



Tenchi Kane No Kami Grand Service 2018 in Headquarters

Beginning this spring, the Reverend Kiyoko Furumoto (associate minister of Konko Church of Eta, Kumamoto Pref.) restarts her propagation in Germany. Since the first Germany Gathering in 1994, Reverend Furumoto had tackled the propagation in Europe, cooperating with Konkokyo International Center (KIC) as a Konko believer living in Germany. In 2006, she was ordained as a minister by Konko-Sama.

Recently, she resided in Japan for a few years to take care of her elderly parents, going back and forth between her church and the hospital. She writes about her hopes and perspectives.



A Wind of Konko Faith from Germany to Europe

By the Reverend Kiyoko Furumoto

I wholeheartedly feel it is because of prayers for me by the late Reverend Mitsu Kikugawa, the founding minister of Eta Church; the late Reverend Yoichi Kikugawa, who passed away last November; my parents; and so many other people, that I can live my life here today. Although I am now fully connected to the Konko faith, I lived my life in self-centered way before I became a minister.

When I left for Germany in 1974, Reverend Mitsu Kikugawa told me "I wonder what sacred tasks Kami-Sama have for you." At that time, I didn't think too much about her words, but I was just so glad to be able to go to Germany. Reverend Mitsu had always preached "Help others and it helps yourself" to me, but I didn't understand the true meaning of her teaching.

In Germany, I went through several difficulties like my own sickness and my husband's depression that required hospitalization. At each crisis, I asked Sacred Mediation to my church in Japan and received divine blessings. As a result, my experience of taking care of my sick husband allowed me to help people who suffered from a similar disease, and I became certain that Kami-Sama never gives

us any useless happenings in our lives.

I found myself receiving blessings of good health and grew in understanding the Reverend Mitsu's teaching, "Help others and it helps yourself" with my own experiences. All of this led me to think "even someone like me may be of service to the Way of Faith." Then, the late Reverend Yoichi Kikugawa conveyed a message to me: "Why don't you become a Konko minister?" It must have been an expression of "The ways of Kami are mysterious and wondrous, beyond our understanding."

As I start to live in Germany again, I would like to live my life in a Kami-centered way and help people in Europe to be saved with the Way of Konko Faith as much as I can. My first task will be to clean my house in Neustadt to welcome the seeking-believers whenever they come.

After next year, I would like to restart Faith Gatherings in Germany and participate in London Gatherings, hoping to deepen our interactions with people who are interested in Konko Faith in Europe. Please feel free to contact me if you know anyone in Europe who is interested in Konko Faith or in our gatherings.



From the Collection of the Reverend Yasutaro Yukawa's Sermons

The Reverend Yasutaro Yukawa (1870-1944) was the founding minister of Konko Church of Tamamizu, Osaka. He led his life with Kami-Sama at the center of his world and continued to convey the True Way of Faith through which people are saved. Within his words filled with humor, we can see his deep understanding of faith that went far beyond common knowledge. Here, together, let's study about how to practice this True Way of Faith and receive salvation.

By Knowing Your True Self, Your Faith will also Become True.

I want you to understand who you truly are. Once you do, the way you do everything will change. If you know your true self, your faith will become genuine.

It took me 13 years to understand what faith is and finally, I was allowed to understand Kami-Sama. During this journey, however, even with faith, I thought that I was having difficulty receiving blessings, such that I was tempted to quit practicing my faith. Yet because things would get worse should I stop practicing faith, I couldn't quit.

When we say that we are seeking faith, I think we are actually wishing for material gain. I, myself, had practiced faith in order to receive such blessings. You may think that you are practicing faith, but you are actually wishing for blessings. However, that is okay. In any case, through my endeavors, Kami-Sama eventually allowed me to understand the divine blessings. Through enormous effort, I began to understand the blessing of having peace of mind for everything, which is everlasting and inexhaustible.

Once you attain peace of mind, even if Heaven and Earth (the Universe) should turn upside down, you, yourself will feel okay. I am grateful to Heaven and Earth, which is filled with hope. By all means, I do hope that you understand what faith is up to this point.

So after having been allowed to practice faith, experience suffering and uncertainty for 13 years, what did I come to understand?

My strength and abilities are limited. With such limitations, I must face boundless tasks. Do I have the persever-

ance? In a world where everything is beyond our control, at any time I may encounter diseases, untimely disasters, etc. Life is extremely dangerous. Life is an adventure. I will never be able to manage my life on my own.

Kami-Sama let me know how imperfect and powerless I am. I humbly came to understand that I cannot achieve anything without Kami-Sama providing me 90% of the power I lack.

After this realization, I have made an effort to pray for everything I do. I can't help praying, even if I were told not to. Clearly grasping this fact has brought me peace of mind. I feel at ease with every aspect of life and I ceased worrying.

Do Practice True Faith.

Kami-Sama says, "You definitely cannot navigate the world solely on your own limited power, therefore I will lend you additional power." Some reply, "No, thank you. I can manage. Since I have strength, I will try by myself and exercise care." Using their own judgment, they decline Kami-Sama's help, and are thus running away from divine blessings, thinking, "I don't need help. I do everything with my own power. Instead, just give me enough blessings." If this is so, no matter how much they practice faith, those without faith will not change. This kind of faith bewilders Kami-Sama.

