



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

Way of Kami and People



Last year, we celebrated the 200th birthday of our Founder, and the Konko Missions in Hawaii held a Faith Enrichment Meeting in Konko, Japan.

After we visited the Founder's historical sites, we visited Geibi, Kasaoka and Kokura churches.

The Reverend Nobuo Sato, the head minister of Geibi Church, showed us the original hiromae (mediation hall) and the room where the three disciples discussed about the future of the Konko faith.

The Reverend Toyoo Saito, the head minister of Kasaoka Church took us to the gravesite of the late Reverend Juemon Saito, (also known as Kasaoka Konko Daijin) which is situated on the rise. It was a good spot to see the Seto Inland Sea. Looking at the sea, Rev. Saito explained how nicely Kasaoka was located to spread the faith. People distributed goods by boat, and Kasaoka is located at the mid-point of the Seto Inland Sea. He said that the boats from Osaka or Kyushu came to Kasaoka when the tide comes in, and they sailed out when the tide is out. In this way, Kasaoka became a logistic hub and the faith spread

to the West with the strong prayer of Kasaoka Konko Daijin and disciples. Then, the faith was spread to Kyushu by the late Reverend Matsuhei Katsura, the first head minister of Kokura Church.

We all learned about Konko Daijin's faith and how this faith came to Hawaii through disciples and ministers. In this year, we will continue to learn about the Founder's faith, focusing on his basic attitude to actualize the Way of Kami and people.

This year is also the 70th year after the end of the World War II. Konko Daijin taught, "The foundation of faith is to be in harmony with one's family." I believe that World Peace starts from a harmonious family. Let us start the year 2015 with good health in harmony with family believing that we are capable of caring for others.

I wish and pray for the year 2015 to be a more grateful and rewarding year for you and your family.

The Konko Missions are open anytime for you to make your personal prayer, request, and receive mediation. Please visit your nearest Mission anytime. (v.o)

Being Awakened to the Blessings of Kami

Celebrating the 200th Birthday of our Founder, the Konko Missions in Hawaii held a Faith Enrichment Meeting in Konko, Japan from October 20 to October 24, 2014. The theme of this year was "the way of Kami and people." The day started with prayer. Then, the attendees cleaned the premises. Rev. Hiroshi Takebe and Rev. Kiyoji Konko were the speakers for this gathering. Thirteen members from Hawaii were rejuvenated with the atmosphere in Konko. This *Malamalama* issue features the Rev. Kiyoji Konko's lecture titled *Live with Prayer in Your Heart*.

Rev. Kiyoji Konko
Director, Hiromae Department

Aloha, everyone! Welcome back to our sacred grounds here at Gohonbu! I am so pleased to be a

speaker for the faith training programs for followers from Hawaii this afternoon.

Before focusing on the main topic, I would like to briefly touch on this year of 2014's meaning for us.

First of all, as you already know, this year commemorates the 200th year since our Founder's physical birth. The significance of Genshichi's birth is that the person, who later became "Ikigami Konko Daijin" and performed Toritsugi mediation, was born in 1814. As Konko Daijin taught us, "To be an *ikigami* is to have Kami born within you. I was the first to receive such divine blessings. You can all receive divine blessings in the same way." (*Gorikai 3: Konko Kyoso Gorikai 18*) Understanding the meaning of this historical event in 1814 helps us to further develop our Konko Faith.

Secondly, our present Konko-sama will turn 80-years-old on October 31st. That morning, as we do every year on Konko-sama's birthday, we, Hombu staff, our family members, the entire seminary class, and additional followers will gather at the Main Worship Hall. On behalf of all of us, the Chief Administrative Director will express heartfelt appreciation to Konko-Sama at the Toritsugi mediation seat.

In addition, 2014 marks Konko-sama and his wife Ms. Yaeko's 50th-year wedding anniversary. We call it "Kinkon-shiki" which is the same as "Golden Wedding Anniversary" in English. So, everyone, please be aware that while all of you are here today on this pilgrimage tour to Hombu, Japan, you are also here during these significant celebrations.

Regarding our 5th generation Konko-Sama, the Reverend Heiki Konko, he has been serving as Kyoshu, our spiritual leader, for 23 years, and counting. Our current Konko-Sama has partaken in "Odemashi" and "Ohike" since the Fourth Konko-Sama's last years of life. If you were to calculate it, it would come out to be almost 9,000 days. Konko-Sama engaged in this religious practice about 9,000 times until this past March, with few exceptions. One time occurred in August 2000 when Konko-Sama and his wife went to Hawaii to attend the KCNA-KMH Joint 100th Anniversary Ceremony

for Konkokyo's Independence which is still fresh in our memories with Konko sama's beautiful voice, when he sang a song.

