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The 2nd Konko International Gathering
 "Back to the Day, Inspiring the Future"

November 14 and 15, 2016,

Daily Renewal

By Reverend Yoshinori Nishikawa, Chief Administrative Director of Konkokyo

Happy New Year, ladies and gentlemen! Konko Daijin, the Founder of the Konko Faith, teaches us, "Live each day with the same happy heart you have on New Year's Day. When the sun sets, think that it's the last day of the year. It will make your life happy every day, and there will be no discord in your family." (GI: Kondo Fujimori 52-2)

This teaching allows us to realize how important it is to make an effort to reform ourselves on a daily basis. When we try to reform ourselves, we reflect upon our own words and actions and can identify the areas where we need to improve. If successful, we will develop the ability to respect and thank all things that take care of us.

I would like to introduce you to a lady who regularly attends a local Konko church. Her husband works in the sales department of a pharmaceutical company. A few years ago, the expected sales for the area which he managed, were lower than anticipated. As a result, the relationship between he and his boss deteriorated, and this situation created much stress on him. He was so stressed he considered resigning from his position in the company.

He was experiencing difficulty rising from bed in the morning, spending as much as an extra half hour before finally getting out of bed. He seemed to have little motivation to go to work and she was becoming increasingly frustrated with this situation. As the frustration level in her heart mounted, it often caused arguments between them which increased to almost a daily basis.

As angry as she was with him, she was also earnestly worried about him and wondered what she could do for her

husband. She then remembered what a Konko minister had once told her: "When you wake up, fold up the *futon* neatly and give thanks to it, for you would have never slept well without it." Until this development, she had thought she knew this teaching but now wondered how earnestly and wholeheartedly she was thanking her *futon* for taking care of her during her sleep. She reflected upon her attitude toward her *futon*.



She made up her mind to also "thank his *futon* on behalf of him" and started giving thanks to his *futon* as well.

Several months passed and he gradually used less time before leaving his bed and unlike before, he was able to leave his bed without his wife's help. He felt more invigorated and was more motivated in his work. He now awakens earlier than his wife, washes his face, reads for a short time, listens to relaxing music, then eats breakfast and leaves for work.

According to her, she was often times ill, but now has become quite healthy both physically and mentally.

As I recalled this story, I realized how important it is to pray for the well-being of people around us. To live our lives following Konko Daijin's teachings will enable us to realize blessings from our Divine Parent. If we ready ourselves to receive divine blessings, meeting the "conditions" of earnestness and wholeheartedness, the visible blessings from our Divine Parent will clearly emerge in our lives.

When people are kind to us, we usually thank them immediately. On the other hand, we do not immediately say "Thank you!" to all the wondrous workings of the Universe,

including the clothes, foods, drinks and a residence, which provide care and comfort to us on a daily basis.

We cannot make fast and giant leaps of progress in faith in one day. However, we can surely train ourselves to make gratitude the basis of our respective lives and tutor ourselves daily to enhance this base. If we earnestly practice this self-learning tool, we will be successful in achieving our daily

reforms, and it will lead to a more harmonious home, community, nation and world.

I sincerely pray that every one of you will be blessed with a wonderful year as you pursue your own self-learning endeavor and learn to cherish each day fully.

This is my earnest and wholehearted New Year's greeting to you all. Thank you very much.

The 2nd Konko International Gathering

The 2nd Konko International gathering was held on November 14th and 15th, 2016, at Konkokyo Headquarters. About 70 people from Japan, Korea, mainland USA, Hawaii, Canada, Brazil and Australia attended. This was the second of what has become an annual event that was begun with the hopes that people around the world, ministers, believers, and newcomers to the Faith, would gather at the Goreichi, the sacred grounds, to celebrate the foundation of the Faith, deepen their faith and affirm the Goreichi as the sacred grounds for all humanity.

The first day began with prayers at the Main Worship Hall, recitation of the Tenchi Kakitsuke and the Divine Reminder, in Japanese and English. Following the prayers, attendees took part in doing sacred mediation with our Spiritual Leader, Konko-Sama. He gave the following message in Japanese and English: "I am grateful that you will hold the 2nd Konko International Gathering 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' that 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."

