Malamalama

Konko Missions in Hawaii NEWSLETTER



April 2006 Volume 24, Issue 2

May Our Joyful Faith Gush Forth

By Rev. Koichi Konko

This summer will be very hot because Konko Missions in Hawaii will be holding its 80th Anniversary Conference. The theme for the Conference is "Prosperity from Generation to Generation." The KMH 80th Anniversary Committee set three objectives; 1. To define "prosperity" in Konkokyo. 2. To explain why Konkokyo is important to this and future generations. 3. To appreciate the accomplishment of Konkokyo in Hawaii on behalf of all people as individuals and families.

To fulfill these objectives, we changed the name from KMH 80th Anniversary Service to KMH 80th Anniversary Conference, and it will be held over three days. Day one will be the anniversary service to appreciate Parent Kami and the people who came before us in Konkokyo in Hawaii, and pray for our future. Day two

will be about sharing ideas for expressing appreciation as well as for building a strong future. Day three will be the beach picnic to deepen our friendships as a member of KMH. I hope everyone will actively participate; as this conference will help to ignite our passion and faith. As co-chairperson, I am very happy to be involved with this event, and my heart is filled with joy in being able to be a part of the preparations. I am really looking forward to having this anniversary conference.

One of the reasons to commemorate the anniversary is to express our appreciations to our pioneer ministers and dedicated members of KMH. How-

ever, I believe that just saying "Thank you" is not enough to properly express full appreciation. It is like just saying thank you and does nothing else. We have to do something more concrete in order to "pay them back." We need one more thing to complete appreciation. That is "positive action." Our actions must be full of joy. We have to rejoice. That is the true way to say, "Thank you." We all have a mission to express our Konko Faith and pass it on to the future generations. That is also a form of sincere "Thank you," like a teaching goes, "Tell

about the divine blessings you have received to those who are unaware of Kami-Sama's blessedness. Then those people will be saved. Giving thanks this way will make Kami most happy." (Gorikai II, 3-3; Senda Shima) So, we have to find our own way of "saying thank you" in this conference.

This anniversary conference is not



merely a firecracker. One firecracker by itself is very beautiful, but it cannot last long. I pray that this conference will be the spark for us, and we will start doing something more to please Parent Kami, our founder, and our ancestors. We have a lot of obstacles to overcome, but I believe everything will go well if we do our best. We just need to support each other. By working together we can receive Kami's virtue.

By attending this conference together, as a family, we can support each other and KMH as well. Let's do something for the future; may our joyful faith gush forth.

KMH Ministers Come Together on Faith

On March 4th, the Konkokyo Hawaii Center held a Ministers Gathering at the Konko Mission of Honolulu, and 15 ministers from the KMH took part. The guest speaker was Rev. Shiro Okuhara, Head Minister of the Konko Church of Kesennuma, Japan. He was provided us by the *Honbu* Main Administrative Office.

The theme was "People should Broaden the Way of Faith. Kami will Grant Blessings." Rev. Okuhara explored six levels for development in our Church: 1. Who is a Minister: Who enlivens Kami's Will? 2. The Divine Calling: "Help people by performing Toritsugi mediation." 3. How can we as Ministers find support from our Founder, masters, and members? 4. How problems can help us grow – Will our churches be around 10 years from now? 5. Uniqueness in Propagation – Each church should have its own unique vision for its liveliness. 6. Let's grow together – Our Church is a Faith for everyone.

Rev. Okuhara shared his ideas by relating to us his own experiences for examples. He then concluded:

"Nowadays we hear about our Konkokyo losing its energy. Particularly, I do care about we ministers losing cheerfulness. Now it is time for us to make real the inspirational Faith that Konko Daijin developed during the Meiji Era. In the midst of persecution against his Faith by the government in that Era,

our Founder amazingly raised his faith up to the divine. And his family and disciples, through our Founder's example, found a guidance for their faith. And our Konko Faith blossomed forth at this time in this world little by little. Our Founder kept living up

to his divine call of 'Help people in need by performing *Toritsugi* mediation.' And no matter how gritty the situation at times became, Konkokyo propagation took place, and grew dynamically.