This morning, when we all went to the Main Worship Hall for the monthly service, everyone noticed that Konko-Sama was not the head officiant. As you already know, Konko-Sama has been resting due to health reasons, since the end of March. Therefore, Konko-Sama appointed his eldest son, Rev. Hiromichi Konko to take his place as the head officiant since this year's Grand Ceremony for the Divine Parent of the Universe. Rev. Hiromichi Konko has been serving as head officiant for all the services until now, except for the June Ceremony for the Anniversary of Konkokyo's Independence. He continues to have annual medical checkups. Currently, Konko-Sama will serve in his daily goyo tasks, as his health permits. Let us continue to pray for Konko-Sama's good health, together.

Those of you who attended the 150th Anniversary Grand Ceremony of the Divine Call held five years ago in 2009, may recall that I had spoken about our current Konko-Sama's life and faith. At that time, I introduced the concept of "three streams" freely flowing, the Central Mediation Hall as the well for all Konko churches, and that an invisible stream to this spiritual source connects each church to it. By receiving Mediation, these streams flow into our households, infusing them with divine blessings, which filter into our daily life occurrences. And I mainly focused on the well and the first stream at that time.

Today, I will focus on the second and third streams and share some stories about blessings at the church and our households, including my family experiences. Through these concrete stories of blessings, which touched my heart recently, I would like to focus on the importance of "prayer." Now let us move on to today's main topic, "Live with Prayer in Your Heart."



"Goma Shinjin" or "Sesame Seed Faith Practice"

First, I would like to share what is "Goma Shinjin" or "Sesame Seed Faith." This story of blessings comes from the late Rev. Teruma Gyotoku of Kagoshima Church, located in the southernmost part of Kyushu Island. This story appeared in "Kami Hito vol.6" which was distributed at the Ikigami Konko Daijin Grand Ceremony at Hombu at the end of September.

At many churches, believers do Goyo in preparation for grand ceremonies and to welcome guests. At Kagoshima Church, a female high school student was helping out by preparing bento. Her job was to sprinkle sesame seeds on the rice.

While this student was preparing church bento, she heard someone reciting "Ikigami Konko Daijin-sama, Ikigami Konko Daijin-sama" in a small voice. And she thought to herself, "I should also pray for something, but what should I pray for?" Then it came to her, "Yes! I will pray in this way: 'Please allow those who worship at the Grand Ceremony and eat these homemade church bento to receive blessings.'" Then she started to recite her prayers in silence, while adding the sesame seeds on the rice. This was her first experience to pray while doing Goyo.

The next day, she went to school and after completing her morning classes, it was time for lunch. When she opened her bento and recited the meal prayer, as usual, she realized, "Oh, this bento is filled with my mom's prayer to 'Please let my daughter learn well each and every day and be a useful child/person.'" She realized that her mother has been praying for her even while preparing her bento every morning.

As Konko Daijin taught us "Practicing faith is the same as learning. It progresses step by step.." (*Gorikai 3: Konko Kyoso Gorikai 62.2*) The student's head minister told her, "If you don't realize one step, you will not realize it throughout your lifetime." After returning home, she used to run into the kitchen and leave her empty bento box there. But since then, she expresses her thankfulness every day, saying "Mom, thank you for the delicious bento."

Regarding this turn of events, her mother expressed at the Toritsugi mediation seat, "Sensei, I'm so glad that my daughter says 'thank you' to me. So, now I'm appreciated for preparing her lunch, when I used to be discouraged and prayed."

Soon after, her mother realized, "My daughter always expresses her thankfulness to me, but I had never expressed appreciation to my husband. I'm so embarrassed for not expressing gratitude to him for so many years. But since I am conscious of this fact, at least once a week I will cheerfully say, "Thank you so much for working so hard for us."

Prior to her husband hearing her express appreciation to him, he used to get up after breakfast was ready. But since he heard his wife's appreciation of him, he began to wake up at the same time she did and he started to pray for her

when she went out for church worship.

The female high school student later became a piano teacher. Soon after she started to teach piano, students' parents would often make phone calls to her mother, saying "My child has changed. After each piano lesson, my child says "Thank you" to the piano and her/his character has changed. These things never happened in my family, until today."

Review "Goma Shinjin"

I just shared the "Goma Shinjin" Okage story (of Konko Church of Kagoshima). What are we able to learn from this story of blessings? Let us first look at the head minister's point of view.

