



The Divine Call received in 1859 urged our Founder to change his livelihood drastically from farming to serving for the sake of saving people. Surprisingly, Kami stated that saving people through Mediation would also fulfill Kami. This incredible request must have surprised our Founder.

At this time, I would like to reflect on the Founder's practice of faith before he received "The Divine Call." By doing so, we can understand the Mediation needed for Kami to save people and the faith which fulfills Kami.

Kami did not make the request (The Divine Call) to the Founder all at once. After sharing the critical moment, the Founder formed a unique faith with Kami. This faith based on the relationship between Kami and the Founder naturally lead to "The Divine Call." Therefore, by learning the characteristics of Founder's faith practiced during this period of time, we could understand The Divine Call in practical level. From that point of view, let us reconsider the "death" and the "desire" described in Memoir of Konko Daijin as "Regard this event as your death. Dispel all desires..." (*Konko Daijin Oboegaki: 9-3-4*)

#### Kami who responds us

In 1856, after the Founder recovered from his critical illness, he decided on visiting shrines on first, fifteenth, and twenty-eighth day of every month to express his gratitude. The Founder taught, "Practicing faith means to direct your heart toward Kami." (*Gorikai III Kyoso Gorikai: 21-1*) As he taught in this teaching, he did not pray only during difficult times. He started directing his heart to Kami based on appreciation for the blessings that he received.

## The Divine Call and the Faith

by the Reverend Mayumi Kawai,  
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In 1857, a deity possessed our Founder's younger brother, Shige'emon. The deity requested financial support for building a shrine. Seeing how the Founder accepted the request and helped the construction sincerely, Kami said, "You have followed My words and revered Me as Kami. I am pleased." (*Konko Daijin Oboegaki:5-1-2*) After this event, Kami started to respond to the Founder whatever the problems he faced. In December 1858, Kami finally informed why the Founder had to face a series of misfortunes. This includes his own critical illness after being adopted to the Kawate family. Kami lets him know that the cause of misfortunes were due to the accumulated offences committed by the Kawate family's ancestor over 400 years ago.

Kami, that our Founder revealed, informed him not only the cause of the problems in his daily life, but also the irreverence that accumulated from long distant past. Irreverence that were unknowingly and unintentionally committed which were impossible for human to realize and resolve. Kami, then, guided him to a solution. Thus, Kami always tried to teach us what to do.

We need to do exactly what our Founder did. When we face troubles, make a request to Kami, understand Kami's heart, and live following Kami's instruction. This is a huge step towards revealing Kami in our daily lives.

### Practices for understanding and following Kami

Common sense, tradition, calculating profit-and-loss, conscience, and a sense of worth are all obstacles when making request to Kami. Understanding Kami's heart becomes harder in the present when we live in a world which revolves around your own self.

Let us see our Founder's faith from the critical illness to The Divine Call. Kami showed him a clear difference between human-centered life and Kami-centered life. By following Kami's instruction, our Founder experienced a new way of life with blessings. Kami trained him to have faith.

For example, it started raining during his farming. He asked Kami whether or not to stop farming. Everything worked out by following the instruction.

He once asked Kami about eliminating swarms of rice insects. Kami stopped him from putting oil in his field. This idea was unthinkable for an experienced farmer. At that time, Kami made him understand not to follow the common knowledge. Kami asked him to sleep without a mosquito net. He was spared from many bites despite multiple mosquitoes were flying about. In this way, Kami guided him to follow the directions.

The Founder's daughter, Kura fell ill. Everyone was worried about her life. When the Founder prayed to Kami, Kami told him to go out and farm as usual. Have no worry whether she lives or dies. His wife was worried and asked for a prayer once more as a last resort. However, as Kami told our Founder, Kura received the blessings and regained her health.

From these examples, Kami's requests were beyond human's comprehension, and the Founder had to surpass the limits of human judgements. Our Founder once stated as follows:

“Once, while I was grinding the mortar, Kami told me to dance, so I danced. Then when Kami told me to sing. I sang. Also, while I dried the barley outside on a sunny day, Kami told me to bring it in because it would rain. After doing so, it began to rain heavily. In any case, practice faith without doubting Kami, and act like a fool if you must.”

No one could imagine Kami's directions in human-centered world. This absolute abandonment is necessary. Why? Because, it is necessary to choose the way that both Kami and people were fulfilled. Kami is fulfilled only when people were saved. Kami, who lives in people's heart, will be saved when people are saved.

### Being a spiritual state of nothingness

Now, what prevents us from expanding out of human perception? We would be placing our lives at risk by denying a choice to follow human ideals. Ignoring climate, common senses, or tradition will not guarantee one's life in accordance to the said common sense and tradition. In other words, the consequence is “death.” However, it is necessary to seek, listen, and follow Kami's thoughts in order to place ourselves in the religious world.

