Konko Missions in Hawaii NEWSLETTER

Malamalama



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

In Memory of the 5th Konko-Sama

By Rev. Koichi Konko, Konko Mission of Honolulu

Reverend Heiki Konko passed away on July 21, 2024, at the age of 89. He served as the Fifth Konko-Sama since 1991 for 30 years.

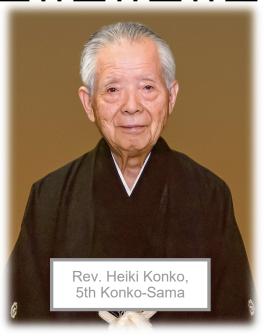
He stated at his inauguration service as the new Spiritual Head of Konkokyo,

「金光教のすべての皆さんとともに『世話になる すべてに 礼を言う心』を土台に、日に日に新たに信心生活を進め、教団の営みの、教会の働きに、信奉者の生活に、『氏子あっての神、神あっての氏子、あいよかけよで立ち行く生神金光大神取次の道の真を、

いっそう現させていただくことができますよう、大みかげを頂き、教団を挙げて世界の平和と人類の助かり に役立たせて頂きたい」

"Together with all members of Konkokyo, based on the spirit of 'being grateful for everything and expressing appreciation to all things,' we shall advance our faith life, renewing it day by day. In the operations of our religious organization, in the work of our churches, and in the lives of our believers, may the true essence of the Way of Mediation of Ikigami Konko Daijin, be increasingly manifested, with the understanding that 'Kami is fulfilled in us. We are fulfilled in Kami. May this Way of Mutual Fulfillment be manifested.' With this great divine favor, we wish to unite our entire religious community and contribute to world peace and the salvation of humanity."

One of his remarkable teachings for me was given to 14 exchange students of Konko Gakuen High



School from Australia at the Toritsugi Mediation seat at the Central Worship Hall. It was in English since he spoke fluent English. "Let me give you three Japanese words. Kami, that's God in English. Toritsugi, that's mediation. Ujiko, that's people or man. These are essential terms in Konkokyo. Kami does not attain fulfillment without man's working. And man owes his existence to Kami. I'm here engaged in intermediary work or mediation between Kami and man.

Both Kami and man are in the relation of mutual dependence upon each other. Kami exists because of man and man because of Kami. As Heaven and Earth's reminder by the Founder reads:

"Pray singleheartedly, the divine favor depends on your heart." This relationship is called "Aiyo Kakeyo", that's mutual relationship. The relationship between Kami and man is just like the relationship between parents and their children. Man is given partial Kamihood since his birth. We must become aware of Kami's existence within our hearts. That is a living Kami. When we die, we are divided into body and soul. And this soul is everlasting."

Another message is the Fifth Konko-Sama's dream at the interview for the KMH 80th Anniversary. We were honored to interview him for our KMH 80th Anniversary in 2006. The interviewer asked him to share his dream in the end. "The late Third and Fourth Konko-Sama never ceased to perform the sacred mediation in the main Worship Hall, and they prayed for the salvation of all people every single day. I hope to follow in their footsteps as well. My sincere wish and dream is for all people, as many as possible, to practice our Founder's faith and to con-

.....continued on page 2

nect with Kami. It is my dream for the creation of the world where all mankind is saved."

When I asked the 5th Konko-Sama whether Konkokyo is polytheistic or monotheistic since there are many deities' names that appear in the Founder's biography, the response was: "There were various stages in the Founder's faith, but it is Tenchi Kane No Kami alone."

I would like to share the Konko-Sama's words, "Prosperity from Generation to Generation" as I once asked him, "What is the most important thing to you?" I asked the same question twice on different occasions and he imparted me this immediately.

I believe he is working for us as a Mitama-Sama with the other Konko-Samas for our Prosperity from Generation to Generation.



Godai Konko-Sama

By Rev. Todd Takahashi, Konko Church of San Diego

Written for the "Ametsuchi" Quarterly Newsletter distributed by Konkokyo Headquarters; October 2023 issue

Aside from having once lived in Hawai'i and lacking the ability to fly to Japan whenever I wanted, the only opportunities I had in my youth to make a pilgrimage to Konkōkyō Headquarters were during family trips to Japan.

