



Face to Faith

January, 2016 **No.85**



Greeting at the Beginning of 2016

By Reverend Shinkichi Kawai, Director of KIC

Happy New Year! We are truly grateful that we can celebrate a new year with abundant blessing. Again this year, I pray from the bottom of my heart that all of you may lead a fruitful life, in which you fully recognize the great work of Kami-Sama.

I, as the successor of Reverend Michiyo Iwasaki, have been appointed the Director of the Konkokyo International Center (KIC). I hope to succeed with implementing our new KIC policy and commitment, based on the key concepts of "Interface and Intelligence," which were introduced by Reverend Iwasaki. I also hope to do this gradually and steadily.

Interface refers to something between two different entities, something connecting them. *Toritsugi* Mediation is exactly the interfacial place which works to connect Kami-Sama and human beings. There are various differences or dichotomies in this world: oneself and others; one religion and another; religion and spirituality; religion and the secular; one country and another; women and men; ruler and the ruled; the elite and the common; majority and minority; rationality and irrationality; commonsense and lack of commonsense; etc. But between these opposing things or on a boundary of two entities or concepts emerges an Interface or a Work of Kami-Sama, who embraces Heaven and Earth in its entirety. It can be said that where

the Founder of Konkokyo sat was exactly a place of interface, and that his Mediation was the work of interface. We will strive to support the Work of Mediation and try to make it open to everyone in the world.

For this goal, the pillar of *goyo* (sacred tasks), we at KIC should shoulder the work of intelligence. People who live in the modern world understand others and analyze problems based on various knowledge and information. But such knowledge and information are not "wisdom based on faith" but may be considered "secular knowledge and information." The intelligence that KIC aims at is a special intelligence which we acquire by reviewing "secular knowledge and information" from the viewpoint of faith, or through the relationship with Kami-Sama. This is intelligence created from the interface between Kami and humanity. Through our sacred tasks, we hope to improve our religious sense

to support Konkokyo's intelligence. Thus, we hope to be a part of the Work delivering the "Way of Kami and Humanity" to the people of the world.

Our sacred tasks are supported by Kami-Sama's blessings that we receive every day, as well as the joy of practicing faith. Let's share this joy with all the people of the world. Let's pray together and talk together. All the staff of KIC hope to joyously take on our sacred tasks.



Left of the front row is Rev. Kawai

The 1st Konko International Celebration

The 1st Konko International Celebration was held on November 14 and 15, 2015, to celebrate the foundation of the Konko Faith, with followers from many parts of the world participating. With the theme, "Back to the Day: Inspiring the Future" the mission for the event was to convey and feel the spirituality of Goreichi (Sacred Ground), to confirm the Konko Faith as the foundation of our lives, and to deepen the Faith and relationships of all who attended. About 50 people from North America, Hawaii, Korea, South America and Japan attended.

As is the custom before undertaking an important event, we asked for Mediation of Konko-Sama.

Konko-Sama gave us this message: "I am grateful that you will hold the first Konko International Celebration in this very place, where Kami revealed the Way to our Founder, on this very day.

We are believers of 'the Way of Kami and People' which our Founder opened up to the world. I wholeheartedly pray that everyone work together for world peace and the salvation of humanity. This is Kami's wish since the Way was born." He spoke in a strong voice, in English, for the benefit of the international participants.

At the opening prayer session, the recitation of Tenchi Kakitsuke was said in Japanese, English, Korean, Spanish and Portuguese.

After prayers, the group was led on a spiritual, Discover *Goreichi* Tour. The tour brought participants to places where the Founder lived his life, to personally feel the spirituality in its past and of its sacred grounds. The *Goreichi* tour began from the Main Worship Hall to the Founder's grave site, the Founder's Original Mediation Hall and finally to the town facing the Worship Hall. Knowledgeable volunteers from Konko town were the docents for this final part of the tour.

