Malamalama

Konko Missions in Hawaii NEWSLETTER



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The Konko Missions in Hawaii will fulfill Ikigami Konko Daijin's vision to embrace the world with the Konko Faith.

KMH Ministers' Gathering

Presentation by Rev. Mayumi Kawai of the Konko Church of Nakano in Tokyo for the KMH Ministers' Gathering on May 29, 2025



Recognizing That I Know Nothing

Today is the first day of the Spring Grand Ceremony for Tenchi Kane No Kami at the Konkokyo Headquarters. I feel truly grateful to receive the divine task (goyo) of speaking on this special day. It feels as though Kami is directly saying, "I will use you in this way," which fills me with gratitude.

At Nakano Church, the way we provide Toritsugi (Mediation) is a bit unique. Some worshippers specifically request, "Rev. Mayumi's approach is a bit difficult, so I'd prefer Rev. Shinkichi (Head Minister and Husband of Rev. Mayumi)," while others say, "I need Rev. Mayumi's clarity, so please let her guide me." My experience with Toritsugi has taught me one significant lesson: "Things never turn out as I expect."

Through many challenges and moments of growth in my own faith, I have consistently learned this: "Kami never acts according to my expectations. Kami always chooses a path different from my own ideas." Yet, surprisingly, this is precisely how true blessings manifest. As ministers, when good things happen to worshippers, we often casually say, "How wonderful to receive divine blessings!" But through my personal experiences, I've realized Kami guides us and our worshippers to places we could never imagine.

Kami regularly gives us gentle reminders, saying, "No, that's not the right way—this way is better." For example, before our Founder (Konko Daijin) was gravely ill at age 42, he went to Kibitsu Shrine to consult an oracle known as "O-kama no o-doji" (divination by the sound of a boiling pot). Initially, he interpreted the divine message as indicating worldly success. Only later did he realize Kami had actually been warning him of a severe hardship to come.

In the same way, Kami constantly teaches us, but if we aren't attentive, we might mistakenly interpret a warning as a promise of prosperity or make our own incorrect assumptions.

Thus, the most critical attitude when receiving Kami's message is to remain humble and acknowledge, "I truly know nothing." This humble attitude is key to truly receiving Kami's guidance.

As I mediate at the Okekkai (Mediation Seat), I sometimes feel pressure to offer clear guidance, explanations, or judgments on whether something is a blessing or not. But I've learned that none of that is truly necessary. Kami guides us clearly enough with-

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out any of my own interpretation.

During the Founder's 140th Memorial Service two years ago, I visited the Konkokyo Headquarters with my children and church members. We stayed overnight in Kurashiki. While the members explored Kurashiki's historical area, I took my children to see Bizen pottery.

We visited a famous pottery shop, "Sobian," which I remembered from my student days. Upon entering with my children, the shopkeeper started enthusiastically sharing stories about pottery. Initially, I thought he was somewhat difficult and eccentric, but seeing my children's genuine interest, he said, "Since you seem to know nothing, let me teach you."

Although I once worked as a journalist in the culture section in Okayama and thought I knew quite a lot about Bizen pottery, I accepted his words. At that moment, I suddenly realized, "Ah, this is exactly how Kami interacts with us." Kami also gently tells us, "Since you seem unaware, let me show you."

This experience reminded me deeply of the importance of remaining humble before Kami. I thought I knew a great deal about pottery, yet this man taught me many things I didn't know. Similarly, Kami constantly reveals truths we have yet to understand, but only when we admit our ignorance.

For example, he explained that a renowned potter, Togaku Mori, who had skillfully recreated ancient Momoyama-period Bizen pottery by constructing a huge, historically accurate kiln, had never become a National Living Treasure because his technique couldn't be practically passed down—no similar environmental conditions exist today. Hearing this, I understood that, like this pottery master's work, Kami's ways sometimes surpass our capability to fully grasp or replicate.

Had I insisted on my prior knowledge, the shopkeeper wouldn't have shared these insights. But by simply accepting my ignorance, both my children and I learned valuable lessons, experiencing true joy and curiosity.