Therefore, we need to seek Kami's thoughts by going beyond the limits of human thoughts such as common sense, tradition, assessing profit-and-loss, conscience, and a sense of worth. As we could not imagine Kami's thoughts, we need to immerse ourselves into spiritual state of nothingness in order to hear Kami's voice. This attitude was stated in The Divine Call as “Regard this event as your death. Dispel all desires ...” (*Konko Daijin Oboegaki: 9-3-4*)

Imagine that we were the one who experienced what the Founder had done. What did we do? We probably could not ignore human wisdom which guarantees our own lives. Thus, we could not dispel our desire, and we would end up with difficulties. One must abandon one's wisdom based on common sense and tradition. Otherwise, one cannot seek, listen, and follow Kami's Will.

How could we realize Kami's Will? Many answers were written in “Kyoten Gorikai”:

“The Parent Kami of the Universe borrows the voice of humans to convey teachings. Those who practice faith should listen well, even to children's lullabies, as you might hear His teachings.” (*Gorikai II: Fukushima Gihe'e 15-2*)

“Those practicing faith conscientiously should not mock the dreams they have at night. Kami teaches good and bad even through dreams.” (*Gorikai I: Kondo Fujimori 58-2*)

“If you lose your way in Shikoku, just pray, ‘Ikigami Konko Daijin, which way should I go?’” “Following this instruction, I was able to find my way.” (*Gorikai II: Ikeda Tomisuke2-2*)

Kami informs us about Kami's heart by sending people or through an event.

If you are unsure Kami's heart even something happened in your life, you could ask again and again until you became certain. You will find Kami's Way for sure. Do not give up.

### Be opened by this Way of Life

The essence of Konko faith is described in The Divine Call. The essence can also be observed through the Founder's life with Kami before receiving The Divine Call. One can

only encounter Kami by practicing faith like our Founder. Practicing faith like our Founder appears difficult because Kami wants us to go beyond human limitation to save not only people but also Kami. The mutual fulfillment exists where human alone cannot reach.

What would be waiting for us after practicing faith in this way? Our hearts would be nurtured as described in the Divine Reminder: “The divine favor depends upon one’s own heart.” We will realize that our hearts have changed

by being cultivated by Kami. Another outcome would be that this teaching given to the disciple becomes meaningful:

“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 2-1*)

Thus, we could open our hearts and face our lives in content. I am one of the followers who are trying to achieve this faith. I wish to keep practicing this Way while sharing the joy of faith with all of you.

## What the “Divine Call” Means to Me

I studied in Vermont, USA, from August 2001 to June 2003. I experienced 9.11 terror, confused people and society itself, resulting in my own psychological issues in Vermont. Then, one night, I had a very strange experience in a dorm room not my own.

There was no mattress on the bed’s box spring and somehow I had a feeling that a student had committed suicide in this room. I pretended to give birth on the hard bed, because I thought it could save the student’s spirit. At midnight, I heard noises outside the door, as if many people were placing bouquets there. It may have been a hallucination, but looking back at it now, I consider it my “death or rebirth” like the Founder’s in the “Divine Call.”

After several relapses in an 8-year span, my last hope to cure my illness was the Konko Faith. Therefore, I entered the Konkokyo Seminary in 2011. The illness was a message from Kami-Sama to change my way of life. I had not appreciated the Faith, nor helped with any *goyo* (sacred tasks), despite belonging to a church family. I discovered how blessed I was to be born into a Konko ministerial fam-

ily living at church, being prayed for by Konko-Sama and so many people.

I once thought Kami-Sama deprived me of my abilities through my mental illness, but in actuality I was given the gift to return to this Way of Faith. In addition, now I can cheerfully serve in many interesting sacred tasks, including regional church activities, *tengaku* (sacred music performances), and English translations.

My deceased grandmother, the third head minister of our church, often said, “Do appreciate, apologize, and request.” I would like to succeed in work together with her spirit and live Kami’s wish for me. I think that Kami-Sama wants me to help spread the Faith, in order for people throughout the world to realize true world peace, as well as to revive my own church.



**Reverend Yukiko Ban**  
Konko Church of Yokkaichi

In the past, I felt some distance between the “Divine Call” and myself. It was neither very close to me, nor did I really feel connected to it.

Recently, I had the opportunity to talk to a Brazilian man about the everyday life of Our Spiritual Leader (as much as I knew). This man was quite amazed to know that such a person existed in the world and said Konko-Sama was “a real iron man.”

This experience with the Brazilian man helped me gain an even better appreciation of the greatness of Konko-Sama.

