



*Let's Get to Know the Founder, His Faith, and How We Each Can Come Closer to Kami!*  
**Manga Comic Book of the Founder's Life**  
**– available in English soon!**

In September of 2014, we joyfully celebrated the 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary since the physical birth of our Founder of the Konko Faith – Konko Daijin. To honor our Founder and commemorate this special year, this manga comic book was born!

We believe that the manga comic book, a popular present-day form of communication for people of all ages, is both an enjoyable and educational way to grasp the spiritual development of our Founder, as a young boy, young adult, farmer, husband, parent/family member, community leader and finally Mediator for our Divine Parent of the Universe and all people – the beloved children of our Divine Parent.

Through his story we can see the various hardships he underwent, yet he never gave up, he always faced the Divine Parent, and looked at himself to find ways to improve and be the best person he could be. Through the illustrations and

text, we can grasp the socio-economic, political and spiritual climate of the 1800's in Japan, when the hundreds of years of self-imposed isolation and peace within the country (Edo Period) was undergoing a great change to make way for Japan to be exposed to the modernism and industrialism going on throughout the rest of the world.

How did the Founder cope? How was he able to stay spiritually centered despite the tumultuous times? It had everything to do with his relationship with the Divine Parent of the Universe. Please read this book and get to know him, his story and those of significant disciples whose lives were also drastically changed. They, too, helped shape the Konko Faith. Please read this book to help shape your own precious relationship with the Divine Parent of the Universe and perhaps be inspired to change your own life...



# Round Table Discussion

A Report by Takuya Fujimoto

*When trying to outreach the Konko Faith globally, we are often asked “What is Meditation?”, “What is the difference between Kami and God?” and “Is Konkokyo monotheistic or polytheistic?” In essence, these questions force us to examine our identity. It is important for us to recognize and grasp the essence of our identity, in order to manifest divine blessings all over the world.*

*On February 13, 2015, the Konkokyo International Center held a Round Table Discussion on the theme: “Learning and Succession of the Konko Faith”.*

The opening address for the session was provided by Reverend Michiyo Iwasaki (Director of the Konkokyo International Center), who cited the words of Japanese philosopher, Tokuryu Yamanouchi, a disciple of the Kitaro Nishida. Reverend Iwasaki said, “Philosophy is not to answer questions but to discover questions. It is important to discover your own questions in the same way a child is constantly questioning and wondering about the world around them.”

The opening address was followed by a presentation by this reporter (a staff member of the Konkokyo International Center) on “Issues Regarding Mediation” from a perspective of religious studies. I suggested that religion is thought to be related to obedience. This is because the followers obey the rule or doctrine of religion. As followers respect the tradition of religion, they obey the rule and behave accordingly. In addition, non-believers also obey various traditions and disciplines subconsciously. For example, artisans and craftsmen obey the traditions of their respective art or craft and follow its practices in the same way people adhere to religious tradition. A set of trusted traditions and beliefs, including those of religion, succeeds in being passed to a new generation when that generation accepts and adheres to them as followers or believers. In

this way, the arts and crafts as well as religion can be said to consist of three components: obedience, tradition and belief (trust).

The main presentation was provided by Mr. Kazuma Takeuchi, Educational Psychology lecturer at Tama University, who has studied the art of mediation especially as it pertains to artisans and craftsmen and how this tradition is passed on to future generations. On this particular occasion, Mr. Takeuchi attempted to apply his studies to the area of religion, in particular, the Konko faith. Utilizing a question and answer approach with the audience, he asked probing questions and engaged the audience in discussing the issue of how the art of Mediation can be passed on to future generations. In this way, we were also able to address the issue of salvation in this modern secular society.

Through this Round Table Discussion format, we attempted to seek and understand the broader idea of a Konkokyo identity by the questions such as “What is Konkokyo?” or “Why do we have a Konko Faith?” or “Why is Konkokyo needed in this world?” This would lead to greater encouragement and motivation for audience members to analyze their respective situation and design a future particular to them. Thus, questioning ourselves could lead to rediscovering the identity of the Konko faith. Mr. Takeuchi



Mr. Kazuma Takeuchi

has a unique talent of asking relevant questions enabling participants to think and discover the importance of questioning.

In regards to successfully passing down the Konko Faith to future generations, Mr. Takeuchi identified three areas for consideration. They are the necessary ability to perform Mediation, development of the minister, and succession and innovation of the Konko Faith. Through his facilitating, the participants were able to clarify their own problems and shared these issues. For example, on the issue of Mediation, we discussed the criteria for evaluating good/bad Mediation or mature/immature Mediation and debated how to distinguish between them. Although we could not clearly define or recognize each type, we did gain a greater sense of each. Furthermore, his questions about Mediation also led us to think about the difference between Mediation and counseling. If a minister Mediates more from a secular or academic perspective, this might be closer to counseling or advice. In this way, the discussion was eye opening through Mr. Takeuchi’s questioning.

Another issue presented addressed the issue of relying on so-called “magic medicines” whereby we can live a life free of unhappiness. Why we do not rely or depend on such things when difficult and sad things happened in life was discussed. Mr. Takeuchi offered the idea that human beings prefer to reject being dependent on such remedies and, instead, prefer to act with free will, self-decision and clear intention. These preferences lead to behavior, which in part, are related to religious influences.

Comparing the fundamentalist religious belief with the moderate liberal one, Mr. Takeuchi asserted that the latter tends to be more related to the mental health arena. The adherents of the fundamental doctrine restrict the range of options on self-decision and thereby repress negative emotions such as regret and anxiety. It is important how the Mediator provides spiritual meaning to people who encounter the unknowable events such as the death of a close person, unfortunate consequence of an accident, illness and war. Hence Mediation might be the means to convey the transcendental message through the vertical axis of Kami. In this sense, Mediation is the art of leading people to solve problems through deepening their faith. In other words, ministers should awaken people to their irreverence to Kami by giving divine significance to their distress.

