



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

Visiting the Founder — The Final Part:

"Memoirs of Konko Daijin" and His Eternal Work Spanning 140 Years

With the onset of the Meiji era, the Founder's worship hall was momentarily hindered from propagating due to national policies. This led to the creation of the "Tenchi Kakitsuke, or Divine Reminder," solidifying the Toritsugi Mediation, and revitalizing the Founder's mission. This final installment explores his later years.

Upon receiving the revelation, the "Memoir" was written, marking a new era termed "the hollow places."

On August 19, 1873 (October 10 by the Gregorian calendar), when the Founder was 60 years old, he received a divine message. This message revealed that although all humans reside between heaven and earth, they remain unaware of the divine blessings. It stated that from temples and shrines to people's homes, all land belongs to Kami. Yet, humans, who judge auspicious directions and dates, are disrespecting the divine. This behavior accumulates and leads to human suffering.

Kami revealed to the Founder, "Tenchi Kane No Kami has sent Ikigami Konko Daijin to the people to give blessings and teachings and to have them prosper forever. Kami is Kami because of people, and people are people because of Kami. Both continue to uphold each other."

The next year, on October 15, 1874 (November 23 by the Gregorian calendar), Kami instructed Konko Daijin, "Write the memoirs of Konko Daijin who established the Hiromae here. Write about the time you were born, what your parents told you, your experiences after you joined this family, and other recollections." "Write about the fears you had regarding Konjin and the Directions, the apologies you made for your irreverences, and about your practice of faith in various kamis."

This passage describes how the Founder, Konko Daijin, composed what can be considered his autobiography, "Konko Daijin Memoir," based on divine instructions. He painstakingly recorded his birth, child-

hood, and significant events after being adopted into the Otani village, as recalled from his parents' accounts. It mentions how someone observed him writing by the light of an *andon* lantern until midnight. This writing process, which began around 1867, involved revisiting and documenting divine messages he had received over the years, deepening his relationship with Kami through these reflections.

In his later years, when visited by Takahashi Tomie, a devout follower, Konko Daijin showed her a thick paper where he had been recording divine messages. He mentioned that since that morning, Kami had repeatedly expressed gratitude for his diligent service, which moved him to tears.

In 1875, Kami delivered the following message, "Like the way water gathers into a depression, all the world's problems gather in this Hiromae. Leave your children's problems to Me. Don't follow social appearances. Those people, including your relatives, who follow social conventions will not receive blessings."

In the pages of "Konko Daijin Memoir" and "Record of Revelations," there is a diagram showing Japan centered between "China" and "India," labeled respectively as "Tang" and "Tenjiku."

Japan is depicted lower and indented, illustrating something flowing into this depression from Tang and Tenjiku. (In the drawing by Konko Daijin, India and China represent the world, while Japan represents the Hiromae.)

Tang, mentioned previously, represents China,

.....continued on page 2



India

Japan

China

while Tenjiku refers to India. As noted before, with the advent of the Meiji era, Japan began adopting modern cultural elements, systems, and ideologies from foreign countries. However, this adoption often clashed with the long-standing customs, traditions, and values rooted among the common people, leading to confusion and disruptions in their daily lives.



Ikigami Konko Daijin Grand Service

The Founder conveyed to a visitor. "Although they say the world is becoming civilized, it is not. It is collapsing. Because of this, Konko Daijin has come forth to save the world." He perceived in his era both the advancements and the shortcomings of an increasingly human-centric world that neglected divine grace. He felt strongly committed to the divine mandate to assist the troubled worshipers through meditation, intensifying his resolve to fulfill this spiritual duty.

"The Shrine Construction Resumes for the Third Time: Between Village Aspirations and Divine Will"

In 1865, Konko Daijin, was instructed by Kami to build a shrine as a place for worshipers to make requests and express gratitude. However, the construction faced multiple challenges due to the carpenter's attitude and understanding, leading to two interruptions in building the shrine.

In Meiji 10 (1877), construction resumed at the request of villagers. A prominent villager, who was well-versed in administrative procedures, offered to help, and the Founder decided to entrust him with the task.

Kami-Sama communicated that although the villagers referred to it as the "Konjin Shrine of Otani Village," Kami, identified as Tenchi Kane no Kami and Ikigami Konko Daijin, is destined to extend its influence throughout Japan and eventually to China and India. Kami-Sama instructed to preach this to the people, and if the villagers were prepared to use their gathered materials for the shrine, they should proceed. Even if they requested stone, it should be provided.

The divine vision for "This Shrine" was significantly different from what the villagers anticipated as a community shrine for their local deity, highlighting a crucial distinction.

Subsequent construction efforts for the shrine were marred by the villagers' expectations and governmental regulations. Although nominal approval

was secured, the designations from the name of the shrine to the deity it was dedicated to significantly diverged from the divine and the Founder's intentions.

Additionally, some caretakers suggested issuing wooden talismans or protective charms and proposed ideas that would financially benefit the shrine.

Although the concept of issuing wooden talismans or protective charms might seem natural in society's eyes, Kami-Sama explicitly stated not to do so. It was emphasized that such items would not benefit the poor and that Kami does not require any monetary gains from charms or donations. The deity values offerings made out of gratitude for blessings received, not for profit through selling charms. This approach significantly differs from Kami-Sama associated with monetary benefits, underlining a unique divine character that prioritizes genuine devotion and prosperity without financial transactions.