One of the highlights of the tour was a site lecture delivered by Reverend Jun'ichi Watanabe, the head minister of Konko church of Habikino. He spoke at



the Founder's original Mediation Hall, explaining that it is a sacred place and spiritual realm. He called it a shrine of *Ikigami*, for the Founder, and also the place of origin of his sufferings and ultimately, of the salvation for people. A powerful feeling of reverence was felt when Reverend Watanabe conveyed that this is where the Founder passed away and was reborn as *Ikigami Konko Daijin*. It is sacred place for those who request his mediation. Attendees said a prayer together, feeling the power of the place where the Founder lived his life to save people.

After the evening prayer, a party was held at the Yatsunami Hall, attended by about 110 people, including followers from Konko town. Women from Konko town prepared many tasty dishes which were thoughtfully explained in English, especially for those unfamiliar with its name or ingredients.

The evening's program included congratulatory and celebratory speeches from representatives of each region: Reverend Roderick Hashimoto of North America, Reverend Yomisu Oya of Hawaii, Reverend Kinya Suenaga of Korea and Reverend Ryoichi Iwai of South America. They spoke with enthusiasm and some showed photos of the activities in their area. They shared how the Way of Konko Daijin has spread in their part of the world. The lighter part of the program included Japanese *Taiko* drum playing, a game quiz about Konko town, songs by young boys and girls and Polynesian dance.

The party grew lively.

The next day was the Establishment Day of Konkokyo. Early that morning we stood in silence as we welcomed the procession of Konko-Sama to the Main Worship Hall, then attended morning service. After that we went to the Founder's grave site and said a prayer there. In the brisk morning air, we participated in *Saiso*, the cleaning of the grounds around the Founder's original Mediation Hall. A healthy and delicious breakfast was later served at the Yatsunami Hall. Meals served here were always graciously hosted by the young ministers and coordinators of the event. They were greatly appreciated by everyone.

Faith Enrichment Workshop was held at the hall. The agenda for the workshop included the sharing of one's experience of feeling Kami at these sacred grounds, as they participated in the many events of the last few days. Participants were also asked to speak of their faith. Here are some of the comments:

"This time, coming to *Goreichi*, I believe I received blessing in the quick recovery of a physical condition that, in the past, had taken many days to heal. I am grateful that I have recovered completely, and look forward to the rest of my trip in Japan."

"I think the holiness of *Goreichi* where the Founder met Kami through his hardships is special. I hope the peace coming from this place will spread all over the world."

"I was always thinking of how Konkokyo must change, to adapt to a different culture back home and to contemporary times, to appeal to the newer generation, but after seeing Konko-Sama's attitude toward praying, I was filled with gratitude from deep down and thought there was no need for me to have anxieties about wanting changes to happen quickly. I don't feel the pressure to rush but now feel at peace as I recognize the important things."

"From a young age, I was taught about faith at church and found peace in my mind. Now I realize how great it is."

"When I first had my own family, I felt I should protect it. I felt the necessity of practicing faith. I feel gratitude that



I have a place, this place, to worship."

"I was born and brought up at a church. When I was young, I felt dissatisfied and sometimes unhappy. Currently I live away from my parents, and in a society of many different kinds of people. I have come to realize the difference between people with Faith and without. Now I really appreciate my parents who taught me about the faith."

In closing, Reverend Michiyo Iwasaki, the director of Konkokyo International Center summed up the conference, speaking of the significance of worship, "On this very day, the Founder responded to a request from

Kami. A most important part of our faith is how we respond to Kami's prayers and wishes for us. We humans all have various desires. When we hold on to them, we cannot hear or hold on to Kami's words to us. It is like how we cannot accept things if both hands are full of things. But if we release these things, the greed, selfishness and others, or let them

go, we can be assured that Kami will fill them with Kami's Wishes. Only then, we can hold on to Kami's Wishes for us. How we respond to Kami, this is the very duty of us followers."

