



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

200th Birthday of our Founder

Happy New Year!

This is the 200th year since our Founder was born. He was born on September 29, 1814 in a small village of Okayama, Japan. He directed his heart to Kami, realized the unlimited divine blessings, and spread the faith to those who came to him.

He told one of his disciples as follows:

“Those of us establishing the Way of Faith do severe religious training. But people hereafter need not do such training. They can receive divine blessings through easier ways.” (GII: Takahashi Tomie: 7)

Many people started to visit him from all over the places, and received the blessings. Katsura Matsuhei was one of them. He was introduced to our Founder by Aketa Kakutaro, a door-to-door salesman. When he first visited the Founder, he did not know what to do. So he sat in the back and just stared at the Founder. Then the Founder said:

“To the person from Suo Province, I'm glad to see that you have come to worship from afar.” (GII: Katsura Matsuhei: 1.5)

Katsura was deeply impressed by the Founder's divine virtue. While he was in awe, the Founder quietly went before the altar and clapped his hands in prayer. In a prompt revelation,

“Though you think that water is bad, don't think so. Think of water as medicine. Then you won't have a stomach illness.” (GII: Katsura Matsuhei: 1.6)

Katsura felt so much gratitude that his body trembled while he bowed. The “water” turned to be the blessings that Kami bestowed.

Later, Katsura spread the faith to Kyushu island having followed the words of Konko Shijin, the Founder's succes-

sor. He was told:

“You are going to Kyushu to die. Become a soil and a dirt of Kokura. If you arrive one day early, people receive blessings one day early”

The faith spread in Kyushu area by Rev. Katsura. Yasutake Matsutaro, who later established the Amagi Church, was one of his followers. He received the following teaching at the first visit to the Kokura Church:

“There are some who realized the blessings of heaven, but no one realized the favors of earth. From now on, know the favor of heaven and earth. Heaven is the father, and Earth is the mother. Knowing the favor of heaven but not the favor of earth is like knowing father but not mother. Realizing the favor of Heaven and Earth, pray single-heartedly to Tenchi Kane No Kami through Ikigami Konko Daijin. You need not worry about anything that you are going to do.”

Rev. Yasutake later expressed that he was so astonished as if the birds suddenly flew from where he stood. In this way, the faith of our Founder was passed on to people and came to all of us.

Celebrating the 200th Birthday of our Founder, the Konko Missions in Hawaii determined the 2014 activities with the objectives to learn about the history of Konko Daijin, and how Konko Daijin's faith came to Hawaii through our ministers. To enrich our faith, we plan to visit Honbu for one week. In addition, Rev. Ide of the Yukuhashi Church has been invited to be the guest speaker for our Conference and Ministers' Gathering. We hope that Reverend Ide with his insight of the Konko Faith will have a huge impact on our ministers and members in Hawaii. (Y.O.)

Being Awakened to the Blessings of Kami

Thirty believers from Hawaii attended the Autumn Grand Ceremony Commemorating the 130th Anniversary of Konko Daijin's Passing on October 3, 2013. On this occasion, the Konkokyo Headquarter convened a two-day Get-together for Oversea Konkokyo Believers prior to the service, which consisted of lectures from Rev. Shozo Yamamoto, Director of Outreach Department I and Rev. Tateo Suenaga, Head Minister of Konko Church of Birigui, Brazil with English interpretation. This *Malamalama* issue features the second half of Rev. Shozo Yamamoto's lecture titles *Being Awakened to the Blessings of Kami*, and the first half of Rev. Suenaga's lecture titles *Seeking A Universe-like Heart*.



Rev. Shozo Yamamoto
Director, Outreach Department I

I would now like to introduce a faith story from a senior Konkokyo believer. Let's call this person Mr. A. Mr. A's parents raised five children during the postwar era. Mr. A's family lived with financial difficulties, but five children grew into five adults. When the children moved out of the house, the parents were looking forward to their

retirement. However, Mr. A's father suddenly became sick. He was not feeling very well for several days, but since he hated hospitals, he avoided going to the doctor. When he suddenly lost consciousness, an ambulance was called and he was taken to a hospital. At the hospital, he was diagnosed with a stroke. Mr. A's father regained consciousness later on, but he could no longer move his hands and legs. He could do nothing by himself. In those days, the hospital was not responsible for extensive care of the patients. Mr. A's family had no choice but to bring Mr. A's father back home. Mr. A's father gradually lost his speech. He could still show his emotions on his face a little, but only his wife could understand them, for she spent the most time with him. Mr. A's father became virtually bedridden.

