

photos by Konko Shimbun



Konkokyo of Korea Celebrates Its 10th Anniversary



On April 14, the 10th Anniversary of the Founding of Konkokyo of Korea was celebrated at the church located at Yongsan Ward, Seoul Metropolitan City, in the presence of Reverend Mitsutoshi Sato, Chief Administrative Director of Konkokyo. Many believers, not only from Korea but also Japan, attended the ceremony.

The service started at 4 p.m., conducted by Reverend Jin Koo Lee. After the service, Reverend Sato delivered a congratulatory speech, in which he talked about his visit to Korea in 1993. Reverend Sato recounted how at that time he sought the news of Reverend Wongyu Lee, the former Head Minister of Konko Church of Seo-daemun, who had not been heard of after the end of World War II. When a minister and a minister's assistant were first appointed from among Korean believers, it seemed that a new wind of Konko Faith had begun to blow in the Korean Peninsula. Reverend Sato said, "Unforeseen miracles happened one after another, and that made me feel the work of Kami-Sama and Mitama Spirits very strongly." He added, "Let's make this 10th anniversary a very special year when we thank the past work of Kami-Sama, pray for the further development of Konkokyo, and renew our efforts in order to attain a surer faith. When you work to show your gratitude to Kami, Konko Daijin and each Mitama Spirit, they accept your efforts and time as precious offerings. With humble spirit, let's gladly serve Konkokyo."

Next, Reverend Nobuhiro Kusuki, Staff Member of Konkokyo International Center (KIC), read aloud a con-

gratulatory message on behalf of Reverend Shinji Yamada, Director of KIC, which said, "I am sure that you believers in Korea would receive here today the Parent Kami's Sacred Wish to save humankind around the world, that the Way of Konkokyo would spread the whole Peninsula, and that those who can actualize the salvation of this Way of Faith would grow in number and quality. Let's try to be useful for service for Kami."

Then, Ms. Jung Ja Kim sang a folksong of Gyeonggi-do and Ms. Sunja Oh danced a Korean dance "Arirang", both of which were received with huge applause from the participants.

In the sermon given at the end of service, Reverend Jin Koo Lee said, "It is my great pleasure that we could observe the 10th Anniversary Service successfully. I do hope that more Konko churches would be established in the whole Korea and more people would be saved."

After the service, all participants took a group photograph and enjoyed a banquet reception at a nearby restaurant. Everybody enjoyed the festive exchange of friendship by wining, dining and singing together.

Reverend Kazumasa Tsukamoto, Director of the Konkokyo Seoul Activity Center, said, "I am truly thankful that we could celebrate the 10th Anniversary of the Founding of Konkokyo of Korea within the prayer of the Spiritual Leader. I would like to define this year as the very first year of Konkokyo propagation in Korea, and do my best to serve afresh for the future."

History of Konkokyo of Korea

Before the end of World War II, there were forty-one Konkokyo churches throughout the Korean Peninsula. After the war, the churches were closed and the ministers returned to Japan. About fifty years later, the Konkokyo propagation in Korea was resumed following an incidental in 1993.

Seventeen years ago, several Konkokyo ministers from the Headquarters visited Korea in order to attend the Japan-Korea Religious Study Symposium. Taking that opportunity, they searched for Reverend Wongyu Lee, the former Head Minister of Konko Church of Seo-daemun, whose whereabouts had not been known since the end of war. On that occasion, they miraculously located his son Jin Koo Lee, who later became a Konkokyo minister, and Mr. Yung Joon Kang, who had been running a foreign language school and later who became a Konkokyo minister.

With this chance meeting as a good start, the Headquarters held Konkokyo gatherings in Korea since 1995 by dispatching Japanese ministers to Korea. Through these interactions, Korean believers, the Headquarters and the KIC shared discussions about faith and propagation materials. Thus, the translation of *Voice of the Universe — Selected Teachings of Konkokyo* and Prayer Book was started. (photo 1) At around the same time, Korean believers began to make regular study tours to the Headquarters in Japan. These participants were very moved at the sight of current Konko-Sama's daily sacred service and went home with precious memories and experiences. Their sincere and positive talks attracted other Koreans to Konkokyo gatherings.