Today, Konko-Sama is the closest person to the “Divine Call.” Thanks to Konko-Sama, through his *Toritsugi* Mediation, I feel much closer to the “Divine Call” now in such a way that cannot even be compared to how I felt about it previously. For someone like me who can’t do anything without

Kami-Sama’s help, Konko-Sama’s prayers are exceptional. Whenever I see Konko-Sama, I receive unlimited strength. Regardless of how discouraged I may be, I attain strength to overcome challenges, and go from there. The “Divine Call” is a wish of Kami-Sama, Our Divine Parent of the Universe, which was first communicated to Our Founder, Konko Daijin, and to which I am connected through Konko-Sama, today. I therefore perceive the “Divine Call” as something fundamental for my faith and am committed to making every effort to align myself with it day-by-day.



**Reverend Shintaro Suenaga**  
Konko Church of Birigui in Brazil





# One of My Many Blessings

Mrs. Flora Higuchi, Konko Mission of Honolulu



This year, the Konko Mission of Honolulu, through the blessings of our ministers and members, celebrates our 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary! I am very fortunate to continue to receive blessings and guidance from our late head ministers, the Reverends Masayuki and Kikue Kodama. One of the most significant blessings of my life happened 40 years ago.

Reverend Masayuki Kodama wanted some of the members to play the *koto*. Reverend Kodama was a man of few words, and I respected him as I did my father. One day in 1972, he asked, “Higuchi-san, can you play the *koto* with four other church members for *Daisai* (Grand service). Do *goyo* and make Kami-Sama happy.” Not knowing what I was getting into, but being raised on filial piety, my answer was a resounding “*hai!*” (yes!).

I was not musically inclined, and I wondered, “What in the world is a *koto*?!” I soon discovered that a *koto* is a wooden instrument about five-feet long with thirteen strings. The strings are plucked with three fingers on the right hand, forefinger, middle finger, and thumb, using ivory picks or fingernail. Tuning the *koto* can be difficult, and tuning five *koto* can be five times more challenging. Mrs. Kaoru Ota and Doris Kodama, youngest daughter of the Reverends Masayuki and Kikue Kodama were responsible for tuning our *koto*. Doris was also our instructor. She attended Konkokyo Gakuin, the Konko Seminary, located at Konkokyo Headquarters in Okayama, Japan, where she learned to play the *koto*. The four new *koto* students, Mrs. Mae Shimizu, Mrs. Nancy Yamanaka, Mrs. Ota, and I, were expected not only to play three songs, but also at the same time, chant in Japanese. Being born and raised in Hawaii, my Japanese was limited. And in addition to the challenge of singing in Japanese, playing the *koto* was extremely difficult for me. I kept plucking the wrong string. It was during that time that I was agonizing over computer problems at work, and I seriously considered quitting the *koto*.

I prayed about this every day, when attending the 5:30 am and 7:30 pm services, and even throughout the day. I received *toritsugi* mediation with Reverend Masayuki Kodama. He encouraged me with words like “*gambatte kudasai*” (do your best) and “*onegai shimasu*” (I’m counting on you). I continued to practice playing *koto* - still making lots of mistakes. I also continued to pray and seek *toritsugi* mediation with Reverend Masayuki Kodama, and then later, with Reverend Kikue Kodama.

In 1976, the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration of the Konko Missions in Hawaii was held at Farrington High School. The five of us took to the stage, looking out at an auditorium filled with people. They were all looking at us, and I felt very nervous. With Kami-Sama’s help, everything went well. I was able to complete all three songs without any mistakes! It took only FOUR years of practice! I was very happy that day with such an accomplishment, and I hope that I made Kami-sama happy, too. I continued playing *koto* for several more years until 1995.

I am so happy and grateful to have received blessings to play *koto* for twenty three years! This was one of the biggest blessings I’ve received in my 88 years of life. It taught me to be patient. We need lots and lots of patience to receiving blessings. It taught me the need to practice my faith every day, in order to receive blessings. It taught me that though people may not be with me physically, those who supported me will continue to support me. These are lessons that I am forever grateful for and I practice strengthening my faith daily.

I am able to celebrate the 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Konko Mission of Honolulu, thanks to the many blessings of those who came before me, the Reverends Masayuki and Kikue Kodama, the Reverend Masahiko Yoshino, and the many believers. I pray that I can continue to make Kami-Sama happy by expressing gratitude and looking to a future filled with more blessings!