Our society today is in disarray. It's not easy to keep the spark of Faith going. However, it is also true that we've been led here in our lives to put our hearts into our missionary work. We should set a good role model for those who have yet to know Konkokyo, by showing forth the wealth of blessings we've gained through practicing the Konko Faith.

And we should show forth our own personal examples as Konkokyo ministers who share Faith to needy people. Each of us, of course, has our own limits. Divine blessings can never come to the world unless each of us plays his or her role. In so many words, 'People should broaden the way of faith. Kami will grant blessings.'

In terms of the Konko Faith, setbacks don't have to mean failure. This is the unique world of our Faith. We're not the Founder. We must do the best we can to take on anew the divine call that he heard, to 'Help people by performing *Toritsugi* mediation.' So let us re-vitalize our churches all together as one, and let us strive to more broaden the way of our Faith!"

Rev. Okuhara's presentation went over well. His down-to-earth, very friendly personality greatly helped to bring our ministers' opinions out into the open.

One minister shared her very relevant opinion: "Even if we try hard to apply the faith we've learned in Japan to local people in Hawaii, it often seems to be of no use at all. There are so many differences between the Japanese way of thinking, language, and culture, and the local American. Don't we first have to seek and realize the genuine Faith of *Ikigami Konko Daijin* by ourselves at heart?"

Rev. Okuhara saw eye to eye with our minister:

"When it comes to a show-down, all we can do is to depend on Konko Daijin's Faith. Then we've got to put aside our more narrow-minded thinking, and put our heart and soul into what our Founder had in mind. We ourselves must of course update our Founder's teachings, and upgrade our faiths in Kami."

And Rev. Okuhara finally ended his talk with a suggestion: "We, ministers, are keeping problems regarding our churches, we're keeping these problems locked up – we're keeping them only to ourselves. That's too much. Having problems is a natural condition. It is healthy that there are problems in churches..." – 'We can work them out,' in the words of John Lennon – "...We can turn around our many problems into opportunities. So we should first share the truth with our members, and then must work together as one for our Konkokyo, and 'work them out."

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Let's Get Together As One for the Anniversary Event!

We invite you to join us for this event. Let's share and pass down Konko Daijin's timeless Faith – "Kami and people live together through an interdependent (Aiyo Kakeyo) relationship" – as we move on to tomorrow. Let us give thanks to Tenchi Kane no Kami, our Parent God and ancestors. Let us commemorate the Konko Missions in Hawaii turning 80!

Conference Information

Dates: Friday, August 18 to Sunday, August 20, 2006

Events & Locations: Aug. 18: Celebration Service - Konko Mission of Honolulu

Aug. 19: Conference - Japanese Cultural Center Aug. 20: Picnic - Ala Moana Beach Park

Registration Fees: Adult: \$40

(\$US) Student (full time age 13 & up): \$20

Senior (age 65-79): \$20 Senior (age 80 & over): Free Children (age 12 & under): Free

Above fees include dinner on 8/18; continental breakfast and buffet lunch on

8/19; lunch on 8/20.

\$100 subsidy will be provided for the neighbor island members.

Accommodations: Please arrange your own accommodations. However, if

you need any information or assistance, do not hesitate to

contact us.

Transportation: Transportation will be provided on each day of the confer-

ence. Please indicate your transportation needs on the reg-

istration form.

Registration Deadline: Friday, June 30, 2006 (received).

Late registration will be assessed an additional \$10.

Cancellation Policy: Full refund if cancelled by Tuesday, July 18, 2006.

No refund after July 18, 2006.