My father reminded me of one particular *omairi* when he was scolded by the fourth Konkō Sama, the late Reverend Kagamitarō Konkō. I had been a bit rambunctious, and in response, my father hit me on the back of my head. Konkō Sama admonished my father, saying, "Don't hit your son's head." Reflecting on it now, from that moment on, my father never struck my siblings or me on the head again.

That said, I must admit that I never really knew the Fourth Konkō Sama personally. However, as I prepared to become a minister, I would visit Konkōkyō Headquarters during the first year of the 5th Konkō Sama's legacy. I was excited, as I knew he spoke English, and I would finally have the chance to experience *Toritsugi* in my own language. But to be honest, I didn't fully understand what Toritsugi truly was at the time. It was through the grace and nurturing of the 5th Konkō Sama—the Reverend Heiki Konkō—that I began to develop my own understanding of it.

You Can Otodoke About Anything

After my first few weeks as a *kenshūsei* (trainee) at the Konkōkyō Theological Institute, I had finally settled in and was thinking about what to do for the weekend. I thought I'd ask Konkō Sama for his thoughts. But something stopped me. Was it right to ask Konkō Sama about this kind of matter at the Okekkai? I wasn't sure. After all, I was only 17 and

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didn't know much! Still, I decided to go ahead and ask anyway. I felt that if it was inappropriate, Konkō Sama would guide me.

Konkō Sama was very kind. He suggested I visit the Ōhara Art Museum in Kurashiki City and explore the Bi-kanchiku area. In hindsight, I was amazed. How did Konkō Sama know that I loved the arts? I had never told anyone.

That day, I traveled to Kurashiki City and found the Ōhara Art Museum. When I was ready to pay for my ticket, the woman at the entrance asked, "Are you Takahashi-san?" I replied yes, and she said, "Mr. Konkō mentioned you would be coming. Here is your ticket. Please come in." I was completely stunned!

Needless to say, I loved the museum and the Bikanchiku area.

The next morning, just before the 6:00 am prayer with the *gakuinsei* (seminarians), I eagerly approached Konkō Sama to thank him. He smiled and said, "I'm glad you had a wonderful time. I am grateful."

That day, I learned an important lesson: you can otodoke about anything. It's not about seeking permission to do something, but rather, through Toritsugi, we share our hearts and desires with Kami Sama. Konkō Sama prayed for my safety and enjoyment, and that made all the difference.

"You Can Still Meet Her."

In 1991, I graduated from high school and left that summer for Konkō Town. During my first week, the late Reverend Kazumichi Konkō asked me, "Todd, which minister do you wish to meet the most while you're here in Japan?" Without hesitation, I replied, "The Reverend Kō Itō."

As a child, I attended the Waipahu Church for Sunday services and Sunday school. I vividly remember the Reverend Akinobu Yasutake and the late Reverend Mitsumasa Yasutake, on different occasions, giving sermons about Reverend Itō's fish story. That story left a deep impression on me as a child. Until then, I believed ministers lived problem-free lives. Hearing that story, I was deeply moved by Itō Sensei's ability to remain positive despite the challenges and adversity she faced. From that moment on, I strove to live with positivity and forward-thinking, and because of her influence on my life, I longed to meet her.

Reverend Konkō looked over at Reverend Hikaru Miyata (Shimanouchi Church, Ōsaka) and said some-



Rev. Todd Takahashi

thing to him. Miyata Sensei then turned to me and said in English, "Todd, Itō Sensei is no longer alive. She passed away." I was stunned. For years, I had prayed and hoped to meet Itō Sensei. I had eagerly anticipated it, only to find out that she had already passed. I was heartbroken.

Later that day, I went to the Fifth Konkō Sama, feeling despondent, and shared what had happened. Konkō Sama responded, "Todd, you can still meet the Reverend Kō Itō. Pray to her and ask her directly. I promise you will meet her." I was taken aback. How could I meet someone who had passed away? I thought Konkō Sama's words were outlandish and he might be crazy. Yet, because he had encouraged me to pray and ask Itō Sensei, I began doing so every day.

In 1992, I entered the Konkōkyō Gakuin (Konkōkyō Seminary) as a *kenshūsei* and made some wonderful friends, one of whom was Norio Kohigashi. That summer, during the Gakuin's vacation, my parents encouraged me to travel and explore any part of Japan. I decided to visit Ōsaka. While there, I visited Norio's church, the Konkō Church of Ryūge. During that visit, I learned that Norio's parents had been seminary classmates with the Reverend Yoshie Nagai (Hilo Church, the 4th Head Minister), with whom my family had a close connection.