Konkokyo Establishment Day Service was conducted by Konko-

Sama. And ministers from North America, Hawaii, Korea, South America and Japan also officiated it for the first time. It was a meaningful and emotional service for followers from around the world.

The event was officially closed with the enthusiastic shouting of our slogan and theme, "Back to the Day: Inspiring the future." It was a rally cry affirming the success of the *Goreichi* which refreshed our faith. It was an energizing conclusion to the first International Conference.

The celebration was a trial event, and it grew into a successful event filled with joy, as attendees renewed or discovered the Way. In 2016, We are planning to hold a second gathering to recognize the commemorative day for the foundation of this Faith, with participation of followers from around the world.

Konkokyo International Center has been holding faith gatherings in areas where there are no Konko churches.

Reverend Nobuhiro Kusuki, the Deputy Director of KIC, visited Britain from November 19 to 23.

Reverend Amy Uzunoe-Chin, the minister of Konko Church of Portland, joined and supported it.



London Gathering

November 21-22, 2015

Reported by Reverend Amy Uzunoe-Chin,

My journey started not knowing what to expect or who I would meet. I guess I have been spoiled with always doing “goyo” in a controlled environment. Where I would be able to prepare my sermons, and have conversations and discussions for a targeted audience.

However, after my trip to London, it has opened my eyes and heart in ways that I have never felt or experienced before.

I was not ready for an impromptu presentation where I had to adjust my sermon significantly on the spot or brainstorm ways to open up conversations to people who either did not know anything about Konkokyo or did not know a lot of history/background of Konkokyo and teachings. As I reflect back on my trip, I went with a mission, a sermon and discussion targeted help the people in London realize Kami’s Love and Kami’s Ways, but in reality, it was the other way around. I felt like Kami wanted to show me that everyone is truly Kami’s children, Kami is in people’s lives whether we realize it or not. The people I came in contact are the ones who have taught me what it means to have a heart of wanting to simply help others be happy, unconditionally.

Though listeners determined how the discussion flowed, determined what I would talk about in my sermon, determined how the day would flow, I had to come to a conclusion that this is what the real world is like. As a Konko Minister, I started to understand that I had to go out of my comfort zone and really ground myself in my faith, in Kami and open my heart in order to truly practice propagation and spread Kami’s Love (blessings) and Ways to the World.

I saw and felt passion in Mrs. Walker, a lady who simply

has one wish, a wish to make people happy no matter who you were. A simple word she always used and believed in so much to help guide her in everything she did. She kept saying “Konko-Sama, Konko-Sama”. With those two words she is spreading Kami’s existence and Kami’s Love to those around her.

The London Gathering is only held once a year, if possible. I was able to experience this rare and special gathering and also see how important it was for those who attended. I grew up in a church so I had taken for granted the limitless times I was able to go to church, talk to a minister, or receive *Goshinmai* (Sacred Rice) whenever I wanted. After the Saturday and Sunday services, people came up and truly thanked us, one with even tears, to express how grateful and happy they were to have received the service and for us to come from far away to make the gathering possible. This truly refreshed my appreciation of being able to go to a church, being able to do *Toritsugi* Mediation and even being able to talk to a Ministers in person.

I believe that this London Gathering is a very important gathering that should continue. I believe that each and everyone’s “Kami’s Heart” has already started to spark. The light will grow and shine brightly within each one of them, like a beacon of hope and guide for those around them. I pray and hope that the London Gathering can be held every year or that someone is able to go there to help support them on a permanent basis so that more people are able to realize Kami’s unconditional love, realize and receive Kami’s blessings and live a worry free life for generations to come. Thank you.



KIC Director Retires

The Reverend Michiyo Iwasaki retired as KIC Director as of December 31. He has been succeeded by the Reverend Shinkichi Kawai, who officially began in this position as of January 1, 2016.



FACE TO FAITH NO. 85 VOL. 23-1 issued by

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