Mr. A was worried about his father. For a while, he helped his mother take care of his father every day. After a few years passed, however, Mr. A stopped taking care of his father every single day. After a few years passed, however, Mr. A stopped taking care of his father and left the daily care of his unresponsive father to his mother. When his mother was very tired, Mr. A looked after his father. His father was a grown man so Mr. A had a hard time when he bathed his father or helped him go to the restroom. On such occasions, Mr. A convinced himself

that he was obligated to help his father. Yet Mr. A honestly thought, "Why do I have to do such things?" Mr. A found his heart full of frustration.

Mr. A's mother and Mr. A had many of these severe days. On one summer day, the mother said, "Since dad is constantly in bed, he has bedsores from the heart. I want to bathe him. It's very hot day, and I don't think he will get chills after the bath. Today is a good day to bathe your father. But I can't bathe him by myself, and I want your help." Mr. A accepted his mother's request. When he loaded his father onto his back, Mr. A felt enormous weight of his father. When a person knows that he is on someone's back, the carrier does not feel the person's weight so much. But when the person does not perceive that he is on someone's back, the person gives the carrier his entire body weight. Mr. A was amazed at his father's incredible weight but he managed to take him to the bathroom. Mr. A and his mother undressed the father and worked together to wash his body.

Mr. A held his father from behind so that his father would not fall as Mr. A's mother washed the body. During this job, the mother talked to the father, "Honey, please give me your right hand. Yes, very good. Let me give you a good wash on your right arm and hand. All right, honey. Now it's time for your left hand." If one heard her remarks, one may imagine an elderly gentleman responding to his spouse's words and is extending his arms on his own will. But in fact, the mother was taking her husband's hand and pulling it to her side so she could wash it.

Glancing at his mother, who seemed to be taking her time washing his father's body, Mr. A was silently angry with his mother. He thought, "I'm having a pretty hard time holding dad, and how long does it take for mom to wash dad?" The mother finally finished washing Mr. A's father with soap and poured hot water onto the father. It was hard for them to put the father into the bathtub. With the father in the tub, the mother again talked to him, even though the father remained silent. Mr. A was impressed with his

mother this time, saying to himself, “What a kind and warm person mom is!” At the time, that was as far as Mr. A interpreted his mother’s action.

Mr. A’s father passed away sometime later. After his funeral, Mr. A’s mother heartily spoke, “I have learned a lot of things through taking care of your dad.” Mr. A astonished to hear his mother say this. Mr. A’s mother continued, “When your father became unresponsive, I sometimes got discouraged and depressed. At times, he even seemed to be nothing but an object. But I was allowed to realize one important thing through praying earnestly to Kami-Sama. Your father was alive by being given life from Kami-Sama. I thought that he didn’t give us any reaction, but Kami-Sama was still working upon him. Father was able to open and close his eyes. He could move his fingertips a little. He could even groan. Each one of those things was possible because Kami-Sama kept your father alive. Because dad was alive, there were times when I was consoled. Your father constantly received merciful workings from Kami-Sama, and he unconsciously continued to manifest Kami-Sama’s heart. After I realized this, I was allowed to consider that your father didn’t spend a second without receiving Kami-Sama’s blessings, and I became so grateful. I began to take care of my husband with a thankful heart. I was allowed to start spending such thankful days, and I was able to see your father off, who finally returned to Kami-Sama.” The mother concluded that she felt like she and her husband truly became a wife and a husband in the very final phase of his life.

When Mr. A heard these words from his mother. Mr. A admired the depth of his mother’s faith in Kami-Sama. Earlier, Mr. A merely thought that his other was simply kind to his sick father. But, he later learned that his mother’s “kind” actions to his father were actually based upon her gratitude and joy.