This interaction mirrors our relationship with Kami. We must not rely solely on the teachings we've heard before. Kami reveals wisdom differently in every moment. We can't simply classify events as blessings or misfortunes based on our convenience. True blessings from Kami come from situations we could never have predicted.

My key message today is that unless we approach Kami with an attitude of "I know nothing," we cannot receive the genuine, profound blessings intended for us. This openness to new experiences is essential. "Every day is a fresh start," as we often hear; we must face Kami and our worshippers with fresh hearts daily, not assuming we know outcomes based on past experiences or personal convenience.

Styles of Konko Faith

Reflecting on our Konko faith, there are traditional ways of receiving blessings through offerings like sacred rice (Goshinmai), sake (Omiki), or sacred water. Before the pandemic, our church regularly offered Omiki at the altar for visitors.

Rev. Oya (Konko Church of Sacramento) once shared a story of when his mother was critically ill. He visited the Fourth Konko-sama, who offered him sacred rice, saying, "This is the last resort." However, he cautioned Rev. Oya not to force it upon his mother, especially since she wasn't particularly receptive to faith. This style of faith might be described as an "ultimate-resort faith."

Another familiar form of Konko practice involves daily visits, regular participation in services, and accumulating spiritual merit or virtue ("Toku"). This form of faith emphasizes regular worship and devotion.

However, such traditional practices can be challenging for people in today's busy world. Yet recently, I've recognized anew the importance of both accumulating merit and maintaining dialogue-based faith with Kami.

If we fail to emphasize the importance of regularly visiting the church and cultivating spiritual merit, later generations may mistakenly think their successes are solely due to personal effort rather than inherited blessings. This misunderstanding could lead to future issues within families.

Therefore, even in 2025, I believe we must strongly advocate the value of consistent, devotional faith practices alongside deepening our dialogue with Kami.

Praying (Inoru)

Setting that aside, as I mentioned earlier, through realizing "things never turn out exactly as I anticipate," I have strongly felt that it is crucial to seek Kami's thoughts. For example, when our Founder heard the cauldron's sound at Kibitsu Shrine, an ordinary person would interpret this as a sign of prosperity, but in reality, it was an announcement of illness. Thus, how accurately we receive Kami's messages is extremely important.

When we talk about hearing Kami's thoughts, people often think only special individuals like spiritually gifted or psychic people can do it, but this is not true. In Konkokyo faith, we have an act of "praying," yet everyone misunderstands this concept.

When people pray, they often decide the order as "express gratitude, apologize, then make requests," but generally, this becomes merely a one-sided statement of what they wish to say. However, the original meaning of "praying" in Japanese comes from the words "i (斎)" and "noru (宣る)." The term "斎 (i)" signifies a presence beyond human beings, and "宣る (noru)" means that someone of high rank speaks to those of lower status.

This originally matches the structure of "norito (祝詞)" or Shinto prayers. Currently, norito is something humans speak towards Kami, but originally, norito was what Kami spoke to humans. Thus, true prayer originally meant receiving words spoken from Kami—a divine being—to humans.

With modernization, the format changed to humans speaking towards Kami, but initially, as seen in shamanistic traditions, humans mainly received and spoke out Kami's messages. Therefore, true prayer is about approaching Kami with the attitude of asking, "What does this mean?" or "I don't understand, so please teach me."

Even when our Founder experienced severe illness at age 42, he began receiving teachings from Kami after admitting, "I am an ordinary person, unable to understand anything." This humble stance is inherent in Konkokyo teachings. Truly sincere faith involves not always assuming one's correctness, but continually asking Kami, "Is this right? Please guide me."

When we practice in this way, surprisingly, Kami teaches us through various forms. Just as the Founder gave the example of wind, even if Kami cannot be seen directly, we can understand the divine workings by observing trees and grass swaying. However, without conscious awareness, we may never notice.

If we always keep our antennas tuned to the question, "What does Kami think about this?" Kami will inevitably help us notice. Therefore, the stance of "I know nothing" is crucial. As ministers, we should not assume, "This person will probably become like this." Regardless of who the person is, Kami always wishes to help them.