I hope you can really grasp the right path and practice the true faith that will truly save you, because even though you think that you are on the road to salvation, if you do not practice true faith, I doubt you will be saved.

KIC Table Talk

What the Reverend Yukawa was saying in his sermon is to "Know who you are." Our ability and strength may comprise, at the most, only 10% of what we need. We can come to know about 90% of the world through Kami-Sama's Workings.

I feel how small and limited we are. At the same time, I feel how great and infinite Kami-Sama is.



What is important is to be well aware that we are helped at all times by Kami-Sama. Unfortunately, we tend to think that we can engage in any action through our own power; action which we are used to doing in everyday life, such as opening our eyes and getting up in the morning, as well as going out in the neighborhood.

The Reverend Yukawa stated, "Life is an adventure," which means nobody can anticipate what will happen in everyday life. Moreover, it interests me that he said, "I have made an effort to pray for everything I do." This doesn't mean to wish for, to thank, or to apologize. In this context, I think "pray" does not mean "I want to do it like this." Rather, I think it means to seek Kami-Sama's guidance. I am living amidst Kami-Sama's Workings and I cannot live without it. I feel it is important for me to keep in mind that I live under these circumstances.



That's right. I think it is important that just as we realize we are the beloved children of Tenchi Kane No Kami-Sama, we do not one-sidedly make a wish and have it come true. Instead, we pray for a way of living together with Kami-Sama's Wish, or pray to become a more helpful person to Kami-Sama. I believe these things are possible.



If you pray to Kami-Sama, you will be led to Kami-Sama. Then, as the Reverend Yukawa said, "I feel at ease with every aspect of life and I ceased worrying." Worrying means that you are not connected with Kami-Sama because you think all your actions are through your own power.

Understanding the phrase "After my enormous efforts," I think the Reverend Yukawa tried various ways, and he came to such a conclusion.



The Reverend Yukawa does not neglect wishing for material benefits, does he? He said, "As I had been endeavoring anyway, Kami-Sama eventually made me understand Divine Blessings." Wishing such blessings becomes a driving force. I think that he has continued to pursue blessings, and he eventually realized the inexhaustibility of Kami-Sama's blessings.



It is painful to go through hardships, but when things are not going well in the way that I wish, I am grateful that through these circumstances, I believe Kami-Sama wants to convey to me to understand, to change myself, or to pray continuously.



Throughout these various actions, Kami-Sama's Workings can be understood. At the same time, I came to understand "How imperfect and powerless I am!" It is very important to live life being mindful of this.



**When I can't do things on my own, I pray,
"Kami-Sama, please add to what I am
lacking." Actually, Kami-Sama allows me to do
what I think I am able to do it by myself.**

From "*Manazashi*"

A teaching by the Reverend Nobunao Yukawa,
the former Head Minister of Konko Church of Ginza



From Ms. Chiki Iwai,
Konko Church of São Paulo

My name is Chiki Iwai, the 14-year-old daughter of the reverend at the Konko Church of São Paulo, Brazil. My name is written with two Chinese characters translated as "thousand" and "rejoicing." I have been told my grandmother experienced, "A thousand times of rejoicing in a single day," from Kami.

For the last four years, my brother and I have been copying the teachings found in "Voices of the Universe" in addition to writing our experiences of Kami's workings in English, Portuguese and Japanese. In this short article, I would like to share one of my experiences.

I am currently a second year junior high student and have participated in a project called ISMART since my first year. The ISMART project selects students from public junior and senior high schools, who then take examinations to qualify for scholarships to be used at private schools. I successfully passed the first and second examinations and remained a candidate along with three others. The third phase was submitting recommendation documents, and I was confident all would go well.

But learned I was dropped from further con-

sideration. I was frustrated and thought, "Why was I not able to pass?" When my father observed my disappointment, he told me about, "thanking failure." He related how most people express gratitude to Kami when they pass an examination, but complain, "Why? I asked Kami so nicely," when they fail. He stated further that we do not know Kami's plan, so it is important to always express gratitude to Kami for all developments."

At that moment, I decided to offer my allowance money to Kami. To my surprise, a reply from Kami came the same day, in the form of a letter informing me of being the recipient for a scholarship to study mathematics at the University of São Paulo. This was based on another program called OBMEP, which I had entered, and was awarded a bronze medal in addition to the scholarship to study twice monthly at the university.

I am so happy and look forward to attending the university, since I would like to be an interpreter/translator in the future.

Although it was painful not to succeed on the third examination, I came to realize one should always express gratitude to Kami instead of complaining, for another new door or opportunity will open.

Although there are more disappointments ahead, I would like to continue realizing Kami's blessings and develop a heart of gratitude.

Thank You!

The Faith Movement:

Let Us Live a Mutually Fulfilled Life with Kami

Let us seek and receive Kami's Words through Mediation

Let us awaken to Kami's blessings and unconditional love

Let us live a joyful life of appreciation

Let us pray for, help and guide one another, with a compassionate heart of Kami

Let us truly live the way of Kami and all people – in mutual fulfillment

Each Person is a Precious and Beloved Child of Kami



The Rev. Masayuki Inoue

On February 15, the Konkokyo LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, and Transgender) Community became an official organization of Konkokyo.