## 160<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Konkokyo Parade

A special parade to energize the 160<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of Konkokyo was held on June 6, in Konko town. About 1,500 people participated in this event which was organized and carried out by voluntary members. Participants marched to the lively beat of the brass band, from the main street of Otani to the Grand Service Hall. This parade was the culmination of the efforts of voluntary believers who felt that in order to receive the virtue of *Goreichi* (the sacred grounds), they would march with gratitude and joy for the future, and at the same time, remember the fervent wishes of their predecessors, as they honored Kami. Some of the participants commented, "I enjoyed the liberal and generous atmosphere," "The joy of the participants filled the Konkokyo



Headquarters."

Reverend Masayuki Takebe, one of the staff members of this event commented, "Participants, over a thousand strong, sang 'Shining Laurels of Kami and Humanity' in front of the Grand Service Hall. I felt the presence of strong energy and was filled with gratitude, elation and a sense of expectation. I realized that much the same energy might have been felt at the time of our Founder. I believe that Kami, who has blessed the wishes of believers from the time of the Founder to the present day, will continue to grant the wishes of the marchers in this parade."

During the service, a special 24 hour prayer event was held to express gratitude to Kami. Also, gratitude prayers by each Head Minister of Konko Churches were held.

## Round Table Discussion - "Salvation Community of Practice"

The Konkokyo International Center (KIC) hosted a Round Table Discussion on July 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>, 2019, addressing the theme, "Salvation Community of Practice." Associate Professor Junko Terado from Professional Institute of International Fashion and scholar of anthropology of religion, was the guest speaker. Nine ministers and believers also participated in the meeting.

Professor Terado has conducted fieldwork and did theoretical studies of world-wide community movements "L'Arche" and the Catholic sacred place, Lourdes in France. In particular, she lectured about responsible and caring attitudes for the troubled and the suffering people. She introduced this spiritual and physical posture as "disponible" in French, which she had observed in Lourdes and the "L'Arche" community, an international private voluntary organization that works for the support of people who have intellectual disabilities.

In "L'Arche," a community based on Catholic faith, the volunteer staff live together with the people with disabilities, and here occurs the cycle of caring/being cared for and healing/being healed. She also pointed out the communion between volunteer staff and the sick and the wounded in Lourdes, where there is this cycle of caring. The volunteer staffs of those communities, L'Arche and Lourde, manifest

openness, hospitality and a sense of place for vulnerable people.

After Professor Terado's lecture, the participants discussed and shared their thoughts on what is the necessary practice of salvation for the vulnerable and how we will establish the salvation community in Konkokyo.



The following are some of the ideas that were discussed:  
 +The image of "Community of practice" is considered like the close and personal relationship between master and disciple, such as that of an artisan-apprentice system. That kind of openness and fellowship are necessary for Konkokyo community.

+We -- each of us -- need to maintain the space within the self, without filling ourselves with our desires or being preoccupied with our jobs. That space becomes the ties with others.

KIC would like to seek the potentiality of a Toritsugi community, where people can increase sensibility and empathy for others' suffering, pain, loneliness and sadness. We believe this kind of community will resonate with Kami's wish for helping people.

## Welcoming the 5<sup>th</sup> Konko International Gathering 2019 at “Goreichi” Back to the Day: Inspiring the Future

Konkokyo believers from around the world, including anyone interested in learning more about Konkokyo are welcome to join this grand event. Let’s get together to celebrate the Konkokyo Establishment Day at the Sacred Grounds, “Goreich”.



Faith Enrichment Activities:

Guided tour of “Goreichi”, prayer service, Dinner party, workshops, and The 160<sup>th</sup> Konkokyo Establishment Day Service

Date: 2019, November 14<sup>th</sup> -15<sup>th</sup>

Place: Konkokyo Headquarters, Okayama, Japan

Registration Fee: None (Includes dinner, breakfast, and lodging)

For further information, please contact KIC.

### Konkokyo KYOTEN Uploaded on KIC’s HP

The PDF data of Kyoten (sacred scripture) of Konkokyo was uploaded on the KIC’s HP. These include “ : Memoirs of Konko Daijin;” “Oshirase-goto Oboe-cho: Record of Revelations;” “Gorikai I: Teachings of Konko Daijin 1;” “Gorikai II: Teachings of Konko Daijin 2;” “Gorikai III: Teachings of Konko Daijin 3.”

[http://kic.jpn.org/eng/?page\\_id=117](http://kic.jpn.org/eng/?page_id=117)



*Let’s pray to Kami-Sama for the salvation and peace of mind of our Mitama, our ancestral spirit.”*

#### A Message from the Staff

Recently, an increasing number of people in Eastern and Western Europe, North America and other parts of the world are expressing a strong desire to learn more about the Konko religion. Their voices echo the voice of Kami-Sama who earnestly prays for their happiness. In response to this sincere interest, we the staff, hope to deliver Kami-Sama’s light to shine in the hearts of each and every one on this earth. It is our fervent wish to provide the golden light to brighten this world. S.K



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