Conference Schedule Outline

Friday, August 18, 2006

3:30 pm : Registration

4:30 pm : KMH 80th Anniversary

Celebration Service

6:00 pm : Dinner

6:30 pm: Entertainment

Saturday, August 19, 2006

7:30 am : Breakfast

8:00 am : Welcome/Opening prayers

8:15 am: Konko Sama Video 8:30 am: Keynote Speeches 9:00 am: Group Discussions

11:00 am: Group Reports

11:30 am: Lunch

1:00 pm :Closing prayers & remarks

2:00 pm : Dismissal

Sunday, August 20, 2006

10:00 am: Opening prayers & remarks

10:30 am: Games & Swimming 12:00 pm: Lunch/Free time

2:30 pm: Closing prayers & remarks

The 80th Anniversary T-Shirt on Sale!

To commemorate the KMH 80th Anniversary Conference, a t-shirt has been specially designed by Randy Furusho (see back) and is available for a limited time. The cost of each t-shirt is only \$10 USD. Order your t-shirts today for the best selection of sizes! T-shirts will be available for sale during the con-



ference activities. However, all sizes may not be available. The t-shirts will be distributed during registration of the KMH 80th Anniversary Conference (8/18 and 8/19). T-shirt orders are welcomed regardless of participation in the KMH 80th Anniversary functions.

Thank you for supporting the efforts of the KMH 80th Anniversary Conference!



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Open Your Spiritual Eyes

Blessed enough, we could capture Rev. Richard Grange, Head Minister of KC San Francisco, as a guest speaker for our Faith Enrichment Meeting, which was held at the Honolulu Church on February 19. Despite being on vacation in Hawaii, Rev. Grange accepted our request with good grace. He spoke on the theme, "Open Your Spiritual Eyes," and about 30 eager believers from KMH took part. We gave and took our opinions, and had a really wonderful time with Rev. Grange! Here is the presentation by Rev. Grange.

By Rev. Richard Grange

As I prepared for today, I made this outline about "Open Your Spiritual Eyes." Have any of you ever heard of this teaching? This is one of the famous teachings of our church so many of you may be familiar with it. The whole teaching



says, "If you follow true faith, you should put aside your physical eyes and open your spiritual eyes (Gorikai III: Shinkun 2 #8)."

I didn't choose the teaching and build my speech around it. Instead, I had these certain experiences I wanted to share with you. And this teaching seemed to fit those experiences, because lately I am starting to open my spiritual eyes. And when I do it, I can see more, and my experiences are different, and better.

Any experience in our lives, and any normal occurrence, we usually see with our normal eyes - our normal way of thinking. We call this common sense. But, we also have the ability to see things with our inner sense, or our inner eyes. Another way to say it is that you can see with your heart instead of just your eyes. No matter how we say it, opening our spiritual eyes means trying to look at things with the faithbased attitude. It means trying to see things from Kami-Sama's viewpoint, or trying to see the spirit of things that are around us. Rest assured, it helps a lot to do this. You can really get a lot more out of your ordinary experiences – out of things that are maybe part of your normal routine – this way. If you really look at your life experience more carefully, with spiritual eyes, you can see how many blessings are actually there. Doing so really makes life more interesting, more fun, and more meaningful.

I really noticed my spiritual eyes opening when I went to the Grand Canyon in 2002. This trip for me was a turning point in my faith. At that time, two Konkokyo ministers from Japan came to San Francisco to

attend an anniversary Service. Then we made a side trip to Las Vegas and during our stay we drove to the Grand Canyon. We decided to join a ranger-led hike on the geology of the Grand Canyon.

Our hike was led by a ranger named "Ranger John". I will always remember this guy because he was very cool. He said, "I am going to tell you a lot about the history and geology of this canyon, but studies have shown that by the end of the hike you will only remember about 10% of what I tell you." He continued, "Now on this hike are going to see a lot of different things, but studies have shown that by the end of the hike you only remember about 20% of what you have seen." Then he said, "While we are on this tour, you are going to feel various things. You are going to feel the feeling of awe, or beauty, or wonder of this beautiful place. Now the same studies have shown that even after a year from now you'll remember over 90% of what you feel today. So during the hike you really should try to feel the Grand Canyon during our hike. Try to soak in the beauty and spirit of this Grand Canyon as we take our walk." So with this message, we started our geology walk.

