
KONKO REVIEW

News from the Konko Churches of North America

OCTOBER/DECEMBER 2020

VOLUME 46, NUMBER 4



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KONKO REVIEW

KCNA CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE MINISTER MESSAGE



Rev. Amy Uzunoe-Chin is the KCNA Chief Administrative Minister.

As we reflect back on 2020 and all that has happened, I am sure it has been quite an emotional rollercoaster ride for most of us—having to adjust to a new way of living, conquering fear, and motivating ourselves and others that tomorrow will be better.

Our Founder, Konko Daijin, also went through perilous times, but he held fast to his faith. He didn't waver from Kami, but held strong and followed Kami without question. There was a time in our Founder's life when he was forced to take his altar down and stop teaching his followers, but Konko Daijin encouraged his followers, including his own family, to continue to pray to Kami and not forget about Kami in their daily lives.

During his several troubling times, Kami told Konko Daijin to say the following to his family:

“As a reminder for your family members, write, ‘How and what things will change are unknown. However, they can be for the better depending on one's own heart.’ Tell this to the whole family and give them the reminder.” (*Memoirs of Konko Daijin: 20:14.2*)

I asked myself the same question, did I follow Kami without question? Did I believe everything would be

better? How and what did I pray to Kami? How and what do I teach children, my family?

Personally, these past eight months have taught me that the most important thing is to be able to show Kami's Wish and blessings through my own life. Praying to Kami has given me the strength to be able to find the good in bad situations and realize the blessings in the rough. Through this process, I have been able to find a heart of appreciation in everything, even the coronavirus itself.

My children asked me, “Does Kami know we are suffering?” I responded, “I am sure Kami knows we are suffering, but have you ever thought about why we suffer? We live in Kami's blessings and Kami is always with us every step of the way to help guide us in any situation we may face. We are alive, thus things happen, but HOW we accept and adapt to overcome our suffering is more important than waiting and wondering whether Kami is going to miraculously help us. You have to pray to Kami for help and guidance. You have to believe and understand that Kami is there to help you get through it because Kami loves you. So that is why it is important to turn our hearts to Kami and ask for guidance.”

My friend, who is a nurse, has been on the front lines and has dealt with patients affected by the virus for these past eight months. She has never shown frustration or anger towards the virus itself, but instead towards people who refuse to wear a mask. It made me realize that it is important we understand that we are allowed to live just like the virus. It is part of Kami's blessing, but WE as humans should respect and care about people's lives by wearing masks. We cannot control the virus but what we can control are our heart, our behavior and our attitude. This is the fundamental belief of Konkokyo. It is about appreciating each other and caring about others, and respecting everything and everyone. We are the children of Kami, thus we also have the heart of Kami. We have the knowledge and tools within us to be able to overcome our sufferings, but it truly depends on each and every one of our Kami-Centered hearts.

Our Divine Reminder of Heaven and Earth, the "Recitation of Tenchi Kakitsuke" is the main teaching of our Konko Faith. It is a reminder for all of us that receiving blessings or being able to live a fulfilling life truly depends upon on our hearts.

Daily, I pray together with my children to help them realize that the blessings we are receiving every day in being allowed to live are because of Kami. I realized that the most important thing I can do for my children and others is to show them my faith and my confidence through my actions and continued prayers, and actions of how I react and overcome each situation we face. Also, to teach them through my trust in Kami that everything will be okay as long as we turn our hearts to Kami, and ensure them that we are not

alone and that we will be guided to stay on the path to blessings.

Once again, despite facing troubling times, Konko Daijin's diligent faith and prayers allowed him to receive instructions from Kami to tell his family the following:

"Your family is not to forget about Kami. Whatever happens, do not depend on others. For the good times as well as the bad, rely on Kami. Do not worry." (*Memoirs of Konko Daijin: 21:1.3*)

Thus, let us work together and continue to support each other and pray for each other. Hold and hug our loved ones close, and teach and show them to appreciate the positives, the blessings we do have in our lives, and not to fear but instead pray and stay calm during turbulent times. Let us NOT FORGET KAMI. Teach and show, especially our children, not to forget Kami, stay positive and always live life together with Kami.

I would also like to take this opportunity to give a special prayer to Kami and give a big shout out of appreciation and heartfelt gratitude to those who are praying for us each and every day, and also to those who have been adapting to the new way of life to help make other lives better—the essential workers, vaccine researchers, our teachers, leaders, ministers, and our Spiritual Leader, Konko Sama. Let us pray for their families, their health and safety so that their efforts continue to help save others. We are all in this together. *Ganbarimashou!* Thank you.

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FAITH STORY: IN THE MIDST OF COVID-19



Written by Alexander Djain, this article comes from the August 2020 edition of the Konko Church of Portland's newsletter, Konko Spirit.

