hitler is regarded as the evil incarnate, and Mother Teresa as the embodiment of love. Their glaring difference is unequivocal, but both are human beings. Being human, we can be either Hitler or a Mother Teresa. The key question for each of us becomes, Which am I, a Hitler or a Mother Teresa?" He goes on to relate a time when "Mother Teresa was asked why she dedicated her life to the poor and needy of Calcutta, she is said to have replied, "Because I realized that I had a Hitler within me." Now this may sound paradoxical, but her admission penetrates to the core of religious awakening. Without awareness of one's own potential for evil, the demonic within remains unrecognized and unchecked. The potential to wreak havoc, whether in personal life or in society, awaits to explode from within us at any time. But once we become fully aware of our darkness, evil will lose its power over us, and the energy that propels it may be transformed into a power for good." It is especially in times of great tragedy and conflict that we need to cultivate compassion and loving kindness as the means of truly finding peace and healing. Shakyamuni Buddha taught that we are never separate from the world of enlightenment.

Even when we feel most stuck, we are never truly far from awakening. Our true essence, is always with us but is covered by our ego and is hidden by the three poisons of greed, hatred and ignorance. Our challenge as human beings is to look within and cultivate compassion, love and wisdom for ourselves and for all sentient beings.

Peace begins with each of us, looking deep within and transforming our self-centered perspective to one of gratitude and service to others. Living a life of gratitude, we can do our part to cultivate peace within ourselves and in the world around us.

True Peace is not passive. It is dynamic activity in our world. How do we care for one another? What do we do to make our world better? How do we respond in times of crisis? Our personal attempts to live with compassion is never wasted. Choosing to cultivate love rather than anger is the only way to change ourselves, our community, our nation and the world.

There is a story from a Buddhist sutra that goes as follows: "Once there was a great forest in which there lived many animals. All of the animals loved the forest. The forest was their home. One day, however, the forest caught fire. All of the animals worked feverishly to put out the fire. After all, the forest was their home. Without the forest, where could they live? However, despite their efforts, the fire grew and grew. Finally, the great lion, the leader of the animals, called out to everyone, "Run for safety! We cannot put out the fire!"

The animals fled to a safe area, and watched in sadness as the fire continued to burn.

They noticed, however, that a little bird continued to fight the fire. This little bird would fly to a nearby pond, drop down into the water, wet its body, and then fly over the forest fire flapping its wings dropping a few droplets of water over the fire. Back and forth, back and forth the little bird worked.

The other animals called to the bird, "Are you crazy? It is dangerous. How do you expect to put out the fire that way?"

Finally the little bird stopped for a short rest and came by the animals. The little bird said, "The question for me is not, can I put out the fire. The question for me is, what can I do? This is all that I can do. I am only doing what I can do." And with that the bird returned to fighting the forest fire.

Each of us faces the forest fire of chaos in our often turbulent world. What can we do in our own way to fight that fire?

Mindfulness is the foundation of true peace. When we truly see ourselves as both a Hitler and a Mother Teresa, only then do we fully comprehend our responsibility for creating a better world each and every day.

This is a time for deep reflection on the causes and conditions that lead to violence and evil acts. It is also a time for us to reflect on our own potential for both good and evil and it is a time for us to rededicate ourselves to the cultivation of peace within ourselves and in the world around us.

In closing, I would like to leave you with a challenge. The essence of a spiritual life is to awaken to the heart of gratitude and to respond in kind. When we take time to reflect upon all the causes and conditions that makes our lives possible, we can do nothing else but to respond in gratitude and to share that gratitude with others.

The one thing that we can do each and every day is to find peace and truth within our own lives. When we are peaceful, then our family will be peaceful. When our family is peaceful, our neighborhood is peaceful. When our neighborhood is peaceful, our city is peaceful. When our city is peaceful, our state and country, and the world too, can become peaceful as well.

I challenge you to live a life of gratitude. Create a gratitude journal. Take time each day to reflect upon three things that you are grateful for and write them down. Think about both the good and bad things that happen each and every day. Being grateful for the good things in life are easy but it is often the bad things that happen which offer us the most important and profound lessons. After this, take a moment to reflect on how you shared gratitude in the world. What one small thing did you do to make the world just a little bit better?