Catching Kami's message is vital in our faith's dialogue with Kami. We cannot understand it immediately, so we repeatedly ask Kami. Eventually, a clear message will arrive.

When we encourage believers to adopt this method, they experience firsthand how things occur by themselves. This firsthand understanding invigorates their faith life. Interestingly, this often resonates even with young people or those relatively new to the faith.

As we follow this path of guidance, unexpected blessings manifest. The ultimate form of these blessings is a world where we all prosper together. True blessings are not just personal gains but a state where the whole family and everyone around us becomes happy together. This is the faith of mutual fulfillment (aiyo kakeyo).

Examples of Dialogue-Based Faith

Next, İ will discuss specific cases in detail, explaining step-by-step how situations developed and resolved. Let me introduce a concrete example, whom I'll refer to as "Ms. A."

Ms. A was relatively new to the faith, a woman in her early 40s, who was brought to our church by one of our believers. At that time, she had children in high

school and university.

Her reason for visiting the church was that she had gotten divorced, and custody of the children was given to her husband. Upon further discussion, she revealed that the children themselves had chosen to stay with their father. Ms. A came to me crying uncontrollably, her face distorted in anguish. She lamented that her husband was abusive towards her, yet she couldn't understand why the children still chose him. Her husband further said, "You can't see the children anymore, and you must pay child support," leaving her deeply troubled.

Ms. A's initial wish was simply, "I want to be able to see my children freely."

Then, remarkably, within two to three months of starting her visits to the church, her daughter contacted her, saying, "I want to see you." I was astonished, thinking, "Kami works so quickly." Yet Ms. A herself saw it merely as a coincidence, not attributing it to Kami.

In the mediation sessions that followed, Ms. A continually spoke negatively about her husband. After these discussions, both of us would pray before the altar. During one session, as I was praying, I suddenly saw a vivid image of a huge white flag waving vigorously, like those used by cheerleaders.

Seeing this image, I immediately thought, "Ah, though she keeps blaming her husband, the truth is she needs to sincerely repent." Returning to our mediation, I told Ms. A about this vision:

"Just now, Kami showed me a huge white flag. Perhaps Kami is saying, 'You need to surrender.' You've been blaming your husband, but you must acknowledge your own mistakes first and ask Kami to show you what you've done wrong."

In Konkokyo, there is a wonderful concept of "winning by losing." Instead of accusing others, one asks Kami, "Please show me where I have been wrong."

Then Ms. A began to dream vividly every night of all the times she had verbally abused her children and husband, becoming so frightened she could no longer sleep well. She asked me anxiously, "Reverend, this is terrifying! How long will this continue?"

I replied, "When you truly repent your wrongdoings, and Kami accepts your sincerity, those dreams will stop." Eventually, after nearly a year, the dreams faded away.

During this process, her attitude toward her daughter changed, and her daughter became much closer to her, eventually deciding to live with her while attending university. Ms. A developed an earnest willingness to sincerely ask Kami, "Show me where I was wrong."

However, her relationship with her son remained distant. Communication continued indirectly through her daughter until her son unexpectedly called her directly. His girlfriend had expressed a desire to

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meet his mother, prompting the call.

It turned out the father vehemently opposed this relationship because the girlfriend came from a deeply troubled family: her father was in prison for attempted murder, and her mother was an alcoholic. The father had kicked the son out because of this relationship.

Yet Ms. A thought, "Without this girlfriend, I wouldn't have reconnected with my son. Surely this must be Kami's work." She did not oppose the relationship and even let the couple live upstairs in her house, leaving their fate to Kami. Eventually, the father relinquished custody entirely to Ms. A.

Later, the son entered maritime security training. While away, his girlfriend misused his money, lead-

ing to their eventual separation, but handled amicably through prayer and discussion.

Ultimately, the son realized his father's earlier warnings were valid, and family relations significantly improved. Ms. A, too, recognized her faults toward her husband. Because Ms. A accepted Kami's guidance without forcibly altering the course of events, the entire family, through these trials, came back together stronger and happier. This was a clear manifestation of the "mutual fulfillment" faith.