Somehow, the conversation turned to Itō Sensei, and Norio's father said, "Todd, do you know that this church's parent church is the Abeno Church?" I was floored. Norio had never mentioned this to me. His father continued, "Stay the night. Tomorrow, you and Norio will visit Abeno Church."

The next day, on our way to Abeno Church, I was filled with anxiety. I was still wearing yesterday's clothes and didn't feel presentable. I hadn't prepared an offering either, as I hadn't known we were going to Abeno Church. After praying and receiving Toritsugi, we were greeted in the reception room by the assistant head minister, Reverend Norikazu Itō. Despite my worries, I was never judged for my appearance.

On my journey back to Konkō Town, I reflected on my visit and Konkō Sama's words. I realized that I had indeed met Kō Itō Sensei—through both Norio and Reverend Itō. The day I returned from Ōsaka, I sought Toritsugi with Konkō Sama, and he imparted these words to me:

How wonderful! You met the Reverend Kō Itō!

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¹ Reverend Kō Itō is the second head minister of the Abeno Church.

² The Abeno Church's parent church is the Shimanouchi Church.

That is very good. Now, if you truly want to meet her, you must keep her in your heart and never forget her. She will have much to teach you. She is a great minister, and you will see her influence in your life. You may not have met her in life, but as a mitama, you can witness her virtue. Keep her in your heart, Todd.

This is an experience I will never forget. Through Konkō Sama's Toritsugi, I was able to witness the profound workings of the mitama. I met Itō Sensei not only at the Abeno Church's Mitama Altar but also through Rev. Norikazu Itō, and my classmate Norio. Truly, her influence endures.

Toritsugi is Liberating

Before the daily prayers in the Main Worship Hall, the *hōshi*, representing the entire Konkōkyō Seminary, delivers a prescribed supplication to Konkō Sama, written by the Seminary. During these moments, Konkō Sama never responds to the seminarians.

A few days before my first time as hōshi, I began practicing and struggling to memorize the mandated Japanese supplication. I asked my Group Advisor, the Reverend Nobumichi Ōkubo, if I could do it in English. He told me that, to be fair to the other seminarians, it had to be done in Japanese. However, he suggested that I could seek special permission from the headmaster.

I went to see the headmaster, the late Reverend Wataru Kobayashi, and requested his approval to do the supplication in English. He denied my request, explaining that since I was in Japan, it would be good practice for my Japanese and fair to the other seminarians.

On the day I was to be hōshi, I recited the supplication in Japanese as instructed. Almost immediately, Konkō Sama looked at me and asked in English, "Why are you speaking in Japanese?" I explained the situation, and after my *otodoke*, the prayer service began a little later than usual. This happened again the second time I was hōshi.

However, on my third opportunity to be hōshi, despite the expectations, I spoke only in English. Konkō Sama, in a loud and clear voice, said in English, "Please begin the prayer service." There was a stunned silence in the Hiromae, and shock was evident on the faces of the Seminary staff, my peers, and the other worshippers. I immediately began the prayer service.

Afterward, I was summoned to the headmaster's office. Reverend Kobayashi said to me:

I don't know why we placed limits on you. I should have allowed you to do otodoke in English from the beginning. How can Toritsugi be a liberating experience if we impose restrictions? How can people be saved if they are limited? You've taught me an important lesson.

Finding My Last Dissertation Committee Member

In late 2009, my dissertation proposal was approved. The next step was to find my committee members. I was very grateful that the chairperson for the Department of Education at my university agreed to be my committee chair, but I still needed to find two more members.

One of the first people who came to mind was the Reverend Dr. Shinkichi Kawai, the head minister of Nakano Church (Tōkyō). However, I faced two challenges: I didn't know how to contact him, and I worried, "Would Sensei even accept?" I realized that if I were to complete my dissertation successfully, I needed to seek Toritsugi about each matter.