After the prayers, attendees were taken on a tour of Konko Town, "Discover *Goreichi!*". The first stop was Café Bodaijyu-No-Mi a notable establishment, as it is entirely managed and operated by people with disabilities. The group also toured the production house that provides supplies for the café.



The next stop on the tour was Kurakuan built by the late Reverend Fujimori Kondo (the Founder's disciple). There in the gardens of Kurakuan, is a special building whose second floor became the Sanctuary for Konko Daijin's Mitama (divine ancestral) spirit. The group explored the gardens and ponds and learned about the Divine Gate, the entrance to Kurakuan, where only Kami could pass through.

The final stop in the tour was Rikkyo Seijo, the restored Worship Hall of the Founder at the original site. The group

was invited to enter. They sat on the *tatami* floor and listened to Reverend Kiyoji Konko speak of its history, and the Faith's origin tenet.



After spending some time at the Rikkyo Seijo, everyone returned to the Main Worship Hall for the evening prayer and at 4 p.m., they went outdoors to solemnly wait and bow with deep respect as they observed *O-hiké*, Konko-Sama's procession from the Main Worship Hall.

That night about 160 people, including members from Konko town attended the dinner party. Reverend Yoshinori Nishikawa, the Chief Administrative Director of Konkokyo gave the opening speech. He observed, "Just 157 years ago, this town of Konko was just a tiny village... Kami-Sama asked the Founder... to save those who were facing difficulties, through Sacred Mediation. With wholehearted and sincere dedication, the successive Konko-Samas have fulfilled the task of Sacred Mediation to this day. The Konkokyo Establishment Day Service will be held tomorrow. Let's give thanks from the bottom of all our hearts." Everyone concurred in a resounding toast. The Hiyoko No Kai, a Mothers and Children group, commemorated this occasion with spirited entertainment and a sumptuous dinner began.

The dinner program began with reports from the three overseas districts of the Konko Faith: North America, Hawaii, and Korea. This was followed by a Japanese drum performance led by Reverend Koichiro Takahashi, singing and guitar accompaniment by Reverend Hiromichi Konko, and the finale, the *Awa Odori*, a traditional, spirited Japanese

dance. Everyone joined in the dance led by Reverend Michie Kimura. The festive party closed with the singing of “Oyagami no Yozashi no Mama ni”.

The next morning, the attendees woke early to be present at the 3:40 a.m., *O-demashi*, Konko-Sama’s procession to the Main Worship Hall. Early morning service followed that solemn reception. After service attendees walked to the Founder’s Gravesite, and recited the Konko Daijin Sangyo Shi, In Praise Of Konko Daijin, then took part in the sacred cleaning of the grounds of Rikkyo Seijo.

After breakfast a workshop was held. Everyone was given a cardstock sheet of paper with Konko-Sama’s message written at the top, in calligraphy: “Kami hito no michi”, “The Way of Kami and People”. In the blank space below, attendees were asked to reflect on and write their year’s wish or goal, and share what they had written, explaining why it was important to them. What they shared was both deeply personal and heartfelt. After the workshop, all headed to the Main Worship Hall to attend the Konkokyo Establishment Day Service officiated by Reverend Hiromichi Konko (on behalf of Konko-Sama) and the ministers from overseas. Everyone prayed sincerely and expressed their gratitude to Kami with joyful hearts.

The closing ceremony was held at Yatsunami Hall. Reverend Shinkichi Kawai, the Director of Konkokyo Inter-



national Center, expressed gratitude to all of the attendees, staff, and volunteers. In an enthusiastic conclusion to the successful two days experience everyone shouted in unison, “Back to the day, Inspiring the Future!” They were energized by their experience and inspired for the future.

Throughout the entire get together the attendees’ smiles were especially heartening and bright. Everyone seemed to have been moved by the spirit of *Goreichi* and were able to enrich their faith, as well as share their feelings with others.

The event was able to come to fruition due to the countless support by all the staff and volunteers, and the mutual appreciation between the hosts and guest. It is this spirit of cooperation and collaboration that has made this gathering exceptional these past two years. But it is mainly through Kami’s graces that we could celebrate it so joyfully.