Despite the ongoing challenges between Kami, the Founder's intentions, the villagers' expectations, and regulatory frameworks, the construction of the shrine managed to progress to the foundational work. However, in January of Meiji 16 (1883), which was the final year of the Founder's life, construction was halted by a divine message advising to pause the work indefinitely. As a result, the shrine was not completed during the Founder's lifetime.

"A Life Lived According to Divine Will, Continuously Active Even Without Physical Form"

From around 1880, when construction of the shrine resumed, the Founder began experiencing declining health. He suffered from frequent severe diarrhea and other physical ailments that worsened each year. As he aged, his health progressively deteriorated.

In 1881, when the Founder was 68 years old, he was informed by Kami-Sama that "worms had entered the body of Konko Daijin." At that time, serious health threats were often metaphorically referred to as "worms." This signified that something detrimental had affected his health, and he sensed that his end was near.

Once, the Founder explained to his fourth son, Hagio, who was helping with the duties in the worship hall, about the significance of the name "Konko." He stated, "Konko means, 'golden light shines'. The 'Kon' comes from the 'Kane' in Kane



Gravesite of the Founder, his wife
and children

No Kami. The 'ko' comes from 'hikari,' meaning sunlight. Sunlight provides the world with light. Therefore, it means that the entire world is being blessed by Kane No Kami's light shining throughout the world." "I'll tell you this little poem that Kami revealed to me: The true way of Konko makes the world bright, shines through Heaven, and will last forever."

By 1883, the health of the Founder had severely deteriorated. He struggled with eating, and on certain days, he could only manage to consume foods that had been divinely recommended. Despite these challenges, his two daughters prepared sweet bean-filled mochi for him, which he was able to eat. He was profoundly grateful for the care and thoughtfulness shown by his children and family during this difficult time.

On August 21st of the same year (Gregorian date: September 21st), the Founder received a divine message stating, "For the sake of all people and to save those who give Me requests, I shall sacrifice you. This is for the eternal dignity of Konko Daijin's divine virtue."

The divine message indicated that the Founder's efforts to save and help people would continue even after his death, as he would be manifested eternally as a mediating deity. This was seen as a divine arrangement by Kami-Sama.

On August 27th (September 27th in the new calendar), the Founder advised worshippers that they could pray to Kami from anywhere from that day forward, as he would no longer be present. He then instructed Hagiō, who was with him, to take over his duties at the worship hall, entrusting him with the divine services there. After this, the Founder never appeared at the worship hall again.

On the early morning of September 10th (October 10th in the new calendar), the Founder, under the watchful care of his wife Tose and others, passed away at the age of 70. Coincidentally, that day was also the annual service day of Konko Daijin, which the Founder himself had served and which had been designated by Kami-Sama.

Until the very end, the Founder lived in accordance

with Kami's wishes, thus concluding his earthly duties while still embodying his teachings. For his family and for the many people who encountered Kami-Sama and found salvation through his Toritsugi Mediation and teachings, his passing was a profound loss.

However, from the teachings left by the Founder, such as "When my body is gone, I can go to where I am requested and save people," and from the divine message that "For the sake of all people and to save those who give Me requests, I shall sacrifice you. This is for the eternal dignity of Konko Daijin's divine virtue," we learn that he continues his work unchanged even after his physical form has vanished.

From his childhood, the Founder revered Kami and practiced his faith with exceptional sincerity and meticulous care. Through various hardships and a serious illness of his own, he came to understand Kami's intentions for the first time.

After receiving divine revelations, the Founder began to accept everything according to divine decree, detaching from human conventional wisdom and conveniences. This deep communion with Kami-Sama led to the emergence of "Aiyokakeyo," a mutual assistance and fulfillment between Kami and humanity, realizing the "Path of Kami and People," where both Kami and people prosper together.

Next year (2023) marks the 140th anniversary of the Founder's death, known as "Founder's 140 Year." During this time, churches have been established by those who received his teachings, and the faith of the Founder has been spread throughout Japan and the world. Most importantly, the successive Konko-Sama, Spiritual Leaders have continuously communicated the divine blessings, ensuring that the divine mediation work of Konko Daijin, aiding people, has never ceased.

*This article was from the November 9, 2022
Konko Shimbun*



The Founder's tomb;
to the left, his wife,
Tose's tomb

The Wildfires (Part 1)

Rev. Roy Yasutake, Konko Mission of Wailuku

Foreword

When I was first asked to write an article about the wildfire, I thought it would be easy but soon realized that I wanted to tell a story, report on what we as a church did in response and thank everyone who so generously sent assistance.

I decided that this article needs to be written in two parts. Part one will focus on the reporting and thank you. Part two will focus on the human aspect. Please bear with me.

Last year in August there was a warning of high winds. In my line of work, being mostly performed outdoors, windy conditions are not helpful at all. At times units will be thrown onto their sides which makes the simple job of servicing them several degrees harder. "I hope the winds won't be too bad today." Was the thought I had as I left home that morning of August 8, 2023.

On that day the areas of Kula, Pulehu and Lahaina had fires start. Little fires happen often with brushfires occurring all over Maui but what made things so bad was the very strong winds which caused the fires to quickly grow out of control.

While there were evacuations in Kula and Pulehu as well as property damage, nothing compared to the damage in Lahaina. Homes and businesses lost, damage to infrastructure and especially the loss of life. 100 souls confirmed with the possibility that there may have been more.

It was the single greatest disaster that Maui experienced in modern times.

In the aftermath, there were constant ads on radio and TV that urged victims to contact the appropriate official organizations to seek immediate assistance. Our County, State and Federal government moved to provide assistance. Several groups including churches, clubs and even celebrities sent words of encouragement.