These commitments spurred Korean believers to ask that a core (church) of religious activities to be founded in Korea. The Konkokyo Seoul Activity Center was established in February 2000, and Konkokyo of Korea in March the same year. Three ministers from Japan — Reverend Kazumichi Tottori, Reverend Hiroshi Sunami, and Reverend Kazumasa Tsukamoto (the present Director of the Seoul Activity

Center) — were sent to serve daily mediations and services. Reverend Jin Koo Lee, who entered the Special Course of the Konkokyo Seminary in 1998 and became a minister in the same year, is now the representative of Konkokyo of Korea. Reverend Yung Joon Kang, who entered the Special Course of the Konkokyo Seminary in 1999 and became a minister in the same year, is now in charge of the Pondon branch church as its head minister.

In the past ten years, the Mediation Place was installed in the present worship hall under Konkokyo of Korea, and Pondon church was founded as its branch.

Other events that have been conducted so far include:

- Memorial Services and Prayer Services for World Peace conducted at a neglected cemetery for departed ministers who were engaged in propagating Konkokyo in the Korean Peninsula, and the departed believers before World War II. (photo 2)
- Performance by young believers of traditional Korean music *Non-gaku*, ritual music for good harvest, and performing at the Konkokyo Youth Assembly in August 2007 in the hope of Japan-Korea youth exchanges based on Konko Faith. (photo 3)
- The production of a video movie titled *A Shining Path for Korea and Japan*.

Some Koreans have commented on the merits of Konkokyo: “I am grateful for the presence of the Parent Kami who prays for the human salvation infinitely.” “I feel comfortable because Konkokyo

has no precepts nor forced donations. I think it is nice that Konkokyo does not criticize other religions.” Another adds, “I like Konkokyo because it worships Kami-Sama as well as Mitama Spirit.”

Some Korean believers think that Konkokyo is a great religion and intend to serve and do whatever they can for Konkokyo. Hopefully, this points the way to future generations who would follow the course of Reverend Lee and Reverend Kang.



photo 1

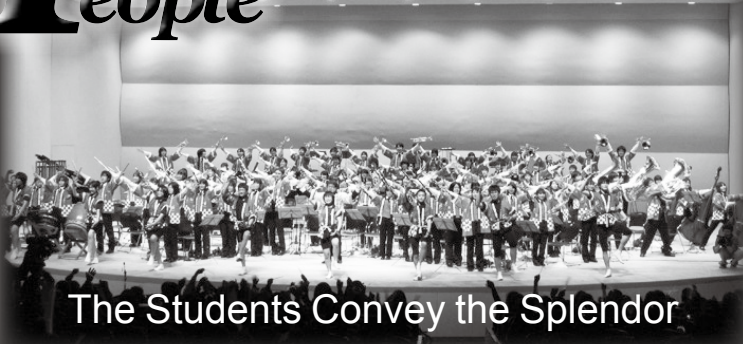


photo 2



photo 3

P People



The Students Convey the Splendor
of Music to the World!

Konko Gakuen Symphonic Band

Reported by KIC

The Konko Gakuen Junior High & High School is located in Konko Town, Okayama Prefecture (Japan), where Konkokyo Headquarters is located. This school has a unified program of lower and upper secondary school which educates students based on the Konko Faith. The school has a good reputation for the quality of its education, but the performance of the Konko Gakuen Symphonic Band (one of the many club activities there) receives especially high commendations. People enjoy their performances often during events at Headquarters and this past March, the Band visited South Korea to perform concerts for several high schools and became popular with audiences there.

In 1919, the Band was organized for an autumn sports festival and also performed at elementary schools in the community and at Konkokyo meetings. Now, ninety students belong to the band, from cute first-year junior high students to

bearded third-year senior high students, and each practices their instruments eagerly every day.

Encouraged by two slogans, “Be a person who can complete ordinary things” and “Be a person who is helpful to others,” the students strive to mature as people by participating in the band’s activities. To attain this goal, they work hard as band members, but also do extra-curricular activities within the school and their community.

However, they don’t participate in brass band contests. “We don’t deny the meaning of these contests,” Mr. Yasuyuki Sonoda, the Coach of the Band, said. “Then why don’t we participate in them? It’s because thirty-seven years ago, members of the Band concluded that performing music was not a competition or for determining a winner. Since then, we stopped entering contests and instead concentrated on playing our regular

concerts. We also visit institutions to hold recitals several times a year.”