Here is a message from the Reverend Masayuki Inoue, Konkoku Church of Kariya, Hyogo pref., the Director of LGBT Community.

In my teens, I dealt with the pains of grappling with who I was as a gay male. I remember a winter when every day, while splashing cold water upon myself, I cried and prayed to Kami to make me attracted to women. However, there was no change, and daily life was a living hell for me.

One day I sought *Toritsugi*-Mediation. I was able to summon the courage to come out to the minister at the Mediation Seat. With a smile on his face, I felt embraced by his warmth as he said to me, "I am very grateful you shared your story with me." Later, through practicing faith and praying to Kami, I found myself mysteriously encountering and creating relationships with other LGBT folks. Through my experiences, I truly felt Kami's love, and have come to realize that each person is a precious and beloved child of Kami. This was my salvation.

There are many in the LGBT community, who are unable to express their sexual orientation and/or gender-expression to family and friends because they feel that something is "wrong" with them or they are not "normal". It is not difficult to understand that these individuals experience a sense of deep guilt, anxiety, and loneliness which often lead to self-loathing, self-deprecation, and/or self-destruction. For example there was a case in 2015, of a gay college student in Tōkyō, forcibly outed, committing suicide.

Prejudice and discrimination towards the LGBT community are still evident in today's society, as many regard them as "aberrant" or "sinful". As a result, many, who identify as LGBT, will not reveal their sexuality or gender-expression. Instead, they quietly

suffer within.

This was the impetus for the formation of the Konkokyo LGBT Community. It is guided by the following aspirations:

- a. Connect with LGBT individuals who are unable to share their inner anguish, feel oppressed, and/or are tormented,
- b. Be a refuge to allow LGBT individuals to be themselves, feel safe, and be embraced in Konkokyo,
- c. Help people to understand various expressions of an individual's gender-identity and sexual orientation, and with that understanding, become an agent of change to erase prejudice and discrimination.

With these objectives in mind, we held a gathering of LGBT believers and have been using social networking sites to forge and deepen relationships with one another.

Additionally, I have shared my story in the *Konko shimbun* newspaper. It is our sincere hope to create new connections with other LGBT individuals.

On February 15, the Konkokyo LGBT Community became an official organization of Konkokyo. Together with assistant director, Reverend Hiroyasu Hisada (Oyama Church, Ishikawa Pref.) — who is an openly transgender minister (female-to-male) — we hope to sincerely engage in respectful and honest dialogue about Konkokyo and the LGBT experience with people.

Finally, it is my sincere prayer that as many people as possible will be helped through the activities of the Community.

Welcoming the 4th Konko International Gathering at "Goreichi" Back to the Day: inspiring the future

Believers from all over the world and those who are interested in Konkokyo are welcome to join in. Let's get together to celebrate the Konkokyo Establishment Day at the Sacred Place "Goreich".

Faith Enrichment Activities: Guided tour of "Goreichi", Prayer Service, Party, Workshop,
and Konkokyo Establishment Day Service

Date: November 14th 13:00-15th 12:00 Place: Konkokyo Headquarters, Okayama, Japan

2018 Services & Events at Konkokyo Headquarters

○Monthly Services

Date&Time: Every 10th and 22nd of the month
at 10:00 a.m.

Location: Main Worship Hall

○Konkokyo Independent Service

Date&Time: June 10th at 1:30 p.m.

Location: Grand Service Hall

○Autumn Memorial Service

Date&Time: September 23rd at 10:00 a.m.

Location: Main Worship Hall

○Ikigami Konko Daijin Grand Service

Date&Time: September 30th 10:00 a.m.,
October 7th and 10th at 1:30 p.m.

Location: Grand Service Hall

○Konkokyo Establishment Day Service

Date&Time: November 15th at 10:00 a.m.

Location: Main Worship Hall

○Memorial Service

for those who dedicated to propagate Konkokyo

Date&Time: December 9th at 1:30 p.m.

Location: Grand Service Hall



*"Be grateful
you are able to wake up
in the morning!"*

"VOICE OF THE UNIVERSE"

94. Konko Daijin will teach you how to practice faith and become a kami. (*Gorikai* I Ichimura Mitsugoro 1-20-1)

95. Tench Kane No Kami watches over everything. People are Kami's children. Turn your body and heart toward Kami-Sama and practice faith to receive His many blessings. Rely on Kami wholeheartedly for everything, without worrying about possible irreverence to Kami. Then you can receive divine blessings. Flowers will bloom on withered trees and life near death will be saved. Receive divine blessings and save those who are suffering. (*Gorikai* II Fukushima Gihe'e 3-1,2,3)

Message from staff

How was this month's Face to Faith? I was impressed with the Reverend Yasutaro Yukawa's sermon and I would like to continue my "life's adventure" by practicing true faith. I hope you too can feel the essence of our faith from this issue, but please feel free to contact us if you have any opinions or comments. T.T



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