Ranger John explained a lot about the formation of the canyon, its history, the different rock layers, etc.. And we did see a lot, but as he said that I can't actually recall much about that part of the walk. But I do remember the feelings I had that day.

How many of you have been to the Grand Canyon? Those of you who've been there know what I'm talking about. It's beautiful with various hues and tones of vibrant colors. And the rock layers



have eroded away are in different shapes. So some parts are steep cliffs, and some parts are gentle slopes. Ranger John explained that it depends on the consistency of the stone layer. When it is hard rock, you get these sheer cliffs. When it is crumbly, it makes a more gradual slope. And in addition to the various

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slopes, you can see different colors – reds, browns, blacks, and whites. He explained, "The reason why it looks and feels so beautiful is because it's playing music to you. The rocks are singing out with its various slopes and colors, long notes and short notes in a kind of natural rhythm." Ranger John asked us, "Can you feel the music of the Grand Canyon? It is there if you try to hear it with your heart. That's why so many people feel something special when they come here."

After we finished the walk, we decided to wait for the sunset and were killing time in the visitor's center. I left my Japanese guests there to look around by themselves, and went outside. I followed a steep path to



the edge of the rim found a quiet place to sit. I just sat there on the rocks, looking out quietly, in a mood of meditation, watching the sunlight change the colors and textures of the Canyon walls. There were other tourists walking around me, but I tuned them out and tried to absorb the feeling of the Grand Canyon.

After about 20 minutes, I started to get this strong feeling of being loved, being cared for, and being surrounded by Kami-Sama. At least this is the way I would describe it now. There was a brilliant blue sky and puffy white clouds above me. And there were these rich layers of rocks and earth below me. I was filled by this overwhelming feeling of being taken care of by heaven and earth –a feeling I'll never forget. It's a feeling that is hard to describe. So I immediately went into my minister's mode, thinking, "How can I describe this? What is this feeling like?

I tried to find an example or metaphors for that feeling. The first metaphor that popped into my head was, "I feel like bologna. I feel like the bologna in a bologna sandwich. Bread above me and bread below me, and I am in the middle." Immediately, I caught myself, "I feel like bologna? No, that doesn't sound good. That certainly won't work in the sermon." And then I realized it was more like the kind of feeling of being in a soft, comfortable bed. There's a soft mattress below you. And a warm blanket above you. You can just lie there in between and feel so comfortable, warm, and safe. That's the kind of feeling I had on that day as I looked out into the Grand Canyon. I felt like I was truly living within heaven and earth, being protected – safe, and cared for by Kami-Sama.

That experience stayed on my mind for weeks. I just loved that feeling. So I made a promise to myself

that every year, at least once a year, I would try to go somewhere special, where perhaps I could have a similar experience.

The next year talked my friend Gary into going on a long road trip with me to Nevada and Arizona. We went to the Grand Canyon again, but also to Monument Valley. You all have seen it, at least on TV. It's a huge, flat valley with these immense stone formations that tower up to the sky, and is often seen in old Westerns or on TV car commercials. On that same trip, we also visited Bryce Canyon National Park, and Zion National Park.

Following year, we took another road trip, this time to the Sequoia National Park, and then Death Valley National Park in California. I'd like to tell you little about those experiences, since in both of those places I felt Kami-Sama in new, exciting ways. The first destination of our road tip was Sequoia National Park, in the east side of California, at the south end of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Sequoia has these huge, massive trees, known as Sequoia Redwoods. The biggest are about as wide as this room. And they are huge, some towering over 20 stories high.

We visited Sequoia Nation Park in March, at time when most of California is warm, but in the Sierra Mountains there was still plenty of snow. We didn't even realize that, so when we got there we had to rent snow shoes in order to take a hike. So we rented snowshoes at the lodge and went out into the forest for a snowshoe hike trough the massive Sequoia trees. It was so beautiful and quiet because of snow, and because of snow there were hardly any people there.

