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Please guide us, Konko-sama

November 15 last year marked the 162nd anniversary of the Divine Call, the day Founder received Kami's request for him to carry out Toritsugi Mediation. On this day, a service to celebrate Konkokyo's establishment and the change of spiritual leadership ceremony from Reverend Konko Heiki to Reverend Konko Hiromichi, which had been postponed, was held at the Grand Service Hall in Konko, Okayama. Covid restrictions were eased due to the decline of new cases, which allowed more believers to attend these ceremonies.

The service began at 10 in the morning. In the pastoral prayer, Rev. Konko Hiromichi conveyed, "While our Founder encountered various hardships, he practiced faith sincerely and conscientiously. Tenchi Kane no Kami sent the Divine Call to Founder as follows: 'There are many people who are troubled. Please help them through Mediation.' Founder gave up his family's work as he was requested to and dedicated his life to Mediation. This is how Ikigami Konko Daijin's Mediation began, and it has been passed down across generations for us receive blessings on all things possible. How precious and grateful it is to witness the succession of the workings of Ikigami Konko Daijin's Mediation. It is my sincere hope that this Main Worship Hall and all Konkokyo churches serve to help and nurture all people and spread this faith through Mediation." Rev. Konko Hiromichi offered a tamagushi, and members of the Konko family and a representative on behalf

of everyone present offered their tamagushis. Rev. Konko Hiromichi then recited the Divine Call.

After the service, the change of spiritual leadership ceremony was held with the presences of the former Konko-sama, Rev. Konko Heiki, and his wife Yaeko-sama and the current Konko-sama, Rev. Konko Hiromichi, and his wife Nobuko-sama. Reverend Iwasaki Michiyo, Chief Administrative Director, provided an opening address. Reverend Katsura Matsuko, a senior Konkokyo minister and head minister of the Konko Church of Kokura (Fukuoka prefecture) thanked the two Konko-samas on behalf of all believers. Rev. Katsura continued to express her utmost appreciation to Yaeko-sama, who attended the ceremony despite her lower-back pain, for her quiet yet steadfast support during the former Konko-sama's 30-year-long service.

Rev. Katsura then encouraged everyone present to thank and seek further guidance. Led by Rev. Katsura, the attendees rose to together express, "arigato gozaimashita (thank you)" to the former Konko-sama and Yaeko-sama, and "dozo yoroshiku onegaitashimasu (please guide us)" to the current Konko-sama and Nobuko-sama. It was a special moment of sincerity and deep appreciation. The ceremony ended with beautiful bouquets offered by four young ministers. The Konko-samas and their wives were in smiles as they departed amidst great applause.

A seminar was held on the same day for newly-assumed head ministers. Konko-sama imparted,

“You all have received great blessings. Becoming a head minister means to join Founder and his efforts. I have also taken on a new role since March. Let us together practice faith so that we

could embody Founder’s faith in our lives. Let us convey the greatness and thankfulness of Tenchi Kane no Kami and be of service to all.”

Let us pray for world peace

By Oya Yomisu

We as Konko believers pray and express our deepest condolences to the victims of war that began on February 24. Our hearts go out to the Ukrainian people. Let us unite our prayers for world peace. When we pray, I would like to remind you that “peace in the world starts with peace in our hearts” because “Kami’s blessings begin within hearts grateful and caring in harmony and joy.”

Kami embraces all people who live in the Universe. With the utmost reverence and sincerity, the Founder realized the blessings bestowed upon us. Thus, he taught us to revere Kami as our Divine Parent and to live in Kami’s infinite blessings. However, many people who do not know this fundamental principle are lost in greed and selfishness. Thus, we face difficulties. Our hearts tend to fill with anger. However, Kami’s sorrow is deeper than ours. Let us direct our hearts to Kami by following our Founder, Konko Daijin, who taught us the blessings of the Universe.

When the government banned Mediation, our Founder, Konko Daijin, closed the Worship Hall. However, he overcame hardship with a revelation. The words of the revelation became the Divine Reminder (Tenchi Kakitsuke).

The Divine Reminder affirmed that Ikigami Konko Daijin is perceived as having the same purpose as Kami.

Divine Reminder

Ikigami Konko Daijin,
Divine Parent of the Universe,

Pray sincerely
With all your heart.
Be one with Kami.

Kami’s blessings begin within
Hearts grateful and caring
In harmony and joy.

Look to Kami always
Now and forever
On this very day pray.

This meant that followers could receive the working of his Mediation by calling his divine name, even if they could not receive his Mediation physically. Later, someone saw our Founder praying to Kami, “When the people of the world pray to Ikigami Konko Daijin with sincerity and wholeheartedness, please fulfill whatever requests they make.”

Therefore, let us recite the Divine Reminder and Prayer for Peace. Let us pray for world peace.

Prayer for Peace

Through our Divine Mediator to the
Divine Parent of the Universe –
Let us pray.

As precious as our own lives are,
So are the lives of all.

You embrace us
with Your blessings,
Wanting us to help one another
And live together in harmony.

Yet, when Your wishes are ignored
And selfish desires pursued,
Tears spread across the world.
Your heart pains as people suffer,
Hurt by injustice, poverty, and war.

Please accept our apologies
As we strive to change our ways,
To reflect Your Love in all we do.
The peace of the world
Starts with peace in our hearts.

Please grant us the courage and wisdom
To see the goodness in all,
To speak words of comfort
and hope.

Allow our actions
to form a peaceful world
Where each is respected
and fulfilled.

Through Your virtue and guidance
We pray with hearts as one
For all to live
In peace and harmony,
For all to live as one.