Alex is a young man in New Zealand who found us on the internet in January, 2015, and has been seeking mediation via email since. Last year he had an opportunity to stop through Tokyo during one of his flights and visited his first Konko Church in Osaki (Rev. Motoo Tanaka's church).

Developing his faith over the years, Alex has been receiving many blessings and being inspired by other stories, agreed to share his with others in gratitude. Thank you Alex for sharing!

[email excerpt 7/13/20] ...Konko-sama encouraged us to share Divine Blessings we receive, right?

Well, when we were in lockdown here, I temporarily lost my job (at the time it was uncertain that it was temporary). I've been learning to depend on Kami and to offer everything to Him, so I offered this situation to Him. Luckily, the government gave me substantial compensation for being out of work during the pandemic. I am so grateful.

To get even freakier, when we went down an alert level and most people were still staying at home, I was offered full-time (often even more than that) work with the company I work most closely with, for around a month or so, to edit

educational content for children for a Home Learning Channel. This was great for me since I'm a contractor.

Being so busy with work I didn't have much time to go food shopping, so I offered the whole food situation to Kami-Sama.

Amazingly, a priest-friend of mine contacted me out of the blue and said he had a box of food to give away. The next day I got another message which gave me chills—another friend of mine randomly messaged me out of the blue offering another box of food. Unbelievable!

And to top it all off, I was able to get my old job back after lockdown. Apparently, there was a tiny, secret corner of the budget to fund my job—which should be fine if no one asks too many questions. What incredible blessings. I've been so well taken care of by Kami. Just too many freaky coincidences.

Those have been some of the major ones, and there have been countless others, too. I feel very humbled and grateful to Kami.

[7/15/20 email] One lunchtime at work, it was raining quite a bit and was very changeable, and I needed to pop out for lunch or stay and eat at the very expensive cafe at work. I offered the situation over to Kami, and asked Kami to show me the right

action and the right time. It felt quite natural to do what came next—the weather eased pretty quickly and held, and I was able to pop out and was able to trust my instincts knowing that it would hold.

I've learned a lot in the last couple of months about depending on Kami and our relationship, and feel I'm really understanding more what Konko Daijin is saying in the scriptures. I'm still continuously learning and growing.



Rev. Masato Tanaka (left), Alexander Djain (center) and Rev. Motoo Tanaka (right)

THANK YOU, ANCESTORS

Sapphira Jackson is a 5-year old believer of the Konko Church of Portland.

For Portland's Spring Reisai, Sapphira baked cupcakes for and wrote a special note to the *mitama*. Her note reads "Thank you ancestors for all your hard work. We are still praying for you. We love you."

Sapphira also performs kibimai dance during Grand Services.



KONKO REVIEW

GRATITUDE ALIGNS AND REFRESHES!



Emma Hew (left), Marilyn Lander (right)
Photographer: Sean Hew

Marilyn Lander has been a believer at the Konko Church of San Francisco for 33 years. To increase her faith and knowledge of Konkokyo, she lived in Konko Town to study at the Research Institute (Kenkyusho).

Reading her article, you will learn that Marilyn lives her faith and uses it in her job as a nanny.

Marilyn welcomes you to email her at:

marilynlander@yahoo.com

...and that is why I teach it [gratitude] to the children I take care of! It's the beauty that magic gets its traction from. It's the leeway that includes everything and everyone. It helps us make sense of being. Simply, it aligns us with ourselves. We are the grateful recipients and ultimately divine givers of the smile it naturally puts on our faces. It provides ease in a world of fast commitments.

Did you ever notice how happy you can make a small toddler by saying “thank you” for what the child just did? “I appreciate that!” “Oh, how happy!” Now for a rendition of “If you're happy and you know it...hooray!” If you didn't go through all three verses, you are missing out. Not only the joy of singing but the words work on a subconscious level that allows you to process an infinite amount of more content. Stretch yourself and sing (the praises).

There's no need to wait until they are a toddler to infuse these new beings with “please” and “thank you”. I narrate for the little ones right from the beginning so they can get themselves ready for that diaper change or going out—even during times of resistance, I say, “Please help me to do this easily so we can be done with it sooner” (think dirty diaper with curious hands nearby).

The words “please” and “thank you” themselves have a specific vibration that is learned very quickly. Pre-verbal is always the feeling of things. Who doesn't like to receive validation?

Routines and reminders help small children adjust to all the learning ahead—“Good morning trees, good morning beautiful blooming flowers, good morning green grass.” All this beauty is often overlooked by fast-moving adults. In the greeting, we see the wind blow and the wildlife moving. We see people coming and going. We hear our favorite gardeners and wonder what they are up to and wave. We see the clouds moving and fog allowing the sun to shine, which begs the question, how can science claim a constant?

