

(Foreword for the January 2014 issue)

We are all blessed by Kami-Sama, as we have been allowed to enter a new year, 2014.

Last year, we gratefully celebrated the 130th anniversary of Konko Daijin’s passing. 130 years ago, our dear Founder passed away and became the eternal Divine Mediator of Sacred Mediation (*Toritsugi*). Since then, the sacred and wondrous workings of Ikigami Konko Daijin’s Mediation

have been there for each one of us. During these 130 years, generations of Konko-Samas (our Spiritual Leaders) have served Kami as the Principal Mediator and countless people have been saved and fulfilled through Konko-Sama’s Mediation and sincere prayers. This year, we celebrate the 200th anniversary of Konko Daijin’s birth. (Our Founder, Konko Daijin, was born on September 29, 1814.)

Our Founder lived the first half of his life as a farmer and went through tremendous hardships. Konko Daijin always made sure that he directed his heart to gods and buddhas, especially when facing challenges. The Founder constantly held fast to an earnest, sincere lifestyle, which later enabled him to meet with our Parent Kami of the Universe. Konko Daijin met a deity who allows people to live and nurtures them with the words “People living between heaven and earth are Kami’s children.” (*GIII: Konko Kyoso Gorikai 51*) Konko Daijin deepened his faith in Kami even further and he became aware that all human beings are born as Kami’s

beloved children and that Kami’s Wish is for each of us to live and go about our daily tasks, with this in mind. After realizing this, Konko Daijin, our Founder, earnestly pursued a way of life as a child of Kami. And Kami finally sent him to the human world as “Ikigami Konko Daijin” in order to save us all.

Konko Daijin told a young man named Sadajiro Yamamoto, “People should know what made it possible for them to be born, and what makes it possible for them to keep

living.” (*GII: Yamamoto Sadajiro, 2*) When Ms. Shino Toshimori visited the Founder’s worship hall for the first time, he taught her, “The light that the Sun shines upon us is a divine blessing. So, too, for the rain that falls. Kami lets all humans live amid divine blessings. People are born into divine blessings, live amid divine blessings, and die amid divine blessings.” (*GII: Toshimori Shino, 1*) Just as these teachings show, Konko Daijin teaches us the relationship between Kami and people, what divine blessings are and how to live our lives as Kami’s beloved children.

The late Reverend Kagamitaro Konko, the former Konko-Sama, shared the following statements in a radio broadcast, “This may sound so natural that we all take it for granted, but none of the people who have existed throughout history were born with the wish to be born. Within the abundant blessings of the Universe, the lives of all life forms have been nurtured. We each were born in different places and different periods, but what we all have in common is

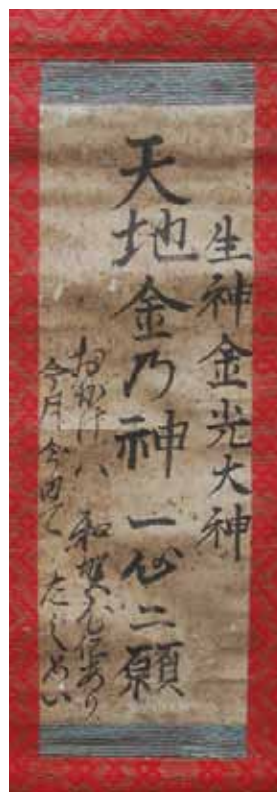
Welcoming the 200th Anniversary of Our Founder’s Birth

being born as someone's child and being born within Kami's blessings. Kami took care of each of us, providing life for each one of us before we were born into this world. This is the very beginning of human life. This is the origin of life. While we are infants, we are unaware of anything. Thus, we never express any gratitude. In truth, however, if it were possible, we should start out our lives by thanking Kami for blessing us with the gift of life. This is something I think about quite often..."

In this way, the former Konko-Sama imparted that each of us are mutually cared for and given life through Kami and others, when we are born. He teaches us that this is exactly how each of our respective lives began.