Thoughts on Aiyo kakeyo

By Fujimoto Takuya

Konkokyo began with Founder's acceptance of Kami's wish, and our faith strives to realize Aiyo kakeyo, a relationship where both Kami and people prosper. Aiyo kakeyo is one of the most important terms in Konkoko to describe Kami-people relations. Surprisingly, Aiyo kakeyo appears in the *Kyoten* only a few times. It has been translated into English in explanatory terms as "mutual reliance of Aiyo kakeyo." It is true that the phrase is hard to define even in Japanese. Aiyo kakeyo derives from Bicchu dialect used to express our relations with others and support for one another. For this, it is no mistake to use "mutual reliance" in the translation; however, I feel that it lacks Kami's greatness and transcendent nature.

What we must remind ourselves is that Aiyo kakeyo is not only defined by our mutually dependent relationship with Kami. In the 1859 Divine Call, Kami imparted, "Kami exists because of man, and man exists because of Kami. Thus, Kami supports man as Kami's children, and man supports Kami as his parent. Everyone will become forever prosperous through Aiyo kakeyo." For this, the core understanding of Aiyo kakeyo became "Kami exists because of man, and man exists because of Kami." This may lead to a misunderstanding that Kami and people are on an equal footing. However, we must not make the mistake of believing that people could influence Kami's workings and that Kami and people help each other on equal terms.

Kami is our Divine Parent who gifts us with our lives and allows us humans to live and practice faith. Tenchi Kane no Kami finds great joy in helping us and relieving us from our hardships. Therefore, we must understand Aiyo kakeyo under the premise that Kami comes above all and "man exists because of Kami."

However, it is Kami, our transcendental being, who states that "Kami exists because of man." In other words, Kami says that Kami's salvation is the same as people's salvation. We know that it is Kami who initiates the Kami-people relationship and lends us a helping hand. When we come to this realization, we express our appreciation in

great awe and may feel that we are undeserving of Kami's generosity. We must once again understand that Tenchi Kane no Kami began this unique relationship of Aiyo kakeyo, which is unseen with other deities around the world.

The origin of Aiyo kakeyo is the relationship between Kami and Founder. Kami chose Founder as Ikigami Konko Daijin, a savior for humankind, and Kami sent divine messages to Founder. Founder embraced these messages and did as he was told. Kami-people relations became possible when Kami existed first and approached Founder. Of course, Kami and Founder were not on equal terms. Our relationship with Kami too, is completely disproportionate. This is why Aiyo kakeyo is not a win-win nor a balanced relationship between Kami and people. Kami-people relations are vertical in nature and the most important relationship. Once this is established, we work to help each other.

Kami-people relations where we uphold each other is incomparable to our coexistence with other people, or with animals, plants, and nature. Such coexistent relations tend to be more horizontal, or even in nature, such as showing empathy or conserving the environment. While being altruistic and helping other people are morally good, these deeds are based on horizontal relationships we have with others and lack religious experience and transcendence.

It is important to understand what it truly means for both Kami and people to uphold each other through Aiyo kakeyo. More specifically, it is important to understand what it means for Kami and people to be saved and what "Kami exists because of man" truly mean. I am certain that faith based on Aiyo kakeyo is enthusiastically practiced among believers and at churches. However, when we stop pondering its true meaning, Aiyo kakeyo may just become a matter of course and its lively nature may just resort to a mere slogan. This is why we should once again go back to basics and reconsider the Aiyo kakeyo relationship of Kami and Founder. Let us deepen our understanding of Aiyo kakeyo, recognize Kami's transcendence, and serve Kami.

Give a prayer to unite with Kami

By Teramoto Tomoko

I hope everyone is doing well this new year. The pandemic that continued throughout 2021 has caused us to distance ourselves from others, and as with myself, I am sure there were many people who felt isolated and anxious. Despite this difficult time, I was able to continue praying to Kami. I gave prayers at my home altar and in my heart at all times and locations. I sought to understand Kami and felt Kami's workings through various occurrences.

I have been able to place great faith in Kami without any doubts thanks to my parents' influence. I was born and raised in a small church called the Konko Church of Naha, located on the main island of Okinawa, at the southernmost tip of

my peers, there were times I felt dissatisfied. However, when I began living on my own in Tokyo, I realized how comforting and supportive it was to know that my parents were mediating and praying at church. I was not only thankful for my parents' prayers, but I too turned to Kami and felt firsthand the workings and teachings of Kami.

Due to the Covid pandemic, I have not been able to travel to Konko from Tokyo for two years. I have instead been praying from my home every morning at the same time as Konko-sama's morning service. At 4 in the morning everyday, the altar's sliding doors at the Main Worship Hall open. The large hall is silent and still, and Konko-sama begins the service. I imagine this scene in my

mind and thank the current and former Konko-samas and the mitama spirits, and I pray for my family, friends, and all believers I had the opportunity to meet through the Konkoko International Center. Knowing that my prayers that I offer with Konko-sama reach Kami, I become filled with gratitude, a feeling so large and vast as if it could embrace the whole world.

Regardless of what is happening in the world we live in, we must remember that our Founder's prayers are ceaseless. Even today, Konko-sama prays for world peace and salvation of humanity at the Main Worship Hall. There are Konkoko ministers that give the same prayers in different parts of the world. Let us too pray each day from where we are to Kami and feel Kami's workings. I look forward to the day we could all meet each other again and share our stories on Kami and our faith.

Japan. Since the very beginning 56 years ago and to this day, my parents' day starts at 3:40 in the morning when they step out of the church to face the direction of the Main Worship Hall and then face the church building to pray. They continue to pray throughout the day with believers and give Toritsugi Mediation.

Because my parents prioritized their work for Kami, it was not possible to go out as a family. As a child growing up in a different environment from



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