At this point in time our church hosted 10 people as a shelter. I will write more on this in part two but for us, the Konko Mission of Wailuku, it was the first time that we were able to serve in this capacity.

Offers of donations to assist the members affected by the Lahaina fire started to come in.

Churches from North America, Hawaii, Japan and the Headquarters church all sent donations. Honestly it was very moving to me that our brothers and sisters in Faith could come together to extend a hand in times of need. I especially remember that some of these donations were less than 50 dollars. What this told me is that the individuals weren't well off themselves yet wanted to contribute anything they could. This was truly heart-warming.

Another thing that amazed me was in how quickly

the donations were sent. Individual donations can be quick, but some were sent as a church, diocese. I'm sure that there must have been meetings to decide what to do and how much they can afford to send. That the decision was made so quickly seemed like a minor miracle to me. It's been my experience that at times a governing body takes time to make a decision, especially in the case of emergencies.

The Konko Mission of Wailuku gathered the donated money and made a new checking account. In the case that there is a need to show proof, the checking account statements would serve. We also decided early on to not offer cash money to the victims, which would have been more convenient but difficult to track. I also feared the assistance money being stolen before reaching the intended person or family.

Every family received a set amount. We used the directive from Headquarters on how much per family as a base to decide the check amount. In the end, we didn't go so far as to decide based on the number of people in the family, but we did make sure to take into consideration the number of children under the age of 18.

We also tried to consider if their homes were intact, damaged or a complete loss.

There was also one member whose business was affected by the fire, but that check was returned. The member said that due to the blessings, my business is okay. Please use the money for others.

Other members' businesses were not so lucky, and it was some time before the surviving businesses could even reopen.

On behalf of the members and families that received an assistance check, thank you very much. To quote some of the recipients, "Every bit helps in times like this. Thank you so much."

There is still money in the account/fund, and we are having discussions to decide how much the second assistance checks should be and who to send them to.

One small portion of the fund was donated to the Noto peninsula earthquake relief fund.

The biggest blessing was that none of the members or their families lost their lives in the fire.

In part two I would like to touch upon some of the dramatic, human elements of our shared experiences. There were quite a few lessons learned as a host and from observations and discussions during the months after the wildfires.

As I need to discuss to what degree I can share some of our experiences the next part may be delayed but I hope it will be worth it.

Thank you for reading until the end of part one.

Accepting Suffering

Rev. Akinobu Yasutake, Konkō Mission of Waipahu
Spring Grand Service 2024 Sermon

Good afternoon, everyone. I feel grateful that we could gather to hold the Spring Grand Service for Tenchi Kane no Kami, the Principle Parent of the Universe. Here is a bottle of water. How do you describe it? Half full? Half empty? I still have half or I only have half? Suppose you have one \$20 bill in your wallet or purse. Do you think, "I still have \$20" or "I only have \$20"? Montaigne, the 16th century French philosopher, said, "Surroundings, conditions, or destinies do not make you happy or unhappy. They just give you a seed." The same \$20 bill, the same amount of water, but it's so different depending on how you see it, how you take it.

On Oahu, there is a radio program on Konkōkyo through Radio KZOO every Sunday. This is a story broadcasted last year. Three years ago, when Mrs. Hirano, a member of Kaminokami church in Hyogo prefecture, was working, she was called by her boss and told that her son who works for a food manufacturing company got in an accident. One of his arms was caught in a machine. She rushed to her son's company and saw a rescue car, ambulance, fire engine and police cars, and realized it's very serious. She was told a rescue team has been trying to take him out from the machine, but it is taking time because the machine has to be disassembled little by little carefully. She called her church and requested, "Sensei, please pray for my son's life to be saved." After a while, her son was taken out and put on a stretcher, sleeping by medicine. Again, Mrs. Hirano called the church and told Sensei, "Please give thanks to Kami sama. It appears his life will be saved."

At the hospital, however, the doctor told Mrs. Hirano and her family that her son's right arm has to be amputated 3 inches below his shoulder. After the surgery when her son regained consciousness, Mrs. Hirano told him, "It is good you still have a life." Japanese law requires that an amputated arm be cremated. So the next day, Mrs. Hirano and her daughter-in-law went to a crematory with the arm in a small casket. Seeing the arm in a casket, they told each other, "It was good this is not his body," and held each other crying. I suppose it is very sad for them that her son was in an accident and lost his arm, but they appreciated more that his life was saved.

His siblings and others grieved over the loss of



Rev. Akinobu Yasutake

his arm, but he appeared not depressed much saying, "I still have another arm." He was in the hospital for three months, and did rehabilitation and training to use an artificial arm. Later, he was able to go back to his company, and took a position as a lift operator. Then, the COVID pandemic started. Many of his co-workers in his division became COVID positive. If the operation of his division stops, it affects the operation of the entire company. So he was appointed to be in charge of his division. He did all the work where he could with one hand, and asked for help from others where he was not able to do it by himself. He took a night shift as well. His company somehow managed to maintain normal operations during the pandemic.

Mrs. Hirano thought her son with just one hand would not be able to work as much as he used to, and he might cause trouble to his company. But his boss and co-workers praised and appreciated him saying the company's operations ran smoothly because of him. Mrs. Hirano and her son felt grateful that he could still be useful for the company and society. Even without his right arm, he can do various things using his left arm and mouth, so Mrs. Hirano jokingly told him, "Don't overuse your left arm. What if you lose both arms." He responded smiling, "Then I still have legs." She appreciated Kami sama that her son could take things positively being appreciative instead of grieving over what he lost.