The second line of the "Let us Live a Mutually Fulfilled Life With Kami (*kami-hito aiyo kakeyo no seikatsu undo*)" Movement reads, "Let us awaken to Kami's blessings and unconditional love." The very first divine blessing we all received was that we were given life and allowed to be born into this world by Kami. We can realize this important truth because we follow Konko Daijin's faith. By asking for and receiving Sacred Mediation over and over again, we gradually become able to recognize Kami's blessings. With the awareness of Kami's blessings, we gradually become able to live each day with gratitude and joy, and we can eventually make it our basic lifestyle.

To promote the current movement, we are planning to focus on its third line, "Let us live a joyful life of appreciation." As we enter the 200th anniversary of Konko Daijin's birth, we want to begin by remembering Konko Daijin's life. We would then like us all to recognize the truth that we were all born through Kami's blessings and that we are kept alive through Kami's blessings. We should pursue life with gratitude and joy, forever mindful that we live as Kami's beloved children. And we will hopefully realize "The Way of Kami and People" in the lives of each one of us.



Divine Reminder
handwritten by the Founder



Founder's *Chukei*, ceremonial fan



Founder's *Kami-shimo*, formal wear



The Founder's Worship Hall desk

The Konkokyo Organization is currently planning to publish a cartoon book about the life of our Founder to commemorate the 200th anniversary of Konko Daijin's birth. We will rewrite the cartoon series of Konko Daijin, which we already published on a regular basis in the *Konko Shimbun* newspaper. This cartoon book of Konko Daijin illustrates

episodes of the Founder's life from birth to death, with some additional explanations. Fittingly, we are planning to publish it on September 29, 2014, Konko Daijin's birthday.

The KCNA will celebrate our Founder's 200th birthday beforehand, at the KCNA Conference in Toronto, Canada, to be held from Aug. 8 to 10. The KMH will hold a spiritual workshop at the Konkokyo Headquarters from October 20 to 24.

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 & 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 & all people
- in Mutual Fulfillment

The New Faith Movement in Paraguay Broadens the Way

By the Reverend Ryoichi Iwai, Director of Asuncion Activity Center

I commute to Paraguay every other month to develop local activities there. This is one of the functions of the Asuncion Activity Center. The main activity is to hold the Grand Ceremony, the Memorial Service, and Prayer Services at the residence of Reverend Hiromichi Maehara, the local minister. About 60 people usually attend the services, including Reverend Maehara's relatives, local believers and non-believers. A main focus is on conducting faith training workshops after the services. At these workshops, we try to discuss and share information that was not covered in the services. In addition to these bimonthly activities, twice a year, we also visit remote areas, approximately 350 kilo meters distance from Asuncion, to reach believers there. At that time, we hold services and group meetings at members' homes. There are two families that have emigrated from Japan to Paraguay. Although there are no local Konko churches there, it is hoped that through these efforts, those families do not lose their faith and will pass it on to next generation.

Last August, in the capital city Asuncion, a memorial service sponsored by the local Japanese Association was conducted in the Konkokyo ritual. Many people attended and expressed how impressed they were by the solemn ceremony of Konkokyo and of the valuable teachings. I think that Konkokyo's success and acceptance by the Paraguayan society is due, to a large part, to the hard work and sincere efforts of the pioneer ministers sent there from Konkokyo Headquarters.

Reverend Maehara has said, "Konkokyo is a great religion. However we have to know more about what the local people need. They are looking for how they can be happier, in their daily lives." I too believe this. Therefore, besides holding only regular faith training workshops, I try to schedule many more workshops, whenever, and wherever I can, in order to build a closer relationship with the local people.

At the Asuncion Activity Center, in an effort to help the local people understand and participate in The Faith Move-

ment: Let Us Live a Mutually Fulfilled Life With Kami, we began our earnest efforts at the very first line: Let us seek and receive Kami's Words through Mediation. In order to lead others, I thought that it was important that I embody that concept first, and I gave it my full thought and effort.

I began with my conversations with people whom I met

as I traveled in Paraguay. In these conversations, I tried to pass on to each individual, Kami's words, and in the process, have discovered Kami's divine intervention and presence there. I believe it was Kami's work that led to these casual conversations evolving into consultation, then mediation and eventually request for teachings. Now they are aware of Kami's blessings, and little by little they realize the importance of pursuing a life of gratitude and happiness. As we participate in The Faith Movement, I became certain of this: Each line, each acknowledgement in The Faith Movement will lead us to realize the way of Kami and humanity and lift up those who practice The Faith Movement.