Family issues can be complicated, and it's often unclear what constitutes a true blessing. But by continuously asking Kami, "What should I do?" events naturally unfold, guiding everyone towards the best outcome.to be continued in next issue....

Konko Mission of Wahiawa Participates in Honouliuli National Historic Site's 10th Anniversary Celebration

By Rev. Edna Matsuoka, Konko Mission of Wahiawa

On May 17. 2025. the Konko Mission of Wahiawa had the special honor of participating the 10th Anniversary Celebration of the Honouliuli



look back and say, "Wow, that was a great day." And by divine blessing, everything went as I had prayed. Seventeen guests came, joined by four

National Historic Site. As part of the commemorative events, our church hosted a public tour to share our faith, history, and deep connection to the legacy of religious freedom and perseverance.

Leading up to the event, uncertainty filled the air. With no RSVPs, we didn't know how many people to expect—perhaps a handful, maybe 50, or even 100? The weather forecast was another concern. For several days, Wahiawa had been blanketed with rain, and I worried we wouldn't be able to carry out a meaningful part of the tour—inviting guests to write their prayers on Tamagushi paper and hang them on our banyan tree. Rain would have ruined the paper and smudged the prayers.

Adding to the concern, Yano Sensei was called to assist with a service in Hilo just days before the tour, leaving just my mother and me to host the event. So, I prayed. I prayed for good weather, for a manageable number of guests, for enough snacks, for an opportunity to share our faith, and for my mom and I to

church including my mom, Clayton, Janet, and myself—a total of 21 people. The weather was sunny and clear. We shared the story of our church and the life of our founder, the late Rev. Haruko Takahashi. Visitors were guided through the displays and historical photos, and we enjoyed thoughtful conversations over snacks in the fellowship hall.

One of the most amazing stories shared was that of Haruko Sensei's journey to faith. As a young girl, she suffered from a visual disorder after being kicked by a horse, leading to depression and even thoughts of suicide. But her sewing teacher, Ms. Kusunoki (Honolulu Church member), noticed her unusual eating habits and compassionately invited her to learn about the Konko faith. That one invitation became a turning point—omichibiki, or spiritual guidance—that saved her life.

Haruko Sensei not only regained her spiritual and physical vision, but her entire family embraced the faith. She later became a minister and established a

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propagation hall in Wahiawa on January 10, 1940, facing extraordinary trials including wrongful imprisonment during WWII at Sand Island and Honouliuli Internment Camp, less than two years since opening up the propagation hall. She was offered parole only if she denounced her faith, but she stood firm in her beliefs and was eventually released—without compromising her beliefs on July 7, 1944.

This public tour gave us the chance to reflect on how one act of guidance can change countless lives. The blessings received by Haruko Sensei extended to her family and congregation, and her father, a master carpenter even helped build the Konko Church of Hilo as a gesture of gratitude.

Today, we're reminded that sharing our faith—even in small, compassionate ways—can have ripple effects. Just like Ms. Kusunoki's gentle question led to spiritual awakening, we too have the power to open life-saving paths for others.

May the legacy of Haruko Sensei and the strength of our faith continue to inspire many more generations.

Finding Tenchi Kane no Kami in Texas

By Mr. Daniel Barreau, San Antonio, Texas

While I'm relatively new to the Konko Faith traditions, I've been practicing its underlying principles for years. My now deceased Japanese wife had been a practitioner of Shrine Shinto, and I would join her in worship. But since I was there for her more than anything else, it just wasn't transformative for me. She recommended I try Konkokyo instead, told me about it, I adopted its principles, but never went all the way, never asked Kami specifically to join me in my life. Then, while I was in a spiritual mess, the Spirit of my deceased wife visited me in a dream, advised me to look more deeply into

Konko and try it all the way. So I watched YouTube videos, requested a prayer book, studied it, said "yes, this is me" and jumped in rather than simply treading water. Everything changed for me after that initial splash. And I thank my deceased wife for her intervention. She'd always said "till death do us part means the death of love and nothing else" and she was absolutely correct.