(A) Head minister's point of view

(1) Express gratitude in your life

When you are able to say "Thank you" to the piano, you are also able to say "Thank you" to a desk, meal, futon, and so many things around you. If you give this hint to someone, she/he can develop her/his consciousness naturally. If this is so, what the follower's daughter is doing is quite significant and teaches us how to live with gratitude. This is the same as the teaching "Those who practice faith should feel gratitude even after sitting and resting on a tree stump in the mountains." (*Gorikai 2: Unknown 23*) By doing so, we will receive divine virtue and the irreverence of their ancestors will disappear. We will be saved by expressing gratitude.

(2) Spread blessings throughout the world

As this story of blessings shows you, it is important to pray for someone or something, so that blessings will be extended from person to person, as in her case. This story is a good example to have one's prayer in your life and spread blessings throughout the world, beginning with your closest community.

Next, you can also recognize from my point of view as follows:

(B) Another point of view

(1) Importance of Church/Mission Goyo

Until now, I shared what is "Goma or Sesame Faith Practice" and the process of the female high school student's awareness of being influenced through a fellow believer's prayer, and her influence upon the faith development and positive impact on others through her prayer. Through this process, we were able to recognize the importance of doing goyo at a mission/church. "No one knows what positive outcome will happen through church Goyo, such as in this case."

In other words, a church/mission is a special place because of the ministers' prayers and the accumulation of previous ministers' prayers, whether or not you no-

tice the depth of these precious prayers.

It is important that students improve their piano skills. At the same time, it is valuable for the daughter to teach basic concepts for living as human beings, between Heaven and Earth. Situations like this will please Kami-sama.

(2) Importance of "Prayer"

Also, "Goma Shinjin" or "Sesame Seed Faith Practice" Stories of blessings exemplifies the importance of prayer and to pray. The student's prayer spread to her family and to so many people. Kami was born in their hearts through her prayer. A person's prayer may change her/his family, community, country, even the world. Our Founder said "Be broadminded about the world. The world is in your own heart." (Gorikai:3 Konko Kyoso Gorikai 9).

Now, I will move on to another story of blessings.

Double Rainbow

Next, I would like to share two blessings my family and I received in California in July of 2010. I was deeply honored to be asked to be one of the guest speakers at Konko Church of Whittier-Rose Hills' 10th Year Anniversary in Los Angeles, California. I attended with my wife Noriko and four children. During our stay in the United States, we had a chance to visit the Grand Canyon at the end of July. We enjoyed 8 hours of extensive driving from California to Arizona in a big van. Revs. Kiyoshi & Wakiko Igawa's son Kiyoshi, their daughter Kazuko, her husband, and three of their grandchildren joined us. We had stayed at the Grand Canyon for three days.

The weather forecast predicted thunderstorms in the afternoon and Kazuko said, "That's all right! While Kiyoji Sensei is staying, Kami-sama will show you all types of natural phenomena." The first day was a nice, clear day. We had enjoyed many breathtaking views and children's programs. In the evening, we were very fascinated by the beautiful colors of the sunset at the Grand Canyon. Everything was a first, for us all.

The second day we also had clear skies until noon and the children enjoyed sketching, etc. Shortly after we got on a bus it started to rain hard.

And while we were on a bus, there was a heavy thunderstorm. People were getting wet and running to catch a bus at the bus stop. After we got off the bus, we took shelter from the rain at a souvenir store. The rain stopped after 20 minutes or so. Then we walked around and reached a point where we could enjoy a panoramic view. What we saw was a beautiful "double rainbow" and nearby sightseers were cheering. Kazuko said, "Sensei, this is a rare occurrence!"

Thus we were able to see many types of natural phenomena; clear sky, cloudy sky, rain, thunderstorm, rainbow, and double rainbow, in such a short span of time at the Grand Canyon. What wonderful experiences we had! Without the rain or thunderstorm, we wouldn't have been able to see a "double rainbow" and the marvelous view. This is a perfect

example of our Founder's teaching "Suffering is a divine blessing in disguise." (難はみかいげ)."

After I received this blessing, I reflected on this experience and I thought, "What is/was that blessing?" "Was this arranged by Kami-sama or by chance?"

First, a thunderstorm was forecasted, so I believe that Head Minister Rev. Igawa prayed hard for us at WRH church.

Second, as Rev. Igawa's daughter Kazuko said, "Kami-sama will show us all types of natural phenomena." She did not accept the thunderstorm forecasted as "bad" news.

Third, Kazuko wholeheartedly believed Kami-sama would arrange everything in a positive way, without any doubt.