It was about an hour hike, but about half way through, I decided that I wanted to hug a tree. So we took a break, and I walked over to one of the bigger trees. I hugged it with both hands. Again, it's a little hard to describe my feelings, but once I hugged it, I had a feeling of this tremendous power. This tree was so alive and full of energy.



And I felt like I was being like lifted up – Whoosh! – up this tree, up to the sky. Of course I wasn't actually flying, but it felt like being elevated by the power of tree up into the sunlit sky above. I now realize that each and every tree is full of life. With our physical

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eyes, trees look like they are just sitting there. They don't move. They don't talk. But in actuality, if we look with our spiritual eyes, we can see that they are full of energy and full of life, especially those Sequoia trees. With our physical eyes we see one side of things, but with our spiritual eyes, with our heart, we can see a whole new view of the world and all the things around us.

The third experience I'd like to share with you took place in a wonderful national park called Death Valley. Has anyone here been to the Death Valley? If you haven't actually been there you might



get the wrong impression from the name. I mean, Death Valley? That doesn't sound like a fun place, does it? It is in the desert, in Southeastern California next to the Nevada border. And it's a big valley, with mountains around all four sides and flat valley floor with many unusual and colorful geologic features. There are many cliffs, rock formations and gullies along the valley walls. They are beautiful colors and layers in the rocks.

My friend Gary and I camped there for four nights. During the days, we explored by car, and got out to go hiking often. But the one thing I remember the most was a night hike in the sand dunes. There were some huge sand dunes in the middle of the Death Valley floor. We headed out about 6 o'clock, right after dinner, and parked on the road near the dunes. At first, the sand dunes small, maybe 4 feet high. But then they got bigger and bigger as we got further and further out. The second one was about 8 feet high. And the next one was maybe 12 or 16 feet. Eventually we decided to stop. There were higher dunes ahead, but by this time we were starting to get tired. We got to top of this pretty tall dune, about 150 feet high. We decided to wait here for night to fall. It was a warm and quiet and actually quite really comfortable sitting on the sand dune. We just lay back into the warm slope of soft sand, kind of like a big sofa. It really conforms to your body, and the sand was warm, really comfortable.

So we were lying there, just kind of soaking in the peaceful feeling of the dunes when suddenly something flew by our heads. "What was that?" It was already dark, but we could catch glimpses of three or four little bats darting around above our heads and all

around us. They must have been feeding on insects that were attracted to our body heat or body odor. It was a strange experience, but the bats went away after 10-15 minutes.

As I sat up there on top of the sand dune, I could really feel the slow pace of universe. It seemed like it took forever for it to get fully dark. The sun sets behind the mountains, but still, it doesn't get dark right away. It takes some time, maybe an hour or so. And as it gradually gets dark, little by little the bright stars start to become visible.

Because of our fast-paced modern day lives, especially in big cities like Honolulu and San Francisco, we are used to a pace of life that moves really fast all the time. We get home from work, have to cook dinner, and turn on TV. Things are changing; we channel surf, and multi-task, and have a rhythm of life that's constantly moving, quick and fanatic. But when we go out of our artificial environments, to places like the Death Valley, and we just have time, and take time to catch our breath and relax, we can realize the universe pace is really slow and steady. It's very gradual, calm, and peaceful. That's how I felt at Death Valley, on top of that sand dune that night.

I also had this feeling of timelessness. I realized that the feelings I had that night must also have been felt by people who rested on that sand dune 100 years ago, or 200 years ago, or a 1000 years ago. They would have felt that same slow, steady pace of the Universe and had similar feelings of peacefulness and calm that I had that even. I though that even though I am here in the year 2004, I share the same heart as our ancestors living hundreds and thousands of years go, and I can experiencing the same kind of peacefulness, calm, and happiness

I wanted to share these three experiences with you because I think that in our modern day lives, we don't get much chance to experience our close connection of nature and the universe. We tend to isolate ourselves from nature.