Presently, I'm sitting at a faded brown wooden picnic table that sits upon a convenience store's narrow but long concrete patio. Kami sits here now with me, for I interact with Kami in a pantheistic manner. I come here daily, Kami and I meet here, sit here together while I sip my morning coffee and do some free-writing for my creative writing. Qualitatively speaking, EVERYTHING for me has transformed ever since I'd begun daily saying to Kami: "Since Konko churches here in San Antonio, Texas, are absent, just like everything else Shinto related, Kami would you accept my dedication of my daily activities as your church and your shrine?" Kami's reply? "oh



YES!" . . .

Besides being an outdoorloving, coffee-sipping, creative writer, I'm also a practitioner of yoga and martial arts, which I do in one of Kami's nearby parks. Upon my first request that Benevolent Kami freely participate with me in my daily activities, Kami asked: "Tell me the processes you utilize for your creative writing, your yoga, your martial arts." "stream-of-After I'd replied, consciousness writing, tantric yoga, hybrid martial arts," Kami said: "Believe me, with worse I have worked. We'll begin by increasing the dimensions of your **HEART'S**

consciousness; then, when that is enough enlarged, we'll promote your heart to be the navigator, the pilot, the Captain of your Mind-Ship; then we'll make observations of how that transformation has altered your martial arts and your yoga. The reason is this: Selfishness, Self-Centeredness, are powerful foes, are cunning foes, while they are not unbeatable, victory over them will require a strong passion for the divine will and its application" . . .

And so, that's where Kami and I started together our spiritual journey. To my great surprise, my transformation came swiftly. So far, Kami has taught me the following: that my Heart Condition needs to be routinely honestly examined and purified, for ITS quality is going to determine the quality of the thought-streams I experience, that I undertake, which of course will then determine where and when I see and feel opportunities to implement Kami's divine will of mutual fulfillment; that prayer can be viewed as a jumper-cable for the restoration of the Heart-Spirit's rechargeable battery; that Yoga's eight

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limbs can stimulate me to question how the surrounding energy-forms may be transformed so as to better seed, better nourish, return a better yield of mutual fulfillment; that sincere, heartfelt adoration for Benevolent Kami does indeed assist me in my rebellion against the philosophy and the will of Selfishness; that my martial arts movements can be utilized in a shamanistic manner, can become bodylanguage prayers for increased skills in observing more quickly and responding more quickly to the threats of Selfishness and Self-Centeredness, which can come from a multiplicity of angles; that Heart Purification is a wonderfully blessed experience because it increases the quality of my instrumentation and my application of the divine will of Kami; that the syllable "OM" that I use daily as a meditation mantra can remind me of Kami's unseen energy that eventually manifests and exists within all that is, that has been, that will be; that the relationship between Kami and I grows, strengthens, evolves to the degree that I purify the thoughts within my Heart-Space . . .

And Kami has blessed me too by REMOVING something from me, that "something" being the urge for further spiritual-seeking that I'd been doing for the last few decades. Though I'd tried everything from Quakerism to Buddhism to Daoism to Paganism to Shrine Shinto to New Ageism, I was never satisfied. I am in my relationship with Kami though, and in Konko I now feel completely at home. I also know now what I had been seeking that only Kami has ful-

filled. I was seeking a RELATIONSHIP built upon free -will, individuality, person-hood, personality, a relationship where Kami and I experience one another, a relationship where evolution is expected to happen, a relationship where the Shrine of the Heart is the church of life itself, a relationship where I feel Kami participating with me in my life, right here with me right now, a relationship where I feel Kami not only in the larger universe, but even through this cup of coffee that I am presently sipping while doing this writing, a cup of coffee that not only reminds me of Kami's beans and water and fire, but also of the atoms, the molecules, the involved chemistry and physics, the lips and tongue and taste buds that are all present within such a simple, daily, mundane experience . . .

