



KONKO MISSION BULLETIN

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The **Annual Autumn Memorial Service** will be observed on Sunday, September 24, 2017 at 10:00 am. Through the service, we will 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 us in commemorating this vital function of the Konko faith in person and on time. A fellowship lunch will follow the service.

In celebration of 40 years in Hawaii

*By Yasuhiro Yano
Head Minister*

Both my wife and I would have served at the Konko Mission of Wahiawa for 40 years on September 28, 2017. Prior to our departure for our missionary work, we got married on September 24, 1977 at Konko Church of Amagi. We were both 26 years old at that time. The following day, we left the Amagi Church and made a visit to see Konko-Sama at Headquarters Church in Konko Town. The fourth Konko-Sama was serving at the Toritsugi Mediation Seat. We extended our greetings and asked for his prayer for our missionary work in Hawaii. I still vividly remember some of the messages we received from Konko-Sama for a longer than usual Toritsugi-Mediation session. Those thoughts given to us actually served as the spiritual foundations for the entire missionary work to get started. But I was not that much aware of the magnitude of the messages at that stage. As for the messages, I have shared them with our church members from time to time in the past. After that, we made a visit to see the Rev. Michio Miyake of Konko Church of Tokiwadai in Tokyo. We also extended our greeting for our departure for our missionary work. If I had not met the Rev. Michio Miyake, I would not have evolved to become a Konko minister and would not have gotten engaged in my missionary work in Hawaii. It really can be a fortunate encounter with a twist of fate, or “ai-en-kien.” On September 27, 1977, we departed from Haneda International Airport.

We arrived at the Honolulu Airport on September 27, 1977 and stayed overnight at the Konko Mission of Honolulu for a day before heading out to Wahiawa. It was the warm yet comfortable air that was filled with the scent of plumeria flower that greeted us as we first stepped off of the plane. The Rev. Kikue Kodama, The Rev. Shoichi Okuno, the Rev. Kiyotaka Yasutake, and the church members of Honolulu showed up to greet us at the airport. Then they took us to the Honolulu Church.

In the morning of September 28, we arrived at the Wahiawa Church. Scores of church members showed up to greet us at the entrance. As I stepped into the church hall, I noticed the lights in the altar were not on. I turned them on and proceeded to

sit down on the chair to give a prayer for our new missionary life at the church.

Prior to our departure, the Rev. Shoichi Okuno who served as Chief Administrative Minister of Konko Missions in Hawaii told us that we should be prepared to start anew from scratch, as if you were equipped with just a pair of chopsticks and a bowl of rice. The remark is a very Japanese oriented spirituality of “hashi ichizenn, chawan hitotsu kara.” This statement means to deal with the spirit of a pioneer who cultivates a totally untouched land from scratch with only bare essentials. However, we were far more blessed than just being equipped with a pair of chopsticks and a bowl of rice. We found pretty much everything we needed to start our life. But it was a fact that the church did not have a residential minister who took care of the congregation for five years after the passing of the founding minister, the late Rev. Haruko Takahashi, who passed away on December 24, 1972. The Rev. Hiromichi Ishii who was assigned to the administrative office of Konko Missions in Hawaii as a staff member stayed to take care of the church for three years. And Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Takahashi and family members also helped to preserve the church presence in Wahiawa for about two years during the five year vacancy. During the period of vacancy of the responsible resident minister, many believers who were actively involved had left the faith community silently. Only those believers who’ve had a strong adherence to the church and some other affiliated people stayed in the congregation. Upon arrival, we found out that \$1,000 cash was kept in the church account for us. No financial securities for the ministers, such as monthly stipends and health insurance were provided. The only cash we had was the monetary gifts given to us at our wedding and departure gifts for our missionary work in Hawaii.

But the monetary issues were of little concern for us. If we get a big enough church congregation, the issue would be solved. As a strict unspoken tradition of the church operation in those days was that the resident ministers should not engage in any other occupation while engaging in his or her missionary work. We have never thought of having a side job to earn extra income for our livings while serving the church. The tradition is based on the belief that Kami will take care of the caretakers of church. At one time, I tried to pray to Kami that we will get a new church member for every monthly service. But I learned that it didn’t work. I have witnessed a strange phenomenon that when a potential new church member would be introduced to the congregation, someone quietly leaves the congregation. But I have kept a daily prayer for the expansion of the church, the faith community in Hawaii and beyond throughout of my missionary work. It is said that five devoted believers who follow the minister would be enough to expand the congregation. I still believe the truth and have been waiting for the right time to come.

Despite the house like church with a small church congregation, we have been able to sustain the operations of the church for 77 years. Thankfully, we have encountered very few occasions of dramas throughout these years. Despite the fact we did not have health insurance for the family at the initial stage or rely on government assistance, we have been blessed with three children. Despite the limited financial resources, all of our children have grown up to become Konko ministers, graduated

from college, and live independent lives in their own blessed conditions.