Since I didn't have Kawai Sensei's email, I reached out to the Reverend Yoshikazu Matsuda, the associate minister at Bihaku Church (Okayama). Matsuda Sensei asked me, "What is the purpose of your dissertation?" I explained that my prayer was for this dissertation to serve the Konkōkyō Seminary and possibly other Japanese religious seminaries. I also wanted to do this in honor of, and as a tribute to, my parents and Konkō Sama, both of whom had been significant influences in my life. Matsuda Sensei replied, "In that case, I will seek Toritsugi on your behalf and then ask Kawai Sensei."

To my amazement, less than a day later, Matsuda Sensei informed me, "Kawai Sensei has agreed. He will take good care of you."

However, I still needed a third committee member. I struggled to come up with someone. I asked several professors I respected, but they all declined due to heavy workloads. My best friend, who was already a doctor, offered to help. My dissertation chair suggested two other individuals who could possibly serve on my committee. But with just one week left to submit the final name, I felt completely stuck. If I didn't submit a name in time, I would have to restart the dissertation process entirely.

In my desperation, I sent an otodoke to Konkō Sama through Reverend Matsuda, mentioning the two names suggested by my chair, as well as my best friend's name. That same day, Matsuda Sensei responded, "Konkō Sama did not give me a direct answer. Instead, he said he will take care of the matter himself." I was panicking. How could Konkō Sama resolve this matter so quickly? In the world of instant emails, I wondered how he would provide an immediate response.

Two days after sending my otodoke, I received an envelope from Hombu Hiromae. I hadn't sent an offering, yet here it was—delivered by express mail. When I looked closely at the envelope, I noticed it was from "Heiki Konkō," written in Konkō Sama's own handwriting. I was stunned. I placed the envelope on the altar and thanked Kami Sama. Then, with great care, I opened it. Inside was Goshinmai with the name: Dr. Tim Greene.

I was deeply humbled. I contacted Dr. Greene immediately, and to my surprise, he enthusiastically accepted. He wrote:

I am very excited to be part of your dissertation committee, especially since your research on seminary effectiveness is exactly the kind of research I've



been doing for years, though in a Christian context. I am very grateful! Please call on me if you need help.

I was in shock. I knew nothing about Dr. Greene, who also happened to be a Christian pastor! Konkō Sama had chosen the perfect person for me from the list of three individuals.

I immediately sent my heartfelt thanks to both Reverend Matsuda and Konkō Sama. In June of 2011, I graduated with my doctorate.

I Am a Worthless Minister

At present, I am doing *goyō* at the Konkō Church of San Diego. This church has a dramatic history, and there are many times, I feel as though I am starting from scratch. Since the congregation is small and the Hiromae is in the home of a believer, I live separately from the church. I am responsible for two churches—San Diego and Whittier-Rose Hill—as well as myself. In addition to this, I am also working as a high school teacher.

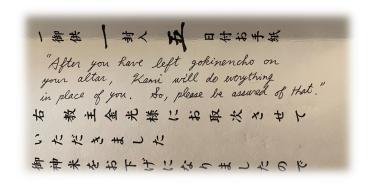
To me, the *Gokinenchō* (Prayer Notebook) is the heart of the church, and it takes time to write in it properly. After completing the entries, I would pray and offer the contents to Kami Sama. However, my prayers for the Gokinenchō would always take place at night, as the last thing I did before bed. But with my church goyō, research, travel, and work, I was constantly exhausted. Many nights, I would fall asleep in front of the altar during prayer. Other times, I would drift in and out of sleep while praying. Some nights, I was so fatigued that I would fall asleep on the floor before I could even begin to pray.

I began to feel guilty, hating myself for not doing my goyō properly. I felt like I was letting down Konkō Sama, Reverend Kōichi Konkō, Reverend Roderick Hashimoto (San Diego Church, Second Head Minister), Reverend Masao Yukawa (Head Minister of San Diego's Parent Church), the late Reverend Norikazu Yukawa (San Diego Church's Founding Minister), and all the members of the San Diego congregation. The guilt became so overwhelming that I seriously considered returning to Hawai'i, convinced I was do-

ing a disservice to Kami Sama, Konkō Sama, and the San Diego *uiiko*.

Before acting on this impulse, I sent an otodoke to Konkō Sama, pouring out my heart and confessing that I felt like a worthless minister.

A few weeks later, I received the otodoke receipt paper, on which Konkō Sama had written: "After you have left Gokinenchō on your altar, Kami will do everything in place of you. So, please be assured of that."