Kami-Sama’s blessings are so vast and infinite that we fail to acknowledge many of them. At first, MR. A’s mother also failed to discover many of Kami’s blessings upon her husband. She, however, gradually saw “Kami-Sama’s blessings” by her continuous prayers to Kami-Sama and “ask Ikigami Konko Daijin-Sama for Mediation.”

Now, I would like to tell you a story from one of the members of my church. The member is a lady and her husband caught a disease three years ago. The husband was soon hospitalized. The lady went to the hospital and took care of her husband every day. She brought her husband’s laundry

home. If she had known when such a lifestyle would end, she could have endured the hard, painful days more easily and smoothly. Because her husband had an incurable disease, his health only got worse. Two months later, the lady became tired. It was now too much for her to bear. She continued to come to church for worship, but my church became a place for her to vent. Two years had passed. I felt uneasy whenever she came over to my church. I had a few reasons for that. First, the lady often said to me, “Why do we have to go through such a hard life?” I knew that she said this because the situation surrounding them was too much for her to accept, but it was tough for me to hear her say so. Behind these words, she probably wanted to ask, “Rev. Yamamoto, when on earth will my husband get well from his disease? When will we even receive a divine blessing for this problem?” I was in a position to listen to her at the Mediation Seat, and I felt uneasy whenever I heard the lady say “Why, Rev. Yamamoto? Why?”

But I was given a chance to engage myself in practicing the faith movement. Earlier, I only regarded the lady as “a pitiful person who has not received divine blessings at all.” However, I gradually came to think, “This lady is still receiving divine blessings. Everything that happens to her is happening in the blessings of Kami-Sama.” This new notion allowed me to make a whole different approach towards the lady than before.

Before this new discovery, I had only thought “The health of the lady’s husband got worse again” when she says, “Now my husband can do only this much.” With the arrival of this new notion, however, I gradually became capable of saying, “The situation appears hard, but your husband is kept alive thanks to the divine blessings of Kami-Sama. You may say your spouse can do is getting smaller and smaller, but he can still do several things.” I began to say these things because I truly felt so, and I was allowed to stress the aspects of joy at the Mediation Seat. The way the lady talked to me began to change for the better little by little.

This lady comes worshipping at my church on a regular basis, and I listen to her at the Mediation Seat. From time to time, despite herself, she still says, “I seriously wonder why such a good person like my husband has to go through such a heavy disease.” However, she started to say, “Sensei! My spouse is surprisingly blessed with so many things. He certainly receives more blessings from Kami-Sama than I can be thankful for.” The elder-

ly lady diligently discovers one fact after another regarding her husband which she ought to feel truly grateful about.

This episode reminds me that Kami-Sama constantly bestows divine blessings upon each one of us.

So far, I have delivered two stories to you; one about Mr. A, my senior acquaintance and another about the elderly lady member of my church. I am almost sure that each one of you here has also had similar experiences. Additionally, the more carefully and earnestly we listen to the stories of Konkokyo faith, we can recognize that there are so many episodes where people “awaken to Kami-Sama’s blessings,” pursue a life of “gratitude and joy” and are finally saved.

On the other hand, we get entangled with issues when we are surrounded by harsh reality and serious problems, and we forget that we are still within the enormous and rich blessings of Kami-Sama. On such occasions, we tend to become insensitive to Kami-Sama’s blessings and become unable to perceive a life of “gratitude and joy.”

We know we should avoid such a lifestyle, but we sometimes cannot help ourselves. Because of this, the “Aim” of our new faith movement states that we should awaken to Kami-Sama’s blessings and live a life of gratitude and joy through praying to Kami-Sama and receiving Konko Daijin’s teachings into our hearts.

If we can put ourselves on the “right track,” we can surely perceive kami-like heart. We will find ourselves in a state where we absolutely want to pray to Kami about suffering people, help them and lead them to the Way of Salvation. If we can continue to follow this religious path, I am sure we will be able to manifest the “Way of Kami and People” in our lives. The “Way of Kami and People” promotes the mutual fulfillment between Kami and humans, as confirmed by the present and fifth Konko-Sama in 2009.

Let us engage in this faith movement together!