My hope is great that my spiritual growth continues this way, that I continue to feel like a sapling tree whose inner-spirit become WONDROUS at not only the feet of the songbird landing upon its small branches, but also at the creeping and crawling insects that assist Kami's ecosystem and provide songbird its nourishment, a sampling tree who not only feels the touch of the sunlight's rays upon its branches, but also feels the happiness inside the small, growing tree who knows its vulnerable roots are moistened and protected by Kami's top topsoil. And my hope is great that one and all find reasons today to say: "I'm feeling a blessing sent by Tenchi Kane No Kami!"



Meaning of Malamalama

Editor's Corner

Do you know what 'Malamalama' means in Hawaiian? I JUST decided to look up the meaning, and here is what google says, "Mālamalama" in Hawaiian generally means "light of knowledge," "clarity of thinking," or "enlightenment.". It's a reduplication of the word "mālama," which means to take care of, tend, or preserve. So, "mālamalama" can be understood as the light that comes from knowledge and understanding, or the clarity that comes from caring for something, like the land ("mālama 'āina").

As editor, after finally looking up the meaning, I feel an added sense of responsibility to use this platform to inform and educate our readers with every issue. I sincerely hope that reading this publication brings even a little bit of knowledge and enlightenment on the Konko Missions of Hawaii to our loyal supporters. As its name indicates, the Malamalama has a duty to malama the stories of our island churches.

We will be celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Konko Missions in Hawaii in 2026. I am hoping to gather the history and stories of each of our churches in the state and preserve them here for generations to come. For this, I'd love to hear from our senior members. Those who have experienced the history of our churches first hand. If you have some stories or memories you'd like to share with our readers, please feel free to contact me, Rev. Koichi Konko or Rev. Edna Matsuoka. We look forward to hearing from you and be given the opportunity to be the Malamalama that will do its part to malama our church.

Join us for the KMH Faith Enrichment Gathering **FAITH IN TIME OF CHANGE**

Guest Speaker: Rev. Yoki Sekiguchi (Head Minister of Hilo Church) Saturday, September 6, 2025 1:30PM to 3:00PM At the Konko Mission of Honolulu Zoom ID: 889 0866 7563

Passcode: 655926

Cold Wakame Udon

Summers in Japan are BRUTALLY HOT and HUMID, so much so that it makes people lose their appetites. There are many summertime recipes which use ingredients that provide added nutrition and cool the body off internally to help combat the unbearable heat. Here is a recipe loosely based on the now closed Restaurant JIMBO's chilled udon dish (my personal favorite).

Ingredients:

- 1 serving of Udon Noodles (cooked to package instructions, rinsed with water to cool and drained)
- Handful of Wakame (reconstituted if dried; or if salted, soaked in water to remove excess salt)
- 3-5 Umeboshi (remove the seeds and chop up to almost a paste)
- 2 inches of Daikon (grated)
- Half a Japanese Cucumber (julienned)
- 2-4 Shiso Leaves (julienned)
- Green Onion to garnish (thinly sliced)
- Your favorite Ponzu Sauce

To assemble, lay the cooked, cooled and drained udon noodles in a bowl or plate with a lip. Layer the toppings over the udon noodles. Pour ponzu sauce over all of it, mix together and ENJOY!!



It's the perfect refreshingly cool meal that will help you forget about the heat. You can adjust the ingredients to your liking, but I personally wouldn't skip the shiso and the ume...so ONO!!

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Konko Missions in Hawaii

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KMH Mission Statement

The Konko Missions in Hawaii addresses the spiritual needs of the people of Hawaii by promoting the Konko faith through a better understanding of the life and teachings of Konko Daijin, and through the practice of Toritsugi (Divine-Mediation).

"Malamalama" is now available through e-mail!

For our devoted readers who would like to receive the "Malamalama" electronically, please let us know at kmhcenter@konkomissionshawaii.org

For our readers who would still prefer a hard (paper) copy, please do not hesitate and let us know.

Thank you!

We welcome any and all article contributions! If you have an interesting story of faith, inspiration or have any ideas or suggestions for material you'd like to see in future issues of the Malamalama, we're all ears! Please contact us at kmhcenter@konkomissionshawaii.org.

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