Upon reading those words, I realized that Kami Sama sees me and all that I do. Through Konkō Sama's sacred message, I was saved—knowing that he was praying for me and supporting me in my efforts.

Today, I continue to work full-time while caring for two churches. With Konkō Sama's sacred words as my foundation, I offer the Gokinenchō to the altar and ask Ikigami Konkō Daijin Sama, the successive Konkō Samas, the present Konkō Sama, the late Reverend Yasutarō Yukawa, the Reverend Norikazu Yukawa, and my aunt, the Reverend Haruko Takahashi, to please pray on my behalf.

Nurtured

Although these are just a few of the many cherished episodes, I am beyond grateful for the 30 years of nurturing I have received from the Fifth Konkō Sama. The valuable experiences and lessons I've gained from him are countless. From his prayers to his teachings, I am truly indebted to the Reverend Heiki Konkō for his patience, guidance, love, and prayers over the past three decades. He has been such an integral part of my life since I first met him at the age of 17, and I will never forget all that he has so graciously bestowed upon me.

五代金光様、お疲れ様でした。ありがとうございました。

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In Memory of Rev. Ann Yoshie Nagai

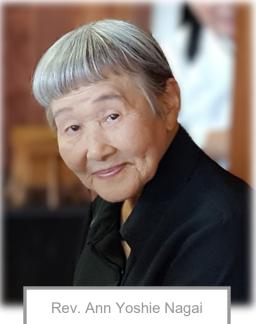
By Ms. Sharyn Hirata, Director, Konko Mission of Hilo

Yoshie Yamanaka Nagai was born in Dairen, Manchuria on August 26, 1930. Sensei, as we called her, began her religious life as early as five years old, bundled up against the freezing cold of Dairen, and trudging hand in hand with her mom at 5:30 every morning to go to church. Later, under influence of her mentors Reverend Matsuyama and Reverend Nishida, who founded the Konko Mission of Hilo, Yoshie attended seminary in Japan and eventually became a minister herself. When Revered Nishida proposed that she come to Hilo to become part of the Hilo church, she gladly accepted.

When she arrived in Hilo in 1960 as an assistant to both Nishida ministers, Yoshie Sensei was always busy. In fact, if you attended this church in those days and even after, there was always the sound of her running footsteps in the church hallways as well as up and down the stairs.

Yoshie became an American citizen and acquired Ann as her American name. After she married Revend Makio Nagai, the Hilo Church's new head minister, everyone could see that she was a wonderful partner and supporter to the Nagai Sensei. Although she did not have children herself, she regarded all the children of the congregation as her own and enjoyed them when they came to the church, teaching Sunday school to the youngsters who attended church. Even as adults, many of them still have very fond memories of Sensei's warmth, caring and her Konkokyo teachings.

During Makio Sensei's later illness, Yoshie Sensei provided him with great devotion and care. After Makio Sensei passed, Yoshie Sensei continued to be a model of strong faith and trust in Kami-Sama's



guidance and support. She prayed every day that she could continue to serve Konko Mission of Hilo as previous ministers had done. She was always smiling, cheerful and positive because she truly believed that Kami-Sama would be there to help and guide everyone.

Despite unfortunate signs of failing health, Sensei always kept her faith and her good humor. Whenever I asked how she was doing, she regularly replied, "I have to be sure I eat well, I sleep well, and I keep using my brain. I have to keep healthy until the new minister comes." She also told me that we should not be worried and stressed about the future of our church. "Kami Sa-

ma will help us," she often said.

Our Bishop Koichi Konko once told me that he strongly believed that Kami-Sama always listened to Yoshie Sensei. A few days before she passed, I visited Sensei at the care facility where she lived when it became too dangerous to live at the church by herself. The nurses told me she quickly became a favorite because she was always so good natured, friendly, and cooperative. Sensei reassured me that she "ate well, slept well, and enjoyed watching television." When I told her the miraculous news that a new minister would indeed be coming in December, she was so elated, "Yokatta! Yokatta! Kore wa Kami-Sama no okage!" ("That's wonderful! That's wonderful! This is Kami-Sama's blessing!") On August 26th, Sensei celebrated her 94th birthday. At about 1:30 AM the next morning, she passed quietly in her sleep.