Seeking A Universe-like Heart



Rev. Takeo Suenaga
Konko Church of Birigui

My deep admiration for the Universe

I was blessed to experience three wondrous things before being “awakened to Konko Daijin’s faith.” Looking back to these experiences now, I guess I was deeply moved by the Divine Parent and our Founder, Konko Daijin.

I was born in 1944, the fourth son of a family serving at the Konko Church of Iki in Nagasaki Prefecture, Japan.. In 1959, when I entered high school, I took part in the “Gathering for Konkokyo Ministers’ Children” (An event for Konkokyo ministers’ children who are

high school students). More than fifty students participated in the event, and this was the first time I visited the Konkokyo Headquarters.

All the teenage participants got together at the Konkokyo Regional Administrative Office of North Kyushu, which was then located inside the Konko Church of Kokura. Rev. Sumi of Konko Church of Sedaka led us to the Headquarters. Until the pilgrimage, all I knew about “Konkokyo” was my own home church, Konko Church of Ashibe and Konko Church of Setoura, both of which were “child churches” of my church (Iki). These churches based my perspectives of “Konkokyo.”

Arriving at the Headquarters, everything that I saw was quite fresh and surprising. I was particularly amazed at the enormous size of the Konkokyo Headquarters. I was deeply impressed. I never knew that Konkokyo was such a huge religion.

Rev. Sumi led us as we orally recited several prayers in the Headquarters, Worship Hall. After the prayer recitation session, Rev. Sumi took us to the Founder’s Gravesite. There at the site, Rev. Sumi said words that had a huge impact on me. Rev. Sumi talked about the Third Konko-Sama. “As you all see, Konko-Sama sits at the Mediation Seat all day long. While sitting there, Konko-Sama seems to be having conversations with Kami-Sama.” When I heard the minister say this, I felt like I got hit with an electricity. I was keenly moved with those words at that moment. I was a freshman. In my junior and senior years, I took part in these gatherings at the Headquarters, but I never had such a moving experience again.

After my graduation, I joined a company called JTB, and I began to work in Fukuoka city. While working, I also took evening courses

from University of Fukuoka. After my first two years at the company, I was thinking of quitting. I wasn't very comfortable with my position as a salaried worker.

In those days, my elder brother, who now serves as the head minister of Konko Church of Gonoura, also worked in Fukuoka. One day, he said to me, "A monthly service will be held at the Fukuoka Branch today." He invited me to join the service. Here, the Fukuoka Branch stands for the Fukuoka Branch of "Kabame Shin Ai Kai," which later became the Konko Church of Airaku. The head of the branch was a lay believer of Konkokyo, but his fellow members called him "minister." The "minister" was Mr. Tomoyoshi Akinaga. I went to the Fukuoka Branch with my brother. Mr. Akinaga first led a prayer session, and he then delivered a sermon. As he started his sermon, MR. Akinaga said, "When I was leading the session, I received a divine call, 'Shanson Tanusimaru.'" He told us that he heard Kami talk to him. The moment I heard Mr. Akinaga say this, I was moved as deeply and strongly as I had been at the Konkokyo Headquarters gathering when I was a freshman in high school. Well, to be more exact, a more detailed, stronger impact penetrated my entire body. I was moved that much.

On the following day, I was strongly urged to go and meet with Reverend Otsubo, whom Mr. Akinaga and my big brother looked up to as their "mentor." The urge brought me to Reverend Otsubo's worship hall called Kabame, which was about ten kilometers away from the center of Kurume city. It was an unfamiliar place for me, and I reached the Kabame worship hall a little after midnight. Yet I was about to see Reverend Otsubo.

I began to visit Reverend Otsubo's worship hall in Kabame every three to four months. One day at the worship hall, Kami allowed me to meet with a person who would later decide my fate. On that certain day, I was about to leave Reverend Otsubo's worship hall, passing the entrance when I happened to run into Rev. Katsuhiko Otsubo (now the second head minister of the Konko Church of Airaku). Rev. Katsuhiko Otsubo was training spiritually at his parent church. When I saw him for the first time, I felt like I got hit with one-million-volts of electricity. The impact was far greater and stronger than the ones I had had at Founder's Gravesite and at the Fukuoka Branch.