Before we leave the house, we always say thank you to the house for keeping us happy and safe, and the parents for allowing us this time to spend together. We also say thank you to the parents for taking such good care of us! These are just quick reminders before leaving for our adventure. We talk about leaving in a few minutes before leaving to get the child ready for what is going to happen. The “thank you” serves not just as a reminder but helps in the transition from one place to the next.

So, when our adventure in the park is over, we thank our friends and the park for being here, and we look forward to being together again. With the gratitude and transition in place, the children have no need to melt down for more time at the park. They know what's next...and it's probably just as good!

One day, a fellow nanny asked me, "How do you get your children to listen to you?" I had to think about it for a while. I listen to them, too, but I also clue them in. I've been training my gratitude at home and various churches for years. Every morning, I write out my gratitude in a journal so I

don't forget how to focus. Also, I guess I'm always trying to find the best way. My current babies' mother encouraged me to share these incites, so here they are:

Every day, we set the tone for ourselves. Why not infuse others with your overflowing cup? This is what happens when we wake up and decide that things are going our way, and as my mother used to say, "Make it a better day for someone else." You might never know who you helped get through their day. Think back for yourself to a time when you were lifted by the beauty of another. Y-u-p!

KONKO REVIEW

LEARN ABOUT OUR MINISTERS OF THE KCNA

Reverend Yomisu Oya



Rev. Yomisu Oya was ordained in 1984. He is the Head Minister of the Konko Church of Sacramento, and the chairperson of the KCNA Ministry Board of Review (MBR).

Kami's Voice in Our Hearts

Konko Daijin taught:

“Without becoming a kami while living, how can you become a kami after death?” (*GI: Shimamura Hachitaro 10*)

People in Japan build shrines to deify a person; however, this teaching tells us to become a kami while we are living. I learned this teaching from a minister through Toritsugi Mediation. The conversation at that time went as follows: I said, “Idiots will only be cured when they die.” He replied, “But, you should pray for them.” I insisted, “No way. I am not a kami.” He continued, “To be a kami is the goal of the Konko Faith.” I was surprised and asked, “A human can become a kami?” He confirmed, “Yes. Our Founder was the first person. My sensei became a kami, and I am practicing faith to become a kami. Why don't you practice faith with me?”

I was surprised to hear that there was a way to become a kami. It really caught my attention. I also realized that toritsugi is the best way to learn the teachings. It is like having a good coach. Therefore, if you could go to church and receive toritsugi, you would find something that you need.

While I was in Hawaii, the late Rev. Yoshino shared his story. Every morning, a large man came to his church and asked, “Can I hold your hands for a while?” As Rev. Yoshino nodded, the stranger grabbed Rev. Yoshino's hands. Rev. Yoshino soon realized that it was his way to get “mana” spiritual power from Rev. Yoshino.

We receive blessings by going to church. However, COVID-19 prevents us from going to church. Now, here is my suggestion. Let us make a virtual church in our hearts and visit that virtual church. We can pray from where we are.

I am currently at Konko, Japan. Since July 6, I have been serving as an administrative director at Konko Headquarters. I am living in a two-story house located a half-mile south of Honbu. My new role is helping the Konkokyo International Center at Honbu. When I was first asked to fulfill this role, I declined. But when I was asked again, I strongly felt that this was Kami guiding me in a certain direction. With some more Mediation, I accepted.

KCNA is the birthplace of my faith. Kami guided me to be a minister because Kami knew that I wanted this faith to be alive in the United States. Since then, my heart

has always been with KCNA and it will not change no matter where I may be. Sacramento, California is the place where my soul will rest in peace forever. I will continue to pray for everyone as the Head Minister of Sacramento Church and as the KCNA Ministry Board of Review (MBR) Chairperson.

Presently, the KCNA encourages us to join the Noon Prayer for Peace on the West Coast, so I pray from Konko at 4:00 a.m. with Konko-Sama at the same time. Every morning, I start my day with an English prayer as if I were attending my virtual church. Around 3:30 in the morning, I leave my

house, and I walk across Route 2 to the Hiromae Worship Hall. This is one of the major roads in Japan and trucks run even early in the morning. There are six ways to cross the road. I ask Kami every day, “Today, which way should I go, Kami-Sama?”

We make decisions in our daily lives. When making decisions, if you ask Kami for guidance with the utmost reverence and sincerity, you will receive Kami’s answer. The Divine Reminder says, “Kami’s blessings begin within Hearts grateful and caring, in harmony and joy.”

Let us embrace Kami’s Voice with a grateful, caring, harmonious and joyful heart.