When I look back at our 40 years of life in serving the Wahiawa Konko Mission faith community, one of the biggest endeavors was to develop our children to become functional Konko ministers. They have evolved to play a vital role in perpetuating the Konko faith tradition in Hawaii and elsewhere. The biggest fear I held in my missionary work was whether or not I would be able to pass on the Konko faith tradition to our children. Throughout my career, I have been always tried to be mindful of how I would be able to help our children hold fast to the faith both my wife and I have tried to spread in Hawaii. If they had rebelled against the way we have lived as Konko ministers, they would be denying the meaning of our engagement in our missionary work. We would be defeated as ministers and we would not be fulfilled through our missionary work that was supposed to be a divine call. Whatever we have done in the past would become nil and helpless if they would not care about the faith we have kept in the family for three generations. The meaning of my being “Inochi no Ohatsuho” or offering of myself in appreciation of the blessings received from Kami would be meaningless. These are hidden fears I have always kept deep in mind. In a sense, both my wife and I would have been fulfilled in the divine endeavor of making our children become the vital resources for the continued operation of the Konko faith tradition. But it would not have been possible without the unconditional acceptance of three of our children for spiritual training at the Konko Church of Amagi for six full years for the completion of their spiritual educational program. It can also be the fulfillment of the late Rev. Fumio Yasutake of Konko Church of Amagi who expressed that his biggest fulfillment was to witness the ministerial candidates amongst the church congregation.

We made a pilgrimage to “Gohonbu” Headquarters Church at Konko Town, Konko Church of Amagi and other related churches in commemoration of our 40 years of engagement in our missionary work. But we didn’t have any extra money to afford our trip. In January of this year, my second son Rodney who has been serving at the Konko Church of San Francisco forwarded a large sum of offering to the church. I made a call to Rodney about the monetary offering. He responded the offering was intended for two of us to make a pilgrimage to Japan in appreciation of the services we have done in the last 40 years in Hawaii. We have never imagined we would be able to make a trip to Japan together.

Around the same time, my wife, Reiko called her mother in Japan over the phone in March of this year, she felt something was not right and we deemed it necessary for her to visit her mother as soon as possible. Because enough money for her trip was available right away, she expressed her intent that she should make a visit to see her mother who lives alone in a remote mountainous area where many other houses have vacated due to depopulation phenomenon in rural areas of Japan. What Reiko witnessed upon arrival at the house was total confusion. Her mother aged over 88 was found mentally disoriented and could hardly sustain her own life. The rooms were a mess, she hardly had food to eat. She found her mother’s clothes partially burned due from the room heater. The pots and pans were scorched. Some of the cooking pans were scorched. She showed some signs of malnutrition.

In such an urgent condition, Reiko and her brother consulted with doctors and the operator of the elderly care facility in town. The doctor immediately responded to make an

arrangement for her to get housed in any available facility. It could be a divine arrangement that one of the facilities in town was available for her stay. Without proper documentations it would have been impossible, but since this case was emergent, she was able to stay at the facility that was just a 10 minute drive from the house. It would be extremely difficult to find a room in such a facility due to ever increasing elderly population who needed to be placed. The whole process for a temporal admission was done in just one week while Reiko stayed in Japan. If Reiko’s mother was not housed at the care facility in time, she could have possibly died.

When we met Reiko’s mother this time around, at one glance, we could see how well her health condition had improved. She had a nice pixi haircut, showed healthy skin complexion, and greeted us with a warm smile. Her delirium had also disappeared. She even extended her thoughtfulness to the people in the care facility. We could enjoy a normal conversation and interaction with her. It was really a great surprise. Good rest, great care, great food, human to human interaction and less stressful living conditions were able to greatly improve her total health condition.

Another purpose of our pilgrimage to Japan was to attend the 5th memorial service for the late Mr. Masataka Yano, Reiko’s father who passed away on August 14, 2012. The house was vacated for almost five months since Reiko’s mother was housed at the care facility in March. After arriving at the house on August 13, with the help of Reiko’s elder sister and her husband, we made preparations for the service. The house, the yard and the grave needed extensive cleaning work. For half a day, till evening, we did major house cleaning. The following day, the memorial service was conducted by the Rev. Makoto Mitsutake and assisted by his son. Reiko’s father served as a commissioned officer of the Army when the war ended. Due to his military career, he could not find job at any public organizations. He spent his whole life after the military service for cultivating wild mountainous land in Oita as a pioneer. His original dwelling was in a cave. He got married and had two daughters and a son. He was a devoted Konko believer who attended the Konko Church of Tateishi in Oita. When I made a marriage proposal to Reiko, he didn’t deny the development. But he wanted to make sure if the marriage and the assigned duties as missionaries in Hawaii would be in line with the heart of Kami. He took Reiko to Gohonbu Headquarters Church at Konko Town and extended a prayer at the grave of the Founder. While he extended his intense prayer to the spirit of the Founder, he was overwhelmed with a deep spiritual jolt of happiness. After the prayer, he pronounced, “Reiko, I have never experienced such an intense feeling of gratitude in my whole life. You can go ahead with your marriage and go to Hawaii.” Without his consent, Reiko would not have married me and we would not be blessed with the family we have today.