Their stage performance is very organized; not only their music, but their physical performance must attract their audience. The Band members themselves, led by student leaders, discuss how they could entertain all of the audience before finally reaching a performance style.

Their first overseas tour was in 1985, when they joined the Japan-China Youth Students Exchange Assembly. Since then, they have been to seven cities in Australia, South Korea, and China. “In many cases, we are invited to perform abroad. It is a big opportunity to show the culmination of our daily practices and to test our skills,” Mr. Sonoda said. “We would like to convey the splendor of music to everyone and we also want the students to grow freely as performers and people.”

New Intern Welcomed !!

The fifth year of the Konkokyo International Center’s (KIC) internship program started on May 10 and our staff extends a warm welcome to intern Reverend Kiwa Nakamura. She describes her aspirations in the following way. “It is difficult to propagate the Faith even to Japanese people. It is beyond my imagination how difficult it must be to propagate overseas. I appreciate this opportunity to engage in world propagation activities as an intern at KIC. My heart is now overwhelmed with anticipation and some trepidation. I will do my best. I will try to learn as much as possible during my six-month term. I would like to be a person who can show Kami’s work anytime, anywhere.”



Four-year Efforts in Paraguay

Reverend Ryoichi Iwai

Staff Member of Konkokyo Asuncion Activity Center in Paraguay



About four years have passed since I started to serve at the Konkokyo Asuncion Activity Center in August of 2006. Prior to my appointment to the activity center, staff personnel were sent from Japan, but it was decided that as a local resident, I should serve as the center's staff and develop new activities in Paraguay.

I have asked young people to participate in the services, by having them monitor the music tape of services and reading aloud the *Saishi* Main Prayer in Spanish during the Service, in an effort cement a closer relationship with each of them. In addition, I have held faith enrichment workshops and individual counseling sessions and continue to make contact as often as I am able, all the while, praying to Kami for ways to further inspire the activity center participants. Since I live in Brazil and can only visit the area every three months, I was at a loss in my efforts to more fully actualize the spread of faith in this area.

When I visited in March of this year, I was asked for advice by one woman, who said "I have no idea how I should go forward in my life." Though she was not interested in this faith at all, two days later, she came to my church in Brazil for a ten day faith training session. She was touched by Konko Faith and the spiritual world for the first time, and regained a new sense of vitality and rejuvenation. Around the same time, I had a phone call from one young man living in Paraguay, who said, "If possible, I would like to go and see

you for a direct talk." It was at this time that I felt Kami was answering my requests and my earlier sense of loss was no longer felt, due to new developments and occurrences. I was introduced to a person who knew so much about Paraguay, and another who was known for his dislike of religions in Paraguay, who began to participate in the faith enrichment workshops I conducted. It was hard not to believe this was the marvelous workings that Kami was revealing to all of us, resulting in our wonderful surprise and joy.

It has been four years since I began devoting efforts to the development of human resources at the activity center in Paraguay. It is notable that today, young believers have become like pillars of the center and participants in various activities there. Now, I pray that this initial foundation will lead to the building of a more prosperous Konkokyo in Paraguay.

Some other activities I am involved in include the translation of articles of the KIC's e-mail newsletter and a monthly Spanish publication of a teaching, which I distribute to believers in an effort to maintain more frequent communication. I am also involved in the translation of a brief biography of Konko Daijin. And finally, beginning this year, I am expecting more encouraging developments from the activities at the activity center in Paraguay, because my wife, who is a second generation Paraguayan, and I are both involved in the activities at the center.

INFORMATION

Updated English Prayer Book Now Available !

The original English Prayer Book was first published in 1989, but many Japanese prayers were translated and added over the past two decades. Lately, there were discussions about the sentiment of the prayers being lost in translation as well as the number of loose inserts put into the book.

In response to these concerns, a committee was formed in 2007 to revise and update the English Prayer Book and now their task is complete.

The main changes are:

- New translations of Konkokyo keywords were adopted.
- "Refreshed" Tenchi Kakitsuke, In Praise of Konko Daijin, Heaven and Earth Prayer, Newly Departed Soul Prayer, Before & After Meal Prayers, and Peace Prayer were added.
- Three songs – "A Shining, Shimmering Light," "A World of Prayer," and "A New Life, A New Beginning" – were added along with translations and scores.

For more information, please contact KIC.



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