This story made me recall a sermon delivered at Amagi church by Rev. Michiharu Konkō, who is the principal of Konkō Gakuen High School. In his sermon, he said those who practice Konkō faith should appreciate what remains instead of grieving what is lost, and introduced a story of two ladies. One is Ms. Mami Sato, who is a handicapped long jump athlete who entered the Paralympics three times: in Athens, Beijing and London. She lost her right leg below the knee due to osteosarcoma when she was a college student, but she continued competitive sports. Konkō Gakuen High School invited Ms. Sato to the school's 120th anniversary event as a guest speaker. In her speech, she emphasized that, "The important things to me are not what I lost, but what I have."

Rev. Michiharu Konkō also talked about another lady who is a very strong Konkō believer. She lost one of her legs due to a hit-and-run traffic accident.

At the moment of the accident before she lost consciousness, she thought she would lose both legs. When she regained consciousness, the first thing she did was check her legs. She realized she still had one leg, and immediately said, "Thank you Kami sama, I still have one leg!" Instead of weeping over the leg she lost, she appreciated that she still has another leg.

Konko Daijin taught, "If you practice faith in Kami, you will become close to Kami. Kami will then bestow divine blessings and turn major misfortunes into minor ones, and will take away the minor mishaps.

Those who say that they practice faith but are still unable to receive divine blessings, do not yet know the true virtue of Kami. You should realize that misfortunes cannot be fully understood by man. Even among devout believers, there are some who stop practicing faith because they experienced great misfortunes. They cut the roots of their faith instead of practicing faith to receive divine blessings that can cut the roots of their misfortunes. This is because they do not realize the true virtue of Kami. When people practice faith, they should know the true virtue of Kami." (Jinkyukyogoroku 32-2, 3)

I had a younger brother, the late Rev. Mitsumasa Yasutake, who passed away due to his illness, muscular dystrophy. This year marks 15 years since he passed away when he was only 48 years old. The symptoms of muscular dystrophy started in his 20's. He was fine before, but gradually he lost his muscular power, especially in his legs and arms. I thought, he's been practicing faith so sincerely so why does he have to suffer. But my father said, 「受けさせていただくしかない」 "We have no choice but humbly ac-

cept". Also, Mitsumasa never grieved over or complained about his illness. He always said, 「神さまがよいようにしてくださる」 "Kami sama will do it right".

Actually, he was an extremely premature baby when he was born. He was so small and weak that he could not feed. There were not many ways to save a premature baby in those days and the doctor said he would not survive. My mother wanted to give him a final breastfeed before he died, when all of a sudden, he started to suck and drink. Later, it was found that it was the time when the former head minister of Amagi church, Rev. Fumio Yasutake, was praying for him. My brother survived. These things cannot be fully understood by man, but I think he was supposed to die at that time and Kami sama extended his life. He could become a Konko minister and officiate daily services until almost the last day of his life.

Let me share one more teaching from Konko Daijin:

"Increasing worries or becoming anxious are signs of losing faith. At times like these, if you practice faith with a grateful heart, it becomes a training period of your faith and your faith will develop. If you do not, you will lose your faith. You will then be overcome by worries and misfortunes, and you will not be able to do anything." (III Jinkyukyogoroku 10)

While we are living, many things occur, and not all are pleasant and happy events. Time to time, we do have misfortunes and worries. But let us not be overcome by worries and misfortunes. Instead, let us practice faith, trusting Kami and taking misfortunes as a chance to develop faith and cut the roots of misfortune.

Now, Connected with God

Sermon given by Rev. Yoki Sekiguchi at the Konko Church of Yao

Hello, everyone. I would like to make a speech about myself. My name is Yoki Sekiguchi.

First and foremost, I am grateful to have this opportunity to present myself and give a speech. I want to express my deepest gratitude to you all.

As the title says, my speech is about the connection to God. In my speech, I will tell you about my past and what I came to think through a year-long learning and training at Konkoyo Gakuin (seminary). In the future, there are certain things I want to do. I will tell you about it too. But before I get into the details, I would like to tell you that I succeeded in quitting smoking during the training year. That was a big step for me. You may have been in a similar situation as me and have struggled to quit smoking. We waver between smoking and quitting.



Rev. Yoki Sekiguchi

You are tempted to smoke but you want to quit! It is half-hearted.

My life in the past and during the training year had something in common with this kind of half-hearted state. At that time, I was wavering in life. I was insecure with myself. I was grappling with my past, present and future prospects.

During my trials to quit smoking, my insecure mentality showed here and there. I could go without smoking a couple of days but I would end up buying a pack the following day. Or even though I tried to quit smoking, I could not resist accepting a cigarette from my friend. I felt pathetic.

Similarly, my life in training at Konkoyo Gakuin started in a pathetic state. In other words, I was standing on half-hearted ground. But this acknowledgement

of my weakness was a good starting point after all. "What am I going to do about my weakness?" was my question.

Now here, I want to say thank you to all the members of the Yao church for sending me to Konkokyo Gakuin by backing me up even though I was unstable.

There are some words I learned at Konkokyo Gakuin, "*Meguri*" and "*Okage*." *Meguri* is referred to as Karma. What goes around, comes around. *Okage* is like blessings.

Today, I want to talk about *Meguri*. Why do I need to talk about *Meguri* here?