Start by doing this for a week, work up to a month and maybe even a year. Gratitude is hard work—it takes practice, discipline and a commitment to truly seeing yourself each and every day.

So take the gratitude challenge and cultivate peace within your own life and then share that peace with others.

Thank you again for inviting me to share this special service with you. Mahalo!



Konko-Sama Says . . .

I, Tenchi Kane No Kami, want to say the following: “Though they live between Heaven and Earth, people are unaware of Kami’s blessings. Shrines, temples, and homes stand on Kami’s land. Unaware of this, people only refer to the Days and Directions, commit irreverence to Kami and encounter hardships due to their accumulated offenses. They are to receive divine blessings by practicing faith. I, Tenchi Kane No Kami, have sent Ikigami Konko Daijin to people to give blessings and teachings and to have them prosper forever. Man is man because of Kami, and Kami is Kami because of man. Both continue to uphold each other.”

(Oshirasegoto Oboecho 25-3)

Bulletin Board

Monthly Services for August 2014

1 Mon -Monthly Service for Tenchi Kane No Kami
(7:30 pm)

7 Sun -Monthly Service, Ikigami Konko Daijin (9 am)
-Bi-annual Volunteer Activity at WGH at 10 am

14 Sun -Autumn Memorial Service (10 am)

21 Sun -Honolulu Church Autumn Memorial Service
(10 am)

-Sunday Service at 9 am

28 Sun -Sunday Service (9 am) *Celebrate Founder’s Birthday

October 2014

1 Wed -Monthly Service for Tenchi Kane No Kami
(7:30 pm)

13 Mon -Wahiawa Church Autumn Grand Ceremony (6:30 pm)

HCRP

The monthly meeting of the Hawaii Conference of Religions for Peace will be held at the Gedatsu Church on Monday, September 15, 2014 at 1:30 p.m.

Volunteer Activity

We will make a visit to the Wahiawa General Hospital Long-Term Care Facility for our regular bi-annual volunteer activity of interacting with the long-term care patients on Sunday, September 7 from 10:00 a.m. After the program at the hospital, we will enjoy lunch at the church. Please join the program. We also hold the regular monthly volunteer activity at the same facility on Friday, September 12 at 10:00 a.m.

Wahiawa Church Educational Fund

We have opened a new bank account titled Wahiawa Church Educational Fund at CPB in the month of August, 2014. The primary purpose of this fund is for the annual Summer Ohana Camp our church has initiated four years ago and any other educational programs approved by the board of the Wahiawa Church. Any monetary contribution for the fund will be greatly appreciated.

200th Year Anniversary Celebration of the Founder Konko Daijin

This year marks the 200th Year Anniversary of the Founder Konko Daijin who was born on September 29, 1814 at a rural farming village in today’s Konko Town in Okayama. The Rev. Yasuhiro Yano will attend the annual observance of Ikigami Konko Daijin Grand Service to be observed on Sunday, September 28, 2014 at the Headquarters Church in Konko Town.

Honoring the Mitama Spirits

September

Mikiko Yamamoto	9/3/2003
Tatsuyuki Kataoka	9/7/2007
Harumi Tokumoto	9/7/2001
Ben Furusho	9/15/1997
Takeshige Ootsuka	9/15/1998
Richard Masao Iwasa	9/17/2005
Kameji Takeshima	9/17/2000
Fumiko Hamai	9/25/1997
Richard Tadayoshi Noguchi	9/27/2009

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 91 and 92)

No. 91

To practice faith is to live day to day. (III Konko Kyoso Gorikai 26-2 Kyoten page 782)

To live day to day

In general, especially in Japan, they perceive that to practice faith means to pray for their peaceful departure into paradise; to pray for their peaceful lives without much hardship. But the Founder Konko Daijin stated, “To practice faith is to live day to day.” The valid meaning of getting engaged in the practice of faith exists in our daily living.