In all, both my wife and I could have enjoyed in getting engaged in our missionary work till this day through many people’s extended thoughts and prayers and countless elements of blessings received knowingly or unknowingly throughout our missionary work.

Both my wife and I have extended “Konnichi made no orei” every day and every step of our journey in serving Kami-Sama in blessedness for 40 years long. We have been praying we will be of help in fulfillment of divine calls.

Konko-Sama Says . . .

No one is aware of the blessings of Heaven and Earth which enable people to live. Kami shall have people become aware of the blessings of Heaven and Earth by having Konko Daijin be born throughout the world where the sun shines, in every country, without exception. (Oshirasegato Obecho 22-2,3)

Bulletin Board

Main Services for September 2017

- 1 Fri -Monthly Service for Tenchi Kane No Kami (7:30 pm)
- 3 Sun -Sunday Service (9 am)
- 10 Sun -Monthly Service for Ikigami Konko Daijin (9 am)
- 16 Sat -Interfaith Community Clean-up at Kakkako Waterfront Park (10 am to 11:30 am)
- 17 Sun -Honolulu Church Autumn Memorial Service (10 am)
- 24 Sun -Autumn Memorial Service (10 am)
- 27 Sun -Sunday Service (9 am)

October 2017

- 1 Sun -Monthly Service for Tenchi Kane No Kami (9 am)
- 7 Sat -Church Clean-up for the Grand Service (8 am)
- 13 Fri -Autumn Grand Ceremony (6:30 pm)

Hawaii Conference of Religions for Peace

The HCRP will conduct the second annual Interfaith Community Clean-up program at Kakaako Waterfront Park on Saturday, September 16, 2017 from 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. The purpose of the program is to clean the entire Kakaako Waterfront Park, to spread awareness of keeping Mother Earth healthy. We wish to show our gratitude for the blessings we enjoy from the land that can be called “home” for all people. Open to all. Please join this program. Please wear comfortable clothes and hat for the clean-up work. Water will be provided.

Volunteer Activity

The regular monthly visit to the Long-Term Care Facility at Wahiawa General Hospital will be made on Friday, September 15, 2017 at 10:00 a.m.

KMH Calendar

September 9 (Sat) –Ministers meeting will be held at the Konko Mission of Honolulu from 10:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Honoring the Mitama Spirits

September

Mikiko Yamamoto	9/3/2003
Harumi Tokumoto	9/7/2001
Tatsuyuki Kataoka	9/7/2007
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 Matsutarō Kōsaka contributed the insightful articles. The translation is provided by Yasuhiro Yano. (Reference pages 317, 318 and 319)

No. 317: Even if you have many, do not abort or discard your children by your own discretion. Kami knows how long or short the life of a person will be, but people don't. Kami will leave you with healthy children. (II Higuchi Shikataro 4-1-2 Kyoten page 662 to 663)

Blessed childbirth

In the past, it was a common practice that a woman with many children aborted the pregnancy to deal with the dire financial condition that could hardly afford additional children in the family. The Founder advocated stopping such a practice.

Basically, how long each individual will live could belong to the realm of Kami-Sama. We cannot determine our own life span on our own.

The Founder related to Haruo Tsugawa, “The fate of humans is already decided at birth. You can go and offer your condolences when there is a birth. This is how far one's fate is decided at birth. The hardships and misfortunes that will be met have been already decided. Kami-Sama is well aware of this. Practice faith with diligence, then major misfortunes will in turn be cleared away. This is receiving the divine arrangement of Kami” (II Tsugawa Haruo 9).

The Founder also related to Kiku Okada, “Humans are unable to predict human life spans. Kami's blessings are unlimited, so practice faith, gain divine virtue, and live a long life” (II Okada Kiku 1).

The Founder's statements sound a bit fatalistic. He taught us that humans are able to sustain our lives through the elements of blessings and the divine arrangement of Kami. The Founder lost three of his own children when he was young. Based on his trying experiences, he tried to share his thoughts to others.

In the original statement, there is a passage, “Kami will be the one to thin out your children, provided that they have a short life span. He will leave you with healthy children” (II Higuchi Shikataro5-2). This statement is a reflection of the Founder who lost three of his children and extended his prayers for the souls of the deceased.