Looking back at the experience now, I suppose it was my

deep admiration towards the Universe, and I think that Kami allowed me to have such a feeling at that time. This deep admiration for the universe led me to awakening to Konko Daijin's faith. From then on, I made up my mind to leave everything behind and enter church for spiritual training. This was in 1966 when I was twenty-two-years old.

Six years had passed since I began my religious training at the church when Reverend Soichiro Otsubo, the first head minister of the Konko Church of Airaku, received a divine message from Kami, who gave him the words of "propagation of Konko Daijin's faith in South America." Reverend Otsubo then said to me, "I will have Mr. Tateo Suenaga and Miss Kimiko Uchida get married and send these two people to South America." I married Miss Uchida and moved to South America with her in 1977.

Propagation in South America

Upon our departure to South America, Reverend Souichiro Otsubo bestowed a following poem upon us.

"You are supposed to impart the Truth, help purify the hearts of people (in South America) and cast a bright ray of light upon a place with bright and dark sides. You never need to be afraid as you go all the way across the ocean to South America and spread the teachings and faith of Konko Daijin there. When I think that you are about to manifest Konko Daijin's ideal in South America, I cannot help but feel all sorts of emotions. I even shed tears of tremendous delight."

Reverend Otsubo, the founding minister of Konko Church of Airaku, then wrote "Pray to Kami for the peace and prosperity of the country of Brazil" on the wrapping sheet of *Goshinmai* (Sacred rice) for us. This is how my propagation efforts in South America started. I started my missionary work with my wife, Kimiko, at Konko Church of Birigui in Brazil.



My Marathon Experience



Ms. Aimee Yasutake
Wailuku

Early Sunday morning on December 8, 2013, I set out to conquer what I thought to be the impossible...the Honolulu Marathon. Up until that day, the furthest distance I had ever walked was 10 miles. I had no idea how much of the 26.2 miles I would be able to complete, but it was my very first marathon and my initial goal was to finish at least half.

My friend, Susan, and I started together, but being much more fit than I, she quickly advanced ahead of me. I started off feeling great! The first mile felt like it was longer than any mile I had previously walked, but the beautiful Christmas lights that lit our way through downtown served as distractions to what I was about to endure. The plan was to make it to the highest part of Diamond Head road before sunrise. That didn't happen, so the sun was up in full force by the time I was headed down the other side of Diamond Head and into Kahala. The mass of people I had been walking with began to thin out. People were stopping to nurse sore feet and muscles. I reached the turn onto Kalaniana'ole Highway, mile 11, the point at which I knew that if I was going to quit and turn around, I had to do it there so I'd still be able to walk back to the finishing area. For some strange reason, I kept going. It was so hot! The sun was beating down on me; there was no wind; and very little shade. I later heard that it was the hottest day of the year. Along the endless stretch of Kalaniana'ole Highway, I felt myself wanting to give up. I questioned why I was doing this to myself. But every time a negative thought entered my mind, I received a phone call from Susan with words of encouragement; or I got a text from friends or family; or I would hear someone on the sidelines cheering us on. Just past the official half-way mark, I ran into my co-worker and fellow marathoner. A friendly face did wonders for my morale and gave me a boost of energy. A half mile after that, I made eye-contact with a stranger who offered me a hug and cheers that helped

me to keep going. And not too long after that, I saw Susan. She was so strong and still so energetic that her enthusiasm gave me the strength and determination I needed to just keep going!

Then came Hawaii Kai Drive. As I was turning the corner onto Hawaii Kai Drive, I saw that there was a water station up ahead. So, I drank some water and then stopped at the restroom. As I was heading up the road, I came to what WAS the water station and saw the truck driving off with all the water!! I couldn't believe it!! Apparently, I was too slow and they were taking away some of the water stations on the course. For the whole Hawaii Kai Drive loop there was no water. There was a 7-Eleven, but I refused to walk across the street to get to it. Just as I was feeling really worried that I would run out of water and start feeling the effects of dehydration, a man who had his hose set up as a shower for the marathoners came into sight. He filled my bottle half way and that was enough to get me to the next water station on Kalaniana'ole Highway. I was never so happy to see water and ice in my life!