The quoted message is a partial excerpt from the original statement given to Mitsugoro Ichimura. Konko-Sama related, “They say you need someone to practice faith with. But this isn’t so. You can practice faith by yourself. If you needed someone to practice faith with, then you would also need someone to die with. However, no one is willing to die with you. Practicing faith is to live day to day eliminating the impurities in your heart” (I Ichimura Mitsugoro 1-13).

Mitsugoro Ichimura witnessed many believers with their family members and friends joined to make pilgrimage to see Konko-Sama. Then, he questioned himself why his own family members didn’t respond to follow him in the practice of faith. He forwarded his concern to Konko-Sama. Konko-Sama responded that he shouldn’t be bothered with such a concern, but try to pursue his own faith in Kami. Konko-Sama wished to convey that we live our own lives which could not be substituted by others. He then stated firmly, “To practice faith is to live day to day.”

Mitsugoro Ichimura recorded a phonetic understanding of the forwarded message by the Founder in his personal capacity as has been quoted, “Practicing faith is to live day to day eliminating the impurities in your heart.” In the original Japanese statement, the word, “不浄心” is used. But this “不浄心” could be replaced with the word “不成” the Founder specifically explained to Norio Sato who asked the Founder, “Each faith has essential core teachings. I would like to know what the essence of this faith is.” The Founder immediately answered, “There are nine significant points. The first three are: Directions, Food restrictions and *Fujō*” (III Naiden 12). And the Founder specified, “*Fujō*-I write *Fujō* with characters meaning ‘not attained’(不成) instead of ‘not pure’(不浄).”

I believe Mitsugoro Ichimura responded to jot down his own interpretation of the expressed sounds on his own manner and used the characters “不浄” accordingly. But the Founder’s intention could be the meaning of “不成.” The Founder might

wish to relate to him, “Don’t feel isolated because only you alone in the family have gotten engaged in the practice of faith. Do away with such a negative thought and try to live day to day with the heart of attaining a fulfilling life for yourself.”

No. 92

The word Shinjin (faith) is not written with the characters for belief and heart. Konko Daijin writes it with the characters for kami(神) and man(人). (I Kondo Fujimori 66-1 Kyoten page 290)

Kami (神) and man (人)

In general, “Shinjin” or practicing of faith is expressed in the Chinese characters “信心” which refers to the heart and believing in supreme beings, such as Kami and Buddha, and pertains to the state of the human mind.

But the Founder defined that the practice of the Konko faith shall be expressed in the Chinese characters “神人.” The Founder learned to read and some basic functions of numbers from the village head for two years when he was young. Through the research of the writings made by the Founder, it became clear that he used some 450 Chinese characters he learned. He demonstrated a marvelous writing skill despite his limited knowledge. He was exceptionally good at applying phonetic equivalent expressions. His understanding of the learned Chinese characters was precise and created many distinctive phonetically equivalent expressions and analogies he used to convey his thoughts to others.

The expression, “神人” (pronounced ‘Shinjin’) is not an equivalent of “信心” or practice of faith. The expression “神人” derived from the Founder’s deep perception about the nature of getting engaged in the practice of faith based on the divine message he received from Tenchi Kane No Kami, Our Divine Parent of the Universe which states, “Konko Daijin, tell worshippers about the relationship between Tenchi Kane No Kami and people” (I Yamamoto Sadajiro 48-3). The Founder tried to let the believers know about the most important nature of the Konko faith expressed in the term, “神人” which implies that both Kami and people enjoy mutually fulfilling interdependent relationship between Kami and people. The expression “信心” does not show the true nature of the Konko faith tradition.

In this regard, the Founder related to Fujimori Kondo, “The word *shijin* (faith) is not written with the kanji characters for belief and heart. I write it with the kanji characters for kami and man. Therefore, do not say *bushinjin* (不神人). It will mean that both kami and man are neglecting their duties. It’s better to say that one’s prayers don’t reach Kami” (I Kondo Fujimori 66).

Many believers use such a casual expression out of humility, “I am just a *bushinjin-mono* (不信心者) or not that much devoted in the practice of faith.” But to the Founder’s ears that expressed thought sounded *bushinjin-mono* (不神人者) that implied both kami and man are neglecting their duties. So we shall never use the expression *bushinjin-mono* (不神人者) in the Konkokyo faith tradition.