I know that Rev. Ann Yoshie Nagai is now happily watching all of us continue to support Konkokyo and her beloved Hilo church. Thank you, Yoshie Sensei, for your great faith teaching to us.

KMH Faith Enrichment Meeting Summary

On September 7, 2024, the KMH Faith Enrichment Gathering was held in a hybrid format, both in person and via Zoom, from 1:30 pm to 3:15 pm. This was a significant gathering as it marked the first hybrid event since the pandemic, providing an opportunity for members to reflect on the theme, "Aiming Towards the KMH Centennial: How Have We Been

Incorporating the Faith in Our Daily Life?" The event drew 19 participants in person and 3 online.

The gathering began with a prayer to center the hearts of participants, followed by introductory remarks on the upcoming KMH Centennial in 2026. The day's discussion revolved around how individuals have been practicing and incorporating their

Konkokyo faith into daily life, inspired by the milestone of 100 years of KMH in Hawaii.

Key Speakers and Reflections:

Dr. John Tamashiro, a prominent speaker, shared his perspective on faith using sports analogies. He spoke about teamwork, likening the Konkokyo community to a team with individuals supporting each other in their spiritual practices. Dr. John emphasized the significance of daily prayers, highlighting how starting the day with prayer provides spiritual strength to face life's challenges.

Another speaker, Mrs. Trisha Adkison, shared her personal experiences of returning to Hawaii after years away and how her practice of faith deepened during that time. She reflected on how Konkokyo principles, such as gratitude and daily prayer, help her feel more at peace. Mrs. Trisha incorporated simple yet profound practices like praying before driving or expressing gratitude for the blessings of life, which have significantly impacted her family and spiritual journey. She also discussed how she is passing on these values to her children, encouraging them to practice their faith during moments of fear or uncertainty.

The participants then engaged in an interactive Q&A session, where individuals shared their personal stories of incorporating faith into their lives. The session provided valuable insights into various daily practices, from morning prayers to gratitude rituals, that have helped maintain a connection to Kami and Konkokyo teachings.

Shared Practices:

- Many attendees expressed how prayers of gratitude help them remain grounded and connected to Kami. Starting the day with a prayer, whether short or long, was emphasized as an important spiritual foundation.
- One attendee shared their practice of praying for the well-being of their patients at work, seeing this as an opportunity to serve others through their faith.

- Another participant, a golfer, shared how even on

the golf course, they find time to reflect on the blessings of life, offering prayers of thanks for their health and the ability to enjoy simple pleasures. Faith in Daily Life:

The gathering highlighted how participants weave their faith into their everyday routines. Whether through prayer while driv-

ing, at work, or even after completing household chores, many described how these small but consistent practices have helped them remain spiritually connected throughout their busy lives.

One particularly touching story came from a participant who reflected on their experience after their father's passing. They shared a vivid dream in which their father appeared on a bridge, symbolizing peace and acceptance after his death. This experience reinforced their belief in the importance of prayer and asking for Kami's guidance in navigating life's challenges.

Recognition of Long-Standing Members:

The gathering also honored long-standing members of the KMH community who have contributed to the growth and sustenance of the Konkokyo faith in Hawaii. Among them was Flora, who has been a dedicated practitioner for decades. The recognition ceremony underscored the deep commitment of these members to living out their faith daily and inspiring others through their example.

Conclusion:

The KMH Faith Enrichment Gathering was a time of reflection, sharing, and connection for the Konkokyo community. Attendees left feeling inspired by the stories and practices shared, with a renewed commitment to incorporate their faith into every aspect of their lives. As the KMH Centennial approaches, the community looks forward to continuing its journey together, deepening its faith, and celebrating 100 years of spiritual growth in Hawaii.

This gathering was a meaningful step toward fostering a deeper understanding of how faith can guide daily life, with attendees sharing not only their successes but also their challenges in maintaining their spiritual practices. The hybrid format allowed for broader participation and demonstrated the community's resilience and adaptability in the face of modern challenges.

The event concluded with a reminder to carry forward the lessons and inspirations from the gathering

as KMH continues to build toward the Centensign in nial in 2026. It was a memorable and heartwarming occasion that strengthened the bonds within the Konkokyo community, reaffirming the significance of faith in daily life.



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Konko Missions in Hawaii

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KMH Mission Statement

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

"Malamalama" is now available through e-mail!

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

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

Thank you!

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

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