I believe that outreach conditions are favorable in today's Paraguay. Paraguay is a country friendly to Japan and although predominantly Christian, it is tolerant and open to people of different religious beliefs.

This year marks the 200th year since our Founder's birth. What will delight our Founder most? The answer would differ, depending on each individual, but for me it is to be grateful from bottom of my heart saying, "Thanks to our Founder, not only I but all of my family is saved. The circle of our salvation radiates outward, to spread to people around us as well." And with that heart, we need to pray that we ourselves be valuable and helpful people who can embody the concept of Kami and human living together.

We are facing many challenges in our outreach program in Paraguay. We have been given Divine Blessings to establish a church, develop human resources and outreach materials. I would like to continue to do my best, with Kami-Sama's help.



Young Followers' Gathering Held at Konkokyo of Korea

Konkokyo of Korea is planning to hold monthly Young Followers' Gatherings from this year to support the spiritual growth of believers there.

The first Gathering was held on February 8 and Reverend Kinya Suenaga, the director of the Konkokyo Seoul Activity Center (KSAC), gave an opening greeting to the attendees. Together, they recited prayers to Kami, sang "Shinjin no Michi (The Way of True Faith)," and then heard a sermon from Reverend Kazumasa Tsukamoto, the former director of the KSAC, who spoke on three themes: the importance of the prayer book, gratitude for our life and body, and the history of Konkokyo's outreach in the Korean Peninsula.

Afterwards, the 2005 film "A Shining Path for Korea



and Japan" was shown and a spiritual workshop and some recreation followed.

Throughout the day, attendees deepened their mutual friendship. Some followers said; "I like Konkokyo's free spirit, which doesn't force us to worship or to donate, and especially the universal teachings about the Way of the Universe and how 'Kami is the parent of

us all. Faith is the same as showing respect to your parents.'

"I felt closer (to Konkokyo) because my relative was in the movie," "I learned about the history of Konkokyo on the Korean Peninsula and the passion shown in researching this after 50 years from the end of WW II is marvelous," and "If possible, I would like to study and train at Konkokyo Headquarters to deepen my understanding of Konko Faith."

KIC Welcomes New Staff Member



Dr. Takuya Fujimoto (Konko Church of Akabane, Tokyo) was appointed as a new KIC staff member on March 1. He described his aspiration as follows, "I would like to work at KIC always following Konko-Sama's words: Each task is significant. Therefore, pursue it with respect and wholeheartedness."

Reverend Yukie Morimoto retired from her position as Deputy Director of KIC on February 28.

**Konko Faith Returns to Taiwan!
Konkokyo Peace Gatherings Held in Taiwan**

The Konkokyo North-Kyushu District has created an Executive Committee to organize a Peace Gathering in Taichung City, Taiwan on May 28.

The outreach of Konkokyo in Taiwan began in 1902 from the Taihoku Church, which was the first Konko Church established overseas. For the first time in the Showa period, there was a remarkable boom with 12 churches established after 1926. However, those churches were soon closed due to Japan's loss in the war and no action has been taken until now.

Konkokyo volunteer believers in the North-Kyushu District appreciate those pioneer ministers and wish for the Konko Faith to spread in Taiwan once again. They have visited the former grounds of the Taihoku Church, as well as two others, for observation and faith training.

This time, we will hold a peaceful gathering and Me-

morial Service in the Japanese tomb in front of the *Reian Kokyo* monument honoring the dead Japanese soldiers and Taiwanese WW II army civilian employees. It is located in the Houkakuzenji temple precinct in Taichung City.

Date: May 28, 2014 (Wed) 10:30am-11:30am
Place: Tomb of the Japanese Soldiers (in front of the Reian Kokyo Monument), Taichung City
Contents: Prayer for Peace and Memorial Service
Concept: Pray for World Peace and Express Condolences

For questions regarding participation, please contact to KIC.