I was lucky enough to be able to visit Konko Town for the first time, for this 2nd Konko International Gathering. I have been interested in Konkokyo for about three years, but only seriously started considering myself a believer this year.

My first impression of Konko Town and *Hombu*, Headquarters, was that it’s an incredibly peaceful place.

It’s like there’s a gentle blanket of calm laid over the town. Everyone I met was incredibly friendly. Strangers would bow their heads and greet us as we passed each other on the street. Even little kids! I speak Japanese, but I don’t look like I do, so people made an extra effort to speak to me in English even when it was a struggle for them. Everyone was

happy to stop for a chat and help me out. I don’t think I’ve ever been to a more wonderful and friendly place.

Hombu and the *Hiromae*, Main Worship Hall, itself were absolutely beautiful. It’s hard to describe the emotions I felt being able to pray in *Hiromae*, and being able to visit the restored home of Konko Daijin. I felt very honored to be able to visit such a sacred place.

The International Gathering itself was so fun! I was able to meet so many wonderful people from all over the world, and I learned a lot about my faith from them. I feel like my faith developed so much over such a short amount of time.

I really enjoyed the tour we were



By Casey Webster from Australia

given of *Hombu*, including being able to actually sit in Konko Daijin’s rebuilt house! That was a truly magical opportunity.

I was very sad upon leaving. I felt so happy, being surrounded by such a loving and supportive community. I hope I can return to Konko Town again soon. Thank you to everyone who made the gathering possible, and I can’t wait to see you again!

2016 London Konko Faith Gatherings — Strengthening Ties with Each Other & Departed Loved Ones —

Reported by Reverend Joanne Tolosa,
Head Minister of Konko Church of San Francisco and New York-New Jersey Konko Faith Gathering Minister

The annual London Konko Faith Gatherings on October 22nd-23rd, 2016 were well attended and well received! Konko Churches of North America (KCNA) Chief Administrative Minister and Head Minister of Konko Church of Vancouver Reverend Roderick Hashimoto and Reverend Joanne Tolosa co-led the informal home gathering on 22 hosted annually by Mrs. Michiko Walker. She served a delicious meal in her dining room, over faith conversations of blessings.

A first time prayer service was held at Mrs. Walker's informal gathering, upon the request of Ms. Shoko Ono (Konko Church of Namba, Minister's Assistant and internationally re-



nown Calligraphy Master). Eight of us joined in the special home prayer service, enthusiastically received. It will be instituted in future gatherings. Impromptu prayers were offered for an attendee's daughter who recently passed away.

At the Imperial Hotel on Sunday, October 23rd, we instituted the practice of collecting the names of recently departed loved ones of attendees and reciting them in the main prayer for the Sunday morning service following the faith workshop on the "Konko Faith: Our Creed" (11 people), as well as the afternoon Ikigami Konko Daijin Grand Ceremony, with 16 UK attendees and two KCNA Ministers, totaling 18 people for the day.

KMH 90th Anniversary Celebration

Reported by Reverend Koichi Konko,
Chief Administrative Minister of Konko Missions in Hawaii and Head Minister of Konko Mission of Honolulu

The Konko Missions in Hawaii (KMH) 90th Anniversary was held at the Konko Mission of Honolulu on Sunday, September 4, 2016. We expressed our appreciation to Kami-Sama and to people in the congregation regarding Konko Faith's continuing to help people in Hawaii.

This occasion also showed us how Kami-Sama strengthened our faith for the celebration with a *sashimuke* (Everything that happens is Tenchi Kane No Kami's doing). During that weekend, two hurricanes were headed for Hawaii, and as a consequence, some local Honolulu events were canceled for the weekend. At the time, some church members asked if we had to cancel the celebration. I responded, "The service will be held. If you don't feel safe, please join the service from your home." We looked



to Kami-Sama for guidance. However, at the last minute, "Madeline" veered south of Oahu and "Lester" went north.

Everything happens with Kami-Sama's virtue. If the hurricanes had hit Oahu, then I—as head officiant—would have performed the service alone with the members' spiritual presence. With blessing, we had a successful service, full of sunshine and gratitude.



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