He might have responded in the same manner as he encountered the lost of his grandson, Sakuramaru when he approached to the ending phase of his life.

G. Faith and Moral Education

No. 318: The child is shaped by the mother's womb. Water held by a round container will appear to be round. In a square container, it will appear to be square. The mother should have a sincere heart and work diligently thinking the child within her is Kami's. She should pay kind attention to her family and continue practicing faith and her education. Then there won't be irreverence toward her ancestors and the country will prosper. She should practice faith on this very

day without losing her sincere heart and her will to work every day. (I Yamamoto Sadajiro 22-5 Kyoten page 374 to 375).

Divinely blessed pregnancy

This message was also related by Sadajiro Yamamoto. The original message found in the Konkokyo Kyoten Scriptures is two-page long.

At the opening, the founder stated, “Faith that stops after one generation won’t please Kami. Practice a faith which will continue on to future generations. During pregnancy, instead of wearing a maternity belt, wear a belt of sincerity around your heart.” In this manner, the Founder denied the traditional perspectives of pregnancy prevailed in society.

In the third paragraph, the Founder stated, “It is believed that a pregnant woman shouldn’t witness a funeral or even attend a relative’s funeral. It’s also feared that if a pregnant woman saw fire, the child within would develop a red scar. But a scar is only skin-deep. Practicing faith to prevent the child from developing scars on its pure heart is more important.” He denied the folk belief held by many commoners and emphasized to keep pure heart of the baby to be born.

The Founder continued his talk, “Like the way water conforms to the shape of its container, a person is shaped by his friends, good or bad. The child, also, is shaped by the mother’s womb. Water held by a round container will appear to be round. In a square container, it will appear to be square.” He emphasized the mother-to-be should keep a sincere heart.

The founder stated, “The mother should have a sincere heart and work diligently thinking the child within her is Kami’s.” The effects of prenatal care have been medically proven. They encourage the mother-to-be to appreciate good music and pictures. But the ultimate state of sincerity could be the thought held by the mother-to-be who conceives the child within her is Kami’s. If the mother-to-be could hold this supreme state of mind, she would be able to enjoy her daily work and can keep good and happy relationships with the family members. As the days pass by she would be able to attain such an ultimate spirituality that she would press her hands together in appreciation of the blessed pregnancy.

The Founder’s extended thought; “She should practice faith on this very day” is a reflection of the Founder’s warm-heartedness.

The Founder also referred to childbirth, “While giving birth, it has been customary for the mother to lean on something without lying down or extending her legs. According to Kami’s teaching, ‘Lean on Kami instead. Pray to Tenchi Kane No Kami-Sama, and lie down comfortably with your legs extended.’”

No. 319: People often say wasting food will result in punishment. Such things should not be said. Teach, rather than scold, your children. Though grains are produced by farmers, harvesting wouldn’t be possible without Kami’s blessings. Teach your children to have a heart that appreciates grains as Kami’s blessings. (II Yamamoto Sadajiro 4-1, 2 Kyoten page 716)

Teach, rather than scold

The governments imposed very severe working conditions for the farmers during the age when the Founder lived. They suffered from imposition of heavy taxes. The farmers learned to treasure even one grain of rice they produced. In the original message, a line reads, “People often scold their children by saying that spilling grain will result in blindness.” The expressed thought was a reflection of the strict admonishment the people followed.

But the Founder advocated that such admonishment should not be imposed, instead teach, rather than scold the children.

The Founder knew hard work and severe working condition of the farmers. But the Founder was fully mindful of the vital nature of blessings, such as the sunlight, the water that keeps the land productive, from Heaven and Earth. What could the farmers contribute for the production of food is very limited compared to the infinite work of Heaven and Earth.

Based on his perspective of the benevolent nature of Heaven and Earth, he appreciated that even one grain of rice cannot be produced by human work alone, but represents a blessing from Kami. They should teach their children about the blessed nature found even in a grain of rice.

In general they say, “You will be punished.” From a religious perspective, this sort of threatening expression should not be used. The Founder simply showed us the truth of Heaven and Earth.

In the past, a respected Konko minister responded to a believer who forwarded a large fish he caught by himself as an offering. He looked very proud of his act. In responding to the expressed demeanor of the fisherman, the minister reminded him about the nature of the fish caught by asking, “Do you think you have raised this large fish on your own. In my understanding, the fish was raised in the ocean that belonged to Tenchi Kane No Kami. If you do not extend your thanks in acknowledging the work of Kami-Sama that helped raise the fish, you could be taking the fish belonging to Kami-Sama without any permission.”

No matter how much we have been blessed materially, we should be always mindful of the work of Tenchi Kane No Kami for anything at all.

Rev. Yasuhiro and Reiko Yano visit the Konkokyo Headquarters in appreciation of 40 years of ministry at Wahiawa Church.