Moreover, Konko-sama had been praying for my family's safety on this trip.

With these divine arrangements, Kami-sama showed us such a spectacular view. These divine blessings were brought about by the sincere prayers of Konko-Sama and the Igawa family.

Third and last Story of Blessings.

Souvenir Homerun Ball

Regarding our stay in California, Kami-sama gave us additional blessings on our final day, right before we caught the night flight from Los Angeles International Airport. Head Minister Rev. Igawa took my eldest son Takuto and me to a major league baseball game between the Boston Red Sox and the Los Angeles Angels, so we were able to see Hideki Matsui and Daisuke Matsuzaka at the Angel Stadium of Anaheim.

This is what happened. Rev. Igawa tried to get the best seats behind home plate that he could for us, but he was unable to and apologized. However, for us, just being able to watch a major league game in and of itself was a precious gift. My son and I enjoyed our first major league game in the outfield bleachers. The seats were in the first row, beyond right field, just beside the right side foul line pole. For Takuto and I, even those seats were so exciting and more than we could have wished for. We enjoyed the major league baseball game and the atmosphere, in seats at the edge of right field.

By the way, Takuto brought his glove from Japan to get a homerun ball.. Because there was no room in our luggage, Noriko and I told Takuto not to bring it. Besides, it's rare to catch a homerun ball at a major league game and we had too much baggage. But Takuto didn't follow our advice.

When the Red Sox's batter David Ortiz hit a home run towards right field, Takuto did catch the homerun ball. Wow!! He showed the homerun ball to the neighboring fans and everyone warmly congratulated him.

Even more surprisingly, my mother's closest friends,

who live in Okayama Prefecture, called my mother and said "I saw your grandson catching Ortiz' homerun ball on satellite broadcasting just now. I had recorded it to DVD, so I will give it to you." My mother said "What? You saw my grandson on TV? Did he really catch the homerun ball? Really? Amazing! What a gift Kami- sama gave us!"

We basked in the pleasant afterglow and Igawa Sensei also had a big smile. While we were still enjoying the game, Igawa Sensei suggested we leave for LA International Airport around the 7th inning.

As I mentioned earlier, our seats were in the very first row, behind right field. So, first, we had to walk up to the top of the steps, then walk all the way across to the left side of the field to get to the parking lot where the car was parked. Even while we were walking, we were watching the game and we had heard a loud cheer. Then we saw Hideki Matsui in the batter's box. I thought, "Oh, this will be my very last moment to watch the Japanese major leaguer in the United States. My heart was preparing to say farewell to America. And what happened next was Hideki Matsui hitting a homerun right before our very eyes. "How amazing! Oh, my Tenchi Kane No Kami Sama!" We had never seen fireworks at a baseball stadium until now, and shouts of joy could be heard from it. Thus we had received such once-in-a-lifetime Okage blessings in California.

After we returned home to Konko, Japan, my son encased Ortiz's homerun ball in a clear plastic box and offered it at our home Kami altar. If you look at that homerun ball carefully, you can see a tiny black mark on the white ball, which is where Ortiz's black bat made contact with the ball. Rev. Igawa prayed wholeheartedly to get the best seats for us. The seats were not the ones that he tried to get, but they were exactly the best ones for us.

We can see how miraculous sincere prayer truly is.

Conclusion

As I have talked about earlier, a female high school student's Okage blessings extended not only to include her family, but also her close community, and as my family received blessings at the Grand Canyon and in California, it is quite important to live a lifestyle with prayer, integrating prayers for others and ourselves while we are engaging in our everyday life activities. Live a lifestyle with prayers that will be born in our hearts through Toritsugi mediation.

Our Founder, Konko Daijin taught us as follows; Our Founder taught us "Practicing faith means to direct your heart towards Kami." (Gorikai:3 Konko Kyoso Gorikai 21-1)

Our Founder, Konko Daijin also taught us as follows; "Konko Daijin received the trust of Kami because of his sincerity and conscientiousness, and became a living kami. Those who believe in Tenchi Kane No Kami should develop sincerity and conscientiousness by following Konko Daijin's example." (*Gorikai 3: Jinkyu kyogoroku 53*)

Let us all know the importance to live with prayer in our hearts.

In order to have Kami born within each of us, we need prayer in our lives through Toritsugi mediation. Toritsugi helps each of us direct our heart towards Kami.

Your sincere prayer will spread among your family, community, country, and the world. Let us all take a step towards becoming a living kami in this year of significant anniversaries for this Way of Faith.

Thank you very much for allowing me to speak to you today and giving me your time and attention. Mahalo!