The issue of minister development was also presented and Mr. Takeuchi pointed out two approaches for cultivating what he called “Mediation-Specialist”. The first approach involved gaining effective experience through deliberate high quality practices consisting of six parts. These are: goal setting, practice by repetition, feedback, pressure, high degree of difficulty, process and reward. Gaining experience of Mediation through



these practices should result in the art of Mediation being more polished and more effective.

The second approach to cultivate a Mediator-Specialists involved participation in Mediation practice based on the theory of “Community of Practice” or “CoP”. CoP is a group of people who share a profession in pursuit of the same goal. The group is organized in an apprenticeship system similar to the artisan, craftsmen and the traditional Japanese performing arts. Through sharing information and experiences, the members, from beginners to experts, learn from each other and develop. This practice can also be applied to Konkokyo, as a means to assist a beginner/novice to gradually elevate to the level of expert/master through the interaction which CoP provides. From this viewpoint, we should pursue a flexible learning model of Mediation which allows for adaptation to various situations to better achieve the goal of learning and passing on the Konko Faith. Therefore, it is desirous that a beginner/novice be inspired by a master and imitates the master’s form of Mediation and renovates the art of Mediation. How we might rediscover this art and discipline in our history and how it must have been passed down from generation to generation was also discussed.

In regards to the development of a faith community, Mr. Takeuchi

pointed out two approaches, namely the virtualization of resources and sharing practice with a master. These are needed to shed light on the resources for Mediation education whereby the beginner/novice acquires the skills through his interaction with the master. Those who flower from the beginner’s stage are able to restructure the community and deal with the changes of time and society. In addition, they also pass down their own experiences to the next generation, thus revitalizing the community.

Mr. Takeuchi’s ideas are based on research for Japanese traditional performing arts and crafts including the traditional Kyoto Dance (Shinobuzukaryu), Shinto Theatrical Dance (Kagura) and the traditional craft of paper making by hand known as “Washi.” Utilizing the dialectic approach, Mr. Takeuchi stimulated a discussion of our faith and the problems within the Konkokyo organization. The way of the Konko Faith, as handed down by The Founder and successive Mediators, must be restructured through continual interpretation and quest of faith. To learn from each other through a community of Konko practicing ministers should manifest good Mediation in this modern society. That is to say, Konko ministers need to perceive Kami’s transcendence sensitively and convey Kami’s message in order to truly reveal the identity of the Konko Faith.

## Fifteenth Anniversary Service of Konkokyo of Korea

On April 18, 2015, the 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Service of Konkokyo of Korea was held at the church which is located in Yongsan ward, Seoul. The service was officiated by Reverend Jin Koo Lee.

Reverend Terunobu Yamashita, director of Financial Affairs Department at Konkokyo Headquarters participated in the Anniversary Celebration.

Following the formal service, Reverend Yamashita gave a speech saying, "It will be 112 years this year, since the first Konko church was founded in 1903 when the country was called Choson. Before WWII, there were 41 churches in this country, but due to the war, all of them were closed. For fifty years there was a void of presence of Konkokyo in Korea. Subsequently, in the year 2000, through the miraculous meeting of Reverend Jin Koo Lee, today's head minister of Konkokyo of Korea and the late Reverend Mitsutoshi Sato, former Chief Administrative Director, Konkokyo of Korea



was re-established, and Konko Daijin's worship hall was reopened, overcoming the fifty years' silence. We are grateful to welcome the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the re-construction of Konkokyo in Korea. This was possible not only because

of Tenchi Kane No Kami's Divine Will, Konko Daijin's prayers and his sacred mediation, but also because of the outreach efforts of the dedicated predecessors and ministers. It is also due to the strong faith and endeavors of

Reverend Lee, Reverend Yung Joon Kang, successive directors of Konkoko Seoul Activity Center and followers in Korea. The fruits of their labors are what we celebrate on this anniversary. I realize how precious this is and am truly thankful."

Reverend Kinya Suenaga, the director of Seoul Activity Center also spoke, saying, "I appreciate it very much that we could welcome the fifteenth anniversary of Konkokyo of Korea in Konko-Sama's prayer."

## Joint Conference of 2015 Konko Churches of North America & Konko Missions in Hawaii

Theme: Konko Religion's Faith Movement "Let Us Live a Mutually Fulfilled Life with Kami (*Kami-hito aiyo kakeyo no seikatsu undo*)," also can be translated as "Kami and Us, completing each other – Live the Faith!" For 2015, the third year of this faith movement, the sub-theme is "Let us help, guide, and pray for one another with a compassionate heart of Kami."

Dates: **July 17th to 19th 2015**

Location: **Campus of California State University Long Beach, Long Beach, California**

Keynote Speaker: **Mrs. Lore Lapinsky CSM, CIS**

There will also be four pre-conference gatherings: Family Camp, Youth Camp, Young Adults, and Spirituality Bridge. For further information, please feel free to contact

[kcnaoffice@konkofaith.org](mailto:kcnaoffice@konkofaith.org)

<http://konkofaith.org/faith-opportunities/conference/kmh-2015-conference-registration-form/>

## Come and Join Konkokyo Festival in Konko 2015

KIC will hold Konkokyo Festival in Konkokyo Headquarters. Believers from all over the world and those who interested in Konkokyo are welcome to join the festival.

For further information, please contact KIC!

Date: **November 14th 13:00 -15th 12:00**



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