It is because I came to think that my wrong-doing in the past had created a certain *Meguri* on myself. I realized I had become what I was because I was full of weakness and wavering. By thinking this way, I began to see things from different perspectives and insights.

"Why did I become such a weak and wavering ME?" The answer was within myself. I realized that how we use our minds in our daily lives may create *Meguri* or *Okage*.

In my thinking, both *Meguri* and *Okage* are the same as snow. Please imagine white snow slowly accumulating on the ground of a park or a field. The whole scene turning into pure white is the manifestation of Blessings (*Okage*). On the other hand, *Meguri* is like black snow. How terrible to see black snow accumulated on the ground. I think that it is up to us to accumulate white snow or black snow. It is absolutely our mind that creates the situation. I used the example of accumulation of snow here, but the expression Konkokyo uses to explain *Meguri* and *Okage* is "accumulation". (Tsumu:積む)

Meguri and *Okage* will not appear at once. The process is so gradual that it takes time for us to realize it. It is very similar to snow. In times of fortune or misfortune, we tend to think, "Wow. Great!" or "Oh no! Why me?" We think we became suddenly lucky or unlucky. But that is not the case. We are unconsciously making white snow or black snow particles in our mind that fall on ourselves.

That is how I came to think. There are of course calamities that we cannot control but our fortunes or misfortunes in our daily lives are attributed to our mind-sets.

The question is how do we make white snow? I think there are ways to make white snow and black snow. Being kind to people, helping those who are in trouble, and taking a lost wallet to the nearest police station, these actions cannot possibly make black snow.

On the contrary, bullying, harassing and ignoring others or littering a cigarette and stealing money from someone's wallet are the actions impossible to create white snow. The answer is very clear. It is just that simple. What goes around comes around. There is a law of attraction of white snow and black snow. The law I am talking about here is that our mind-set creates the case. If you find someone else's purse lost on the street, would you think you are lucky to have more money or would you think of taking it to the police sta-

tion so that she or he can get it back. Your mind and decision lead to a different fate. It is the law of cause and effect. Good mind and actions will certainly create white snow. Malicious mind and negative emotions will undoubtedly cause black snow to fall.

I wish I could talk about my own white snow story but unfortunately it was difficult for me to have a good and pure mind in the past. Understanding the law is easy but taking good actions is difficult. I want to explain how easy it is to make black snow if you are not very careful. In other words, you have to be aware of your weakness. If it is difficult for you to make white snow, let's try at least to avoid making black snow.

Making white snow is not that difficult if you follow God's wish. For example, if you find someone's wallet on the street, you would take it to the police station at once with god's intention in mind. But if you start thinking of excuses such as the police station is too far or you need money, your egoistic mind comes first, not God's wish. We as humans are so mentally weak that we tend to be self-centered or egoistic, forgetting God's intention. The battle within yourself is the key in your life.

At Konkokyo Gakuin, the teacher taught us there are two sides we have to deal with in life. One is our dream and the other is our mission. We want to make our dream come true but at the same time there are our own missions we have to take care of. Our mission has to come first, they explained. Otherwise, we will not have truly satisfying lives, even if our dreams came true.

We humans are weak. To have strength, we need to be patient and have courage to let go of our ego. I was a cry baby, and a clinging and wimpy boy as a child. A lot of people, including my friends, helped me carry on. I also received God's help. I am really grateful to everyone. They made me what I am now. Sometimes we cannot depend on other's help though. There are times we need to find ways ourselves to be full-fledged people. Being thankful to people and God is important but also, we have to strive to improve ourselves. I think that is one way to achieve our own mission in our lives. What I mean by strive is to overcome our weakness. As they say, "The first and best victory is to conquer self".

Overcoming a temptation to steal money from a wallet you picked up on the street is the great victory to yourself. That courageous action is watched by God for sure. To sum up, it is our mission for us not to create black snow. We are tested by God how we take actions in many cases. The case of picking up someone's wallet could be a test by God. God deliberately sets up some difficult situations or problems in front of us to see how we deal with them. To tell you to truth, I was in bad terms with my mother in the past. It is because I was not smart enough to have the courage to overcome my selfishness and improve myself. I have created *Meguri*, Karma.

Among other things, my mind-set was so wrong that I had created *Meguri*. At the age of 14, I dyed my hair nearly blond. At 15, I had my ears pierced. I started

smoking when I was 16. From 17, I became an absentee at school. I was dubbed "Mythical Pokemon" because I only showed up at school once a week or so.

These actions alone can create *Meguri* but the serious problem I had was that my mind was rotten. My mind was in the dark. I think it was my unhealthy mind that created the biggest *Meguri* in my life. Even now, I feel that I have to go on with lots of *Meguri* I had created at that time.

Now let me change a subject here. I would like to tell you how I got connected with Konkokyo. Before I get into the subject, I have to explain where I was born and grew up because it has something to do with Hawaii. My father was posted to Oahu in Hawaii in 1991 by the company he worked for in Tokyo. So I was born in Hawaii and stayed there until I was 7 years old.

Even though I was a Japanese, I felt like I was a kid with lots of Aloha spirit. My family returned to Japan and my life in Japan started when I was 7. Ever since I moved to Japan, I have always wanted to go back to Hawaii, my hometown. When I was 20, I abandoned everything in Japan and moved to Hawaii. I met Kunito-sensei in Hawaii at the age of 24. It was when I moved to the Big Island from Honolulu. He was my senior worker at my new working place. My first impression was he looked intimidating. He looked at me from my head to toes as if he was screening me. His first words were, "You look like a TV personality called Gekidanhitori(劇団ひとり)." Never had I imagined, the encounter with Kunito-sensei would lead me to Konkokyo at that time.