Communicating with Kami

Ms. Lisa Yasutake
Waipahu

As I am sat here in a house in England looking out at a sunny but somewhat dim sky and grass turned white with frost, I find it strange that not too long ago I was breaking a sweat while looking at the tropical fruits lined up at the farmers market on the coast of Hilo. This was on November 15, 2014, the second of three days of the Konko Missions in Hawaii Young Adult Gathering. Though I find this small village called Holmes Chapel picturesque and charming, I do miss the beautiful views we enjoyed from the historical Pu'u Wa'awa'a Ranch on the Big Island where the Young Adult Gathering was held. Surrounded by a variety of wildlife, we could see Maui across the horizon at daybreak and a dazzling canvas of stars after sundown. I had written an article about the previous Young Adult Gathering held in Honolulu, and at that time I was unsure whether or not I would be able to participate again, but here I am writing about it. Divine blessings never seem to run out, do they?

The theme of this Young Adult Gathering was "Communicating with Kami." We discussed how the founder communicated with Kami, how we communicate with Kami, and what we could do to better communicate

with Kami. I expect that most people in this faith would say that their primary method of communicating with Kami is praying. As such, we had a discussion dedicated to answering questions about prayer such as whether or not there is a right and wrong way to pray, what we should and should not pray for, and how much of our prayer we should dedicate to appreciation, apology, and requests. People of this faith understand the importance and power of single-hearted prayer whether or not we actually succeed in doing it regularly. It is no wonder, then, that we devote much time and energy on praying to Kami.

However, how much time and energy do we spend *listening* to Kami? What struck me was that communication, by definition, can be one or two-sided. Faithful Google tells me that communication is, "the imparting or exchanging of information by speaking, writing, or using some other medium." We often pray to Kami because we want some sort of answer whether it be guidance ("Kami, please show me a sign of which house I should buy"), a positive outcome ("Kami, please have the surgery be successful"), or confirmation ("Kami, are you listening?").





Even if we have no specific request and are praying to offer apologies or express gratitude, we are still in a way expecting a response; to be forgiven or to have more blessings bestowed upon us. We know that we can impart information one-sidedly to Kami through prayer, but what do we receive in exchange if this is a two-sided conversation?

It is easy to recognize when people communicate with each other—having verbal conversations, sending text messages or emails, or even creating artwork or music as a form of expression to others—and it feels much more difficult trying to recognize the ways Kami communicates with us and what Kami is trying to tell us. Of course, the blessings we receive can be counted as one way Kami communicates with us. In this sense, because the blessings Kami bestows know no bounds, Kami is constantly communicating with us. Perhaps there are other ways Kami communicates with us such as through the words of another person (like when the founder was deathly ill at the age of forty-two and his father-in-law began speaking as Konjin), but in any case, unless we pay attention and at least try to recognize them we will very easily overlook Kami's attempts at communicating with us. These were the thoughts I had as I stood at the Visitor Information Center on Mauna Kea, looking up at the haze of clouds blocking my view of the starry sky beyond. If the stars are a metaphor for Kami's blessings and thus Kami's way of communicating with us, it is up to us to

have a joyful heart of appreciation to keep the sky clear and to practice faith to realize that the stars, whether we can see them or not, are always there.

Though the view at the Mauna Kea Visitor Information Center may not have been the best, those of us at the Young Adult Gathering were blessed with good health, safe travel (no hurricane to cancel our flights this time), fantastic views of the stars to and from the Center (some of us saw a green comet!), and the opportunity to view the Imiloa Astronomy Center and Tsunami Museum, eat one strawberry daifuku at Two Ladies Kitchen (they gave each of us a bonus daifuku with our purchase) and countless chocolate samples at Big Island Candies, pray together at the Konko Mission of Hilo, get a tour of the beautiful Pu'u Wa'awa'a Ranch, and spend plenty of time enjoying each other's company. Now that I am literally miles away from Hawaii, these experiences feel a world away. I do sometimes miss the warm sandy beaches and local *kau kau* and it is not always easy trying to communicate with friends and family in different time zones, so it is good to know that Kami is there to listen to me twenty-four seven and I can always find Kami communicating with me through blessings everywhere, no matter where I am.

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).

NOTE

"Malamalama" can now be sent through e-mail.

For our devote readers who would like to receive "Malamalama" electronically, please let us know at kmhcenter@hawaiiantel.net.

For our readers who received the "Malamalama" through e-mail but would still prefer a hard (paper) copy, please do not hesitate and let us know.

Thank you

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Radio KNUI AM900 at 6:20 p.m., every 2nd Sunday

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