2026 CHURCH SCHEDULE REMINDER

January 睦月

1	**Thurs. 9:00a.m.**	**New Year's Day Service**
4		Sunday Service – Sunday Gathering
11		**Monthly Service – Shintokai Meeting**
18		Sunday Service – **Church Goyo**
25		**Monthly Service & Monthly Memorial Service** Church Clean-up

New Year's Day Service

As we welcome 2026, we warmly invite you to begin the new year together at our New Year's Day Service on **January 1, 2026, at 9:00 a.m.** Let us start the year with gratitude, prayer, and positive energy, entrusting the year ahead to Kami. We look forward to sharing this meaningful beginning with you and our Konko ohana.

Sermon Summaries

"Practicing Faith—Directing Our Hearts Toward Kami" December 7, 2025

In this sermon, we were reminded of a fundamental teaching of Konkokyo: **faith is the act of directing our own hearts toward Kami**. The teaching from *Voice of the Universe* states, "Shin means your heart, and jin means Kami. Practicing faith means you direct your heart toward Kami." Even though we live surrounded by divine blessings, we cannot truly receive them unless our hearts are turned toward Kami. Faith is not something abstract—it is a daily, personal practice.

To illustrate this, the sermon introduced the life story of **Rev. Hiroki Yamada**, a 34-year-old minister from the Konko Church of Yasuura. Rev. Yamada shared a simple but striking moment from his daily life. While home alone with his young son, he asked how they should spend the day. His son replied, "Shinjin! Faith!" Although the child merely wanted to sing a Konkokyo song, the words struck Rev. Yamada deeply. He felt that Kami was speaking to him through his child, reminding him to practice faith in the present moment.

Rev. Yamada then reflected on the greatest turning point in his life: the passing of his father, who was the head minister of their church. His father died at the young age of 53 from stomach cancer, when Rev. Yamada was only 18. Though gravely ill, his father continued welcoming visitors with a warm smile, encouraging others even while suffering himself. Rev. Yamada believed his father would recover, so his sudden death came as a shock.

The reality of death struck him when he held his father's cold hand. He felt a deep emptiness, regretting that he had never been able to repay his father's love and devotion. Later, his mother shared the circumstances of his father's final moments. Despite extreme weakness, his father insisted on sitting up. With his last strength, he pulled himself upright, faced the sacred rice or Goshinmai, bowed deeply in seiza—and passed away in that posture. Hearing this, Rev. Yamada felt something shift inside him. Though filled with sorrow, he was also saved by the way his father lived and died—with unwavering faith.

Over time, the emptiness inside him began to heal. As he reflected on his father's endless prayers, kindness, and sincere devotion, he realized that his father's faith was still supporting him. This experience planted the seed that would later guide him toward ministry.

Years later, before entering the seminary, a series of events further awakened his faith. A health check revealed potential stomach problems. Soon after, he was involved in two car accidents within weeks—one in a company car and one in his own. Though the accidents were serious, no one was badly injured. Remembering that his father's own path to ministry began after a major accident, Rev. Yamada began to sense a calling.

That same year, catastrophic flooding struck his hometown. As he struggled through dangerous conditions to reach the church, fear overwhelmed him, and he repeatedly called out, "Konko-Sama." When he finally arrived, he saw devastation everywhere. Yet his mother sat calmly before the altar, reciting the regular prayer service. Unable to leave her alone, he stayed by her side. As the prayer ended, the floodwaters stopped—right

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at the boundary of the church. On one side, everything was destroyed; on the other, everything remained untouched. The church stood safe in the center.

His mother said, "This church was saved. Do you understand what you need to do next?" Rev. Yamada took this as a message from Kami and from his father. He decided to enter the seminary the following year, which coincided with the tenth memorial year of his father.

Another powerful experience came later when he visited a landslide area. Amid the mud and destruction, he noticed tiny grasses and insects returning to life. In that moment, he felt clearly: **Tenchi Kane No Kami is here**. Without thinking, he knelt and put his hands together. He realized deeply that all life is sustained and protected by the Divine Parent.

After completing seminary, his follow-up medical tests unexpectedly returned to normal, despite earlier warnings that he might develop the same cancer as his father. While doctors were puzzled, Rev. Yamada knew this was another expression of Kami's work. His once-unsettled life became calm and grounded through faith.

The sermon concluded by returning to a core teaching: **we are born, live, and die within divine blessings**. Knowing this truth changes how we face hardship. A life that knows this teaching and a life that does not are entirely different—especially during times of difficulty. Because we know this, we also carry a responsibility to share it with others who may be suffering.

Finally, we were reminded of Konko-Sama's words: *"I am the one who practices faith on this very day."* Faith is not practiced by someone else, nor is it something we force upon others. **I practice faith today**, treating today as precious. When we practice faith sincerely, it helps us—and it also helps those around us. Our faith gives encouragement, strength, and hope to others, allowing the Founder's faith to continue living through us.

May we each practice faith today, share it with those around us, and help guide future believers to this path.

https://youtu.be/J8wNRMqKlMs

"No Experience Is Without Meaning" **December 14, 2025**

This sermon centered on a reassuring teaching from Voice of the Universe: Kami thinks only of saving people and never allows any experience to be meaningless. Even hardships and difficulties, when met with faith, become foundations for future blessings. Because Kami is our Divine Parent, Kami's wish is always to help, support, and guide us.

At the same time, the sermon asked an honest question: Is this teaching truly real in our daily lives? The answer lies in how we receive and respond to divine blessings.

First, we reflected on what prevents us from receiving blessings. Often, people do not recognize Kami's presence in their lives or forget that we are constantly sustained by Kami—by the land, nature, and unseen support around us. Acting only on our own judgment, ignoring Kami, or failing to pray can distance us from blessings. The teachings remind us that arrogance and selfish desire block the flow of divine help, and even long-standing patterns from previous generations can influence present difficulties.

Konko-Sama teaches that the greatest way to thank Kami is not through material offerings, but by sharing our experiences of blessings with others. When we receive help yet keep it to ourselves, we miss an important part of faith. Sharing our blessings allows others to be saved and brings joy to Kami.

The sermon then emphasized a vital truth: Kami alone cannot save people without human participation. Kami does not have a physical body or voice; therefore, Kami works through people to help people. This is the meaning of aiyo kakeyo—mutual fulfillment. Just as parents and children support one another, Kami and humans rely on each other. Blessings appear when Kami's work and human effort function together.

Practicing faith, then, is not complicated. It means becoming "close friends" with Kami—thinking about how Kami would feel, what Kami would do, and trying to live from that perspective. Like close friends who understand each other without many words, faith deepens through daily interaction, trust, and shared experience.

The sermon concluded by reminding us that faith is not fear of Kami, but closeness to Kami. When we pray, act with gratitude, move our hands, enjoy food, laugh, speak kindly, and share uplifting stories, we are already practicing faith. Even small acts—such as being grateful for laughter—bring light into the world.

By appreciating daily blessings, thanking Kami, and sharing those blessings with others, we help create a kinder, more hopeful world—one life at a time.

https://youtube.com/live/jc0mYlZPT8Q