We don't go out very much, and even when we do, we try to insulate ourselves from the sun light, from the wind, and the cold, so that we often cannot understand the true nature of the world we live in – the true nature of Kami-Sama. We don't see things with our spiritual eyes. We are so used to seeing things with our physical eyes. With our physical eyes the Death Valley is a

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just a barren, dismal place of death. With our physical eyes, we might just see it as a worthless desert. And if we visited the dunes, we might think that it's just another night – nothing special. But with our spiritual eyes open, we can see the reality that each night is a precious gift. If we open our spiritual eyes, each day is a new chance to understand Kami-Sama, the true nature of this Universe, and the blessings that we receive.

When I read this teaching now, "If you follow true faith, you should put aside your physical eyes and open your spiritual eyes," it means I should see things with Kami-Sama's eyes. We should understand our experiences with a broad viewpoint. We should see our world with have unconditional love in our hearts, loving no matter what, and not expecting anything back.

See this Styrofoam cup? If you try to describe this cup using our physical eyes, you can say that it's white and very light weight. You can say it's of a certain diameter, height and width. But what we'd be



missing is the inner life to this cup. For example it's holding water right now. So this cup allows me to drink the water, which helps the healthy function of my body. This cup can also serve tea, or it could even be a toy for kids. They could probably play with this for hours, and it could be like a friend to them. So more than just a physical thing, there is also a spirit in this cup, and in all things. My experiences lately have helped me to realize that.

Lately, in past year or so, I have been drawn to places of beauty. In San Francisco I love to visit Land's End, which is the westernmost edge of San Francisco, overlooking the Pacific Ocean. There is of the beach, the waves hitting the rocks, and the scent of the ocean breezes. I love the air there. There is also a Stow Lake in Golden Gate Park close to my house that I love to visit. It is a beautiful place with a waterfall, a lake, ducks, and trees. And there's Muir Woods which is an old-growth redwood forest about a half hour drive from San Francisco. I just want to go there. When I'm there, I have the feeling of being closer to Kami-Sama. I can feel a peace and just enjoy the beauty of the places.

I think when we open our spiritual eyes, that's what happens to the world. I noticed it in myself. I can see and feel more now than 5 years ago or 10 years ago. I walk down the street, and I can notice more interesting things to see. Lately, I have begun to notice more of the people around me when walking in town. There are a lot of interesting people. There are a lot of races, people from different backgrounds, and different stores on the street. I am starting to notice those things more lately. It's not that the world has changed really. I have changed. I've grown as a person. I am able to open my spiritual eyes more. I think this is why our founder gave this teaching. He realized that we depend too much on our physical eyes. We depend too much on our own viewpoint, and we need to broaden it.

Actually this is one of the best and most important parts of *Toritsugi* mediation. When we come and talk to the minister, express what we are feeling, pray together, and receive teachings, it helps us broaden your viewpoint. It's just because another person is viewing you, plus you can receive Kami-Sama's viewpoint through *Toritsugi* mediation.

Throughout our lives, we need to keep asking ourselves: "What does Kami-Sama think and how does Kami-Sama view this situation?" To me this is what, "Open your spiritual eyes" means. It is to see thing with a new, better, more truthful viewpoint. When you see things with your spiritual eyes, things will become more meaningful, and more valuable to you. Ordinary things become extraordinary. You will start to see that everyday occurrences are actually great divine blessings. So it makes your world a richer place.

Thank you for listening.



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Imformation

Youth Gathering

Theme: One with Our Parent Kami

Date: June 16-18, 2006 (Fri-Sun)

Location: Camp Timberline Kapolei, Oahu

Age: Over 6th grade, under 6th grades are

permitted with parent or guardian

What: Camping out with tents

Registration Fee: TBA



Flyer & Application form will be given out at your Church soon.

Please make plans to take part and have fun with other Konkokyo members. For more information, please contact the Konkokyo Hawaii Center.

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Konkokyo Hour: Radio K-ZOO AM 1210 at 7: 00 am, every Sunday

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