The connection to Kunito-sensei was the entry to Konkokyo for me. Please let me explain how my life was at that time. As I have told you, I came back to Hawaii with nothing. My life was miserable. I could hardly make a living. From 20 years old, I started to work in Honolulu for three years and then moved to the Big Island. For first three years, I had no savings, no friends and so many difficulties. I was fighting hard and only believing in myself. It was the toughest time, mentally and physically. I now think *Meguri* I had created in teenage years was falling on me. I was struggling but one day I found a job opening ad. I applied it and I was accepted right away. I was hired as a tour guide driver. Maybe I looked like an abandoned weak cat without money and had some experience driving.

The workers there questioned why hire him? In fact, I wasn't welcomed among colleagues because I had to spend more time for driving training than other workers. I was so thankful to the president who hired me. Kunito-sensei was not like the other workers. He understood my difficult circumstances and treated me nice. He often took me out for dinner and helped me a lot. He would take me to a local sushi restaurant and I always ordered the most expensive Unagi dish there.

He still teases me about my no hesitation-attitude even now. I owe him a lot other than meals he treated me. He would take time to teach me how to drive after long working hours. Who would take the time to teach a rookie how to drive?! We went all the way to the Sheraton Hotel, which is very far from our place.

Thanks to his help, my driving skills improved fast and I started to take some customers sightseeing. The relationship with other workers got better and I began to feel positive about everything. Everyone at work saw the fact that Kunito-sensei really took care of me well. No one could make complaints about me because Kunito-sensei was backing me up. It was not until he offered me some money to buy a car that I realized he was someone very special. I tell you that I did not go so far as to ask him for money for a car. At my debut as a guide, my salary went up, and he told me "You will need a car. Let's go find it. I will pay the deposit for you. You can pay me back monthly within a year. Just be careful not to cause a car accident. Hang in there!"

Within a day, I was a car owner. It was like a magic to me. I had been poor and getting nowhere but all of sudden I was driving my own car! I could not comprehend what was going on in front of me. But this incident became my important turning point. My life began to roll. I was so fortunate being with him. But then, I thought, "How come he is so nice to me more than anyone else?" His kindness and generosity were beyond my comprehension. Now I understand that he was there to help me. He had always been with his belief in God to give a helping hand to those who need help.

What he has done for me was for the good cause. So I received help from him, in another words, from God. This was how I touched the essence of Konkokyo for the first time in my life.

Since this incident, I began to see Kunito-sensei admiringly as a human being. I knew he was a Konkokyo minister, but we did not talk about its teachings that much. On many occasions, he pointed out that it was myself who had been making things difficult or complicating the situations. He did not mean to push his beliefs on me, but he explained difficulties are caused by my own heart.

Being impatient, full of complaints, being self-centered, and having a pessimistic side were always there. It was like only I was focusing on myself. I did not care much about others around me. Of course, there was no God in my mind either. I thought I was capable of leading my life by myself, alone. I had lost contact with my family too at that time. At the bottom of my heart, I believed in myself striving to survive. What is wrong with that? But at that time, things were not working for me.

The harder I put pressure on myself, the less energy I received. I had not had that much interest in Konkokyo when I was on the Big Island. From time to time, Kunito-sensei would take me to the Honolulu church to let me see the services. He told me to ask questions about anything if I felt I was stuck in life. It was my first experience to do "Otoritsugi."

"Life is hard. How and where did I choose the wrong path in my life? I began to cause lots of trouble as a teenager and built up bad relationships with my family. I am stuck in life. I feel like I cannot breathe well. Why do I feel this way?" was my question to them at Honolulu church.

The mediator replied, "You are not living your life.

You are allowed to live.”

I was taken aback by his answer because it never occurred to me to think that way. But at the same time, I felt relieved somehow. Up until then, I thought I had to take care and make efforts to live my life. It was a new and fresh perspective to embrace the idea of being allowed to live, receiving energy from a source other than myself.

From the first visit, I got more involved with their services and activities. Thanks to Kunito-sensei's enthusiastic efforts to guide me, I spent more time at the Honolulu church. As I began to learn the teachings of Konkokyo, I felt I was receiving the blessing from Kami-Sama. But I wondered why people like me, being a desperado and worthless like me can receive his blessing. Words cannot explain but I felt like some magnificent power was behind all of this. Now I am learning at Konkogakuin in Okayama as a student, and this kind of feeling of being blessed is getting stronger and stronger every day. I am so thankful for that.

Through Kami's compassionate heart, I began to think everything, including my darkest days, failures, and the suffering were meant to be connected with Kami's heart here. I was guided from the beginning after all. Now I came to think that falling black snow on myself was a necessary process to create some energy to find my true self as a child of Kami. I wouldn't have met Kunito-sensei and Konkokyo's Kami-Sama, if I had not left Japan to find a new life in Hawaii. If my life was going well and I was satisfied with everything in Japan, I would not have had to leave everything. It was possible that I took everything for granted and became an arrogant person creating much bigger *Meguri* later in my life. Maybe Kami has made my *Meguri* smaller by leading me to come to Hawaii while I was still young to correct my way of living. Maybe my *Meguri* was *Okage* after all.