With the scorching sun now directly above me, I made my way back toward Kahala. By this time, the majority of the marathoners had already crossed the finish line. Those of us that were left were the walkers and the injured. I was feeling like I was the last one out there, but that's when I saw the last couple of marathoners just now making their way toward Hawaii Kai. They probably didn't cross the finish line till well past the 13-hour mark. But they were out there...taking one step at a time, and looking like they were having the time of their lives. When I saw that, I thought to myself, I have to finish! If these people with physical ailments could do this marathon, I have to do it. There are so many people out there that would love to run or walk a marathon, but can't. I have been blessed with perfectly functioning legs and body...I have no excuse! When I reached the 20-mile mark, I started to cry. Partly because I was in so much pain, but also because I had come so far.

My pace dropped considerably. I thought of quitting many, many times. But, every time the thought of quitting entered my mind, someone came along to offer me

encouragement and tell me, “Good Job!” I then found myself giving others encouragement. Every time I told a fellow marathoner, “Good Job! Keep going! We’re almost there! Don’t give up!” I found that it gave me strength and another boost of energy to keep myself going.

The last 4 miles were probably the hardest. Physically, I was exhausted. Mentally, I was breaking. I felt like I had nothing left in me. That’s when I got another call from Susan. I cried. I cried, not because of the pain, but because I was feeling so frustrated at the fact that I couldn’t make my body do what I wanted it to do and I thought I was going to have to stop. “You can’t stop now, Aimee! You’re so close! Just a couple more miles! It’s tough. It’s really hard. But, you can do it! I know you can! Ganbare!!” Those words saved me. They saved me from the certain disappointment I would have felt had I given up then. They pushed me forward. Kahala Avenue is a slight incline all the way. Then an even steeper incline to get over Diamond Head again. It was torture!! As I was going up Diamond Head, in order to keep myself focused on moving forward, I prayed. I said the Tenchi Kakitsuke out loud. I kept repeating whatever lines of prayers I could remember. It was working! It distracted me from the pain so that I could keep putting one foot in front of the other. Kami-sama must have heard my pray-



ers, because he continued to send people to help me push on. I met a sweet elderly couple walking the marathon hand-in-hand. There was a young couple whose legs were so stiff and fatigued that they were hobbling along slowly, but supporting each other the whole way. I kept having to stop every few yards or so. My legs felt like lead. Then from behind me I heard, “We can do it....we can do it....we...can...do...it!” It was a mother chanting those words for her teenaged daughter, who was struggling to walk just like I was. The mother caught up to me and her words got stronger. She looked at me and said with conviction, “WE CAN DO IT! WE CAN DO IT!!” I used her chanting like a marching cadence to keep time with their walking. We were doing it. Then she broke out into song. “Santa Claus is coming to town...” So I started to sing with her. It was great! I even started to pick up speed. The goal was so near now. I could finally see the FINISH line. I was overcome with emotion for the last 400 meters. I cried all the way past the finish line and let out a huge, “CHEEEEE HOOOOO!!!!” The next words out of my mouth were, “Thank you Kami-sama!”

The marathon was a life-changing experience. The magnitude of appreciation I felt after having completed one of the toughest challenges of my life was overwhelming. It reaffirmed my faith in the human spirit and its deep connection to Kami-sama. I experienced first-hand Kami-sama’s love. When in my deepest desperation, Kami-sama sent the help I needed to get through my hardship. I believe every word of encouragement from strangers and friends alike, was a gift from Kami-sama. The marathon symbolized for me every struggle, hardship, frustration, and fear that I have encountered and served as a strong reminder that I can overcome them. I can conquer them, but only with the help of friends, family, caring strangers, and Kami-sama.

Thank you to all those who supported my decision to do the marathon. You believed in me, even when I didn’t believe in myself. They say a marathon is a race against yourself. This may be true, but you are certainly not out there alone. I thank all the volunteers who made it possible for all the crazy marathoners to go out there and give it their all. Thank you for all the prayers and words of encouragement. It wouldn’t have been possible without you! I DID IT! CHEEEEE HOOOOO!!!

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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