Now I strongly feel that my life is not my own, but I am allowed to live by the force beyond. Through this way of thinking, I came to realize that Kami's plan is so magnificent and beyond our reach. I really appreciate his awesome guidance these days. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected my life as well. I lost my job and came back to Japan. I had to job-hop to go on living on my own. I did not live with my family and tried to be independent but it seemed only difficulties laid ahead. Konkokyo helped me here in Japan. Kunito-sensei showed me a possible way to be trained and become a minister at Konkogakuin so that I can avail myself as one of the ministers in Hawaii. Giving a meaning to my life as a minister to help the organization and people who need help in Hawaii seemed like a much better choice than just hopping from one job to another to earn a living. I confess that I wanted to go back to Hawaii because it is my hometown and I feel much happier there than living in Japan. But my decision to become a minister to work in Hawaii was for a good cause. I was connected with Kami-Sama there who guided and helped me. It is my turn to give back. Some part of me is self-centered and another part of me wants a meaningful life living as a minister.

Through one year of training at Konkogakuin, my way of thinking or mind-set has drastically changed. My purpose is not focused on going back to Hawaii, but changing myself. Broadening my perspective, kicking off bad and old habits and turning over a new leaf are much more important than just going back to Hawaii.

Without understanding the laws of *Meguri* and *Okage*, my life could be the same as the old one, full of troubles and sufferings. I might as well become stuck again. To tell you the truth, I do not want to go back to Hawaii yet. I need to grow more and I want to improve myself. I want to get everyone's approval and Kami-Sama's approval. At Konkogakuin, I deeply understood how immature I was, creating my own *Meguri* in life.

I cannot express my gratitude to Kami-Sama for letting me know how much I have to change and grow. I am focusing on the task at hand now. My wish to go back to Hawaii as a minister will be granted when I am approved by Kami-Sama. This is what I think now.

So please let me continue my training a little bit longer. I have just begun to grasp God's intention and heart. What matters most is that I need to focus on the task at hand and be able to return my duty to Kami-Sama. Let me introduce one of the teachings of Konkokyo which I encountered at the very beginning of my training at school.

Ikigami Konko Daijin
Tenchi Kane No Kami

Prayer sincerely,
With all your heart.
Be one with Kami

Kami's blessings begin within
Hearts grateful and caring,
In harmony and joy.

Look to Kami always,
Now and forever.
On this very day, pray.

This prayer fits with what I am right now. At the end of my story, I would like to tell you an episode during my school year. I was not good at cleaning the hallway, especially wiping the floor with a wet rag. Even though I did not do well, I stopped complaining about it and just focused on cleaning the floor as I cleared my mind. By the time I finished a year-long school training, about the end of March to the beginning of April,

I fixed my eyes on the beautiful cherry blossoms above my head. I was moved by its beauty and I felt that I was blessed by Kami-Sama. It was as if it was the celebration from Kami-Sama with a warm message, "Good things happen if you keep tackling with things even though you do not know the meaning of them." From this experience, I decided to stop giving up on things so easily and keep on challenging myself until I get the hang of them. This was truly a revelation and a gift from Kami-Sama at the end of my school year.

As cherry blossoms takes time to bloom through weathering heat waves in summer and blizzards in winter, my blooming time will take time.
Thank you.

Hanashikai

March 10, 2024

Mrs. Karen Taniguchi, Konko Mission of Waipahu

Reverend Santaro and Mrs. Sueka Sonoda founded the Waipahu Konko Mission. This church is their legacy. The church was established in 1938 when Reverend Santaro Sonoda received the mission from Konkosama, to open a Konko church in Hawaii. This year, we are observing Reverend Sonoda's 50 years memorial anniversary. It is therefore very special that we could speak of our legacies here, at this church, in this hanashikai.

Waipahu Konko Mission hosted the spring hanashikai via Zoom. Three churches participated in the event, Honolulu and Wahiawa Kyokai, along with us, on the topic, "Legacy". Several people shared stories of their legacy, the impact that people had on their lives or how they influenced many, keeping alive and passing on something valuable to future generations. At the core of many of the stories is the impact of Konkokyo. These are the stories:

Fumihiko Indei is the founder of the Aisen Shiatsu School. Along with his wife, Elaine, he has taught, certified shiatsu therapists and provided therapy for forty-seven years. Forty-seven years ago, the word "shiatsu" was not a word that people knew. Today, it's an entry in Webster's Dictionary. Sensei's legacy of shiatsu in Hawaii has been a journey, an achievement he said that was possible thanks to Konkokyo's teachings guiding him. When he left Japan decades ago, his teacher told him to choose a religion, for spiritual guidance. Indei Sensei came to the Konko faith. He embraced Konko teachings. They helped him endure and face each day with ease. He learned not to worry about tomorrow, but face today with grace, respecting people, recognizing Kami's blessings and being appreciative of it. He lives by this tenant, his mantra to this day. He said that even at 83, going on 84, in this, his zodiac year of the dragon, he is still learning. There are many unseen blessings that he has yet to discover, he said.

Another person who has had an impact on people's lives is also a teacher, by profession as well as in the karate dojo. Clayton Matsuoka's legacy story is a poignant one of how he came to become the Sensei of his dojo. Clayton had been a student at the dojo, now practicing karate for 38 years. One



day just before his sensei passed away, he took Clayton aside and asked him to take over the care of the dojo. Clayton was entrusted to carry on the tradition of his late teacher. This was 26 years ago, and even through lean times, he has carried on what he was charged to do. Reverend Edna, his

wife said of his efforts, "hosoku, nagaku tsuzukeru". It's a Konko teaching about diligence; never giving up especially in adversity. Clayton said that at times when no one came it was hard to keep the dojo open, but he never closed the doors. His dojo is more robust now and the legacy of his teacher continues with him, at the helm.

Arthur Isaki talked about his legacy, working over thirty years mentoring young people from elementary school age to high school, coaching several different athletic programs. His impact went beyond helping them develop skills on the football field, basketball and volleyball courts, baseball diamonds, but also guiding young people develop character and build skills in teamwork and forge friendships. He is proudly witnessing his own children carrying on his legacy into the next generation, to his grandchildren. It's a legacy that enriches the community as he can see the children he's worked with, from a diverse population including the underprivileged, grow to become successful members of the community.

Wanda Tamashiro's mother-in-law, Mildred Tamashiro, was a very special, giving person. Her legacy is etched in Wanda's memory as the gifted seamstress with an endless supply of energy and generosity, who made for herself and her daughter Jill, dozens, maybe hundreds of articles of clothing, some of which she still uses today. Over the years she sewed and donated dozens of her handcrafted nightwear, pillowcases, dish towels and other things to the Waipahu Konko Mission bazaars. Wanda's family and friends have been the lucky recipients of her many creations - muumuus and dresses, something they are appreciative of. Wanda is striving to keep Mildred Tamashiro's legacy alive by embroidering dishcloths and passing them on to her children and grandchildren and as she does that, telling them stories about this special person, their grandmother-

great grandmother.

Trisha Adkinson's grandmother passed on the Konko faith to her. This is the precious legacy that she hopes to nurture and pass on to her children. She only recently learned that her ancestors helped in the founding of the Wahiawa Konko Church. This history and her grandmother's strong faith are the basis for the bond which she has with church. She thinks of the church as another home, especially as she feels it brings her closer to her grandmother. Like many families, she and her husband do not force their children to attend church with her. She therefore has taken it upon herself to be the spiritual leader of the family, to teach them how to live with Kami in their lives, and she hopes that they will someday attend church with her. Her dedication to this endeavor is the spiritual legacy she is fostering.

"Suffering is a blessing". This is what Reiko Motosue's mother said to her. Suffering can become a blessing. This is what her mother realized when she became a Konko believer.

Reiko attributes her faith to her mother. This is her legacy. Her mother's faith began with personal hardship. A friend saw her mother's suffering and encouraged her to seek help at the Konko church. She found the words of the Sensei very comforting. She went to the church daily, to pray. Sensei told her to be patient, that Kamisama always cared about her. There were times she got angry because her prayers were not answered. She cried to Sensei, asking why her situation didn't improve. Sensei told her, "Your sadness makes Kamisama sad. He cries with you." Upon hearing that, she felt sadness leave her mind. She realized that she only focused on sufferings and did not recognize the many good things in her life. She apologized to Kami that she did not show her gratitude for that. She felt that it was a turning point in her life and from then on, blessings flowed to her. Although there was no cure for the situation that caused her sadness, she could take it in stride and focus on being happy.

My story is of the impact of the elders in my life. I grew up in Kalihi, in what we called a "camp", a close-knit community where people relied on and helped one another; the younger families helping the seniors and the seniors helping the young families with children. The obaachans of the camp were often our teachers, as our parents were busy at work. We followed them around and watched them cook, talk story, confide in each other, make things, and find joy in

discovery. They took us into their homes and patiently taught us how to make things-sock dolls, macrame bags, paper flowers, and such, and even tsukemono. They were our silent models of respectful living with grace, a powerful legacy. Later, in my adult life there were the ladies of the church, Mrs. Takemoto, Mrs. Kawakami, Mrs. Shimai and Mrs. Ishii, who continued the legacy of teaching me, not only in words, but by action, many life's lessons in all things wonderful. The power of people teaching by example and kindly allowing us to discover together is the wonderful muscle memory thing and a spiritual memory legacy. It shows us the impact that we all have on people in our lives.

In our next story, it all began with a large stainless steel mixing bowl positioned in a large trash can filled with cement, paired with a handmade mallet made from a guava tree cut from their yard. This was 33 years ago, the beginning of the tradition of mochi pounding at the Wahiawa Konko Mission. The engineer behind it is the Reverend Yasuhiro Yano. But it is made possible because of the strong support of family, members of the church, community participants, and now, second-generation helpers. The mochi pounding event grew from a small church project to a wider audience and community participation. It has become an annual tradition, growing into a cultural event, demonstrations at the Japanese Cultural Center of Hawaii and demos at many hotels like the Sheraton, Hawaii Prince. Reverend Edna mentioned again the "hosoku, nagaku" teaching, referring to the dedication and perseverance that made this possible, a legacy that grew from humble beginnings.

The Konko spiritual legacy spans six generations, from the Ikigami Konko Daijin to his grandson, the third Konko-sama, the great grandfather of Reverend Koichi Konko, to the present ministers. Reverend Koichi showed the Konko family tree from the third Konko-Sama, which is ever expanding. He counted 81 contemporaries of his generation and 70 in his son Michiyo's generation, in this family tree created ten years ago. It is still growing.

As we shared our stories of legacies, we acknowledge the hearts of the ministers and their wives who were devoted to their service to their church and to us, their congregation. Their unwavering faith has brought immeasurable blessings to us past, present and future, to help us live with the joy that we live with today.

Join us for the next Rotary Hanashikai!!

On August 4, 2024 @ 10:30AM HST

Theme: Root of My Faith

Hosted by the Konko Mission of Honolulu

You can also join via Zoom: Meeting ID: 847 4142 7204 Passcode: 063254

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!

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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.