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LEARN ABOUT OUR MINISTERS OF THE KCNA

Reverend Byron Ishiwata



Rev. Byron Ishiwata was ordained in 1993. He is the Head Minister of the Konko Church of San Jose.

I decided to become a minister in order to help people through my service to Kami-sama. My grandparents, Reverends Asataro and Fusa Yamada, founded the San Jose Church in 1932. They initially planned to open a church in Vancouver, British Columbia, but were denied entrance into Canada. My understanding is that they were not allowed to enter Canada because only blue-collar workers were permitted to emigrate at that time. I often think about how my life would have been different if my family had ended up in Vancouver instead of San Jose.

I like being a minister because I enjoy helping others. It gives me great satisfaction when I'm able to help others physically and those who need someone to talk to for help. However, being a minister has several challenges. There are sacrifices that have to be made at times. There may be things you want to do and vacations you want to take but can't because of church obligations. Then, there are times when you have to travel without much sleep in order to attend a church service out of town on Sunday mornings. You cannot stay out too late on a Saturday night or on New Year's Eve unless you can go

with just a few hours of sleep. Fortunately, because I have lived at church my entire life, I have grown accustomed to this lifestyle.

Being a minister means learning to be a good handyperson, because paying others to do the work is not always an option. Most ministers serve as the gardener, plumber, electrician and janitor. The majority of us are not trained as doctors, psychiatrists, marriage counselors or therapists, but with Kami-sama's guidance and with a sincere heart, we do our best to help others with their issues.

I've been fortunate to be able to continue my pre-ministerial career as an accountant throughout my career as a minister. I am grateful to Rev. Nobuharu Uzunoe for convincing Honbu that I can have a dual profession as a minister and an accountant. Honbu did not like that I had an accounting career and wanted to be a minister. They said that I needed to quit my job in order to be ordained as a minister but that after ordainment, I could return to my job as an accountant. This didn't make sense—why should I quit my job momentarily to become ordained and then find a new job?

I like the teaching "suffering is a blessing in disguise". I believe that

one needs to experience some bad times in life in order to be ready for any circumstances that one may face. If you can overcome hardships in your life like the Founder, you can be strong enough to face anything in life. Hopefully, we can all lead a trouble-free life without sufferings. But realistically, we face physical and emotional issues, family and relationship issues, and political issues. We have to find ways to solve our problems and have faith in Kami-sama to help us.

Our current situation presents a big challenge for all of us. Our lives have been disrupted by the pandemic and a lot of our freedoms have been taken away. We are now living like Konko Daijin did in the 19th century with diseases that have no cures. At that time, medical services were expensive and not everyone could afford medical treatment. Because it was far less expensive, some people would seek help by going to church to pray to receive blessings for recovery. As of today, we do not have a vaccine for the coronavirus, so there is a sense of helplessness. However, we, too, can pray for Kami-sama to take care of all of us so that we and our loved ones don't get the virus; and if someone does get it, that they will be able to recover completely. Presently, most of us are unable to attend church except on a limited basis, so praying remotely is what we have to do.

After this is all over, hopefully soon, we will be able to resume a normal life. We will look back at our suffering as a trial and tribulation of life, and the experience will have made us stronger to feel that we can overcome any adversity that life has in store for us. We will feel blessed that we were able to recover from the COVID-19 crisis

and will have that much more enjoyment in our everyday life that has been restored to us.

I feel that I've been blessed during my lifetime and hope that you all feel that you have been blessed too. As stated in a famous teaching, "Divine Favor depends on one's own heart," you alone decide what is positive and negative in your life. The Founder's life was such that he had a positive outlook and saw most events as positive. It is very easy to get depressed during this pandemic, and to lose sleep with the political climate and social unrest in our country. In order to cope with this unrest, my feeling is that we will overcome all of this soon and will all be better with a better political situation and more social justice. The coronavirus crisis will be something that we look back on as a pandemic that we the world worked together to cure, and we will be stronger as a result.

Let's all pray to Kami-sama for an end to the pandemic and show appreciation for our good health, a good family life and good friends.

KONKO REVIEW

ACRONYMS AS PRAYER



Irene Graff is a believer at the Konko Church of Gardena. Her article makes you think. If you come up with a different acronym, please email it to:

*konkoreview@
konkofaith.org.*

Do you ever want to pray but don't know how to start? Do you sometimes avoid saying prayers because you think you might do it wrong? If you answered "yes" to either question, you can take comfort in the fact that you are not alone. Knowing how to pray is a concern for many believers of all faiths. Faith leaders respond to these concerns in many ways. One way is by creating standard prayers that we can memorize and recite anytime, such as the Divine Reminder.

A second way to guide believers through prayers is by creating easy-to-remember acronyms. My sister, a practicing Catholic, described to me a common acronym that guides Christians through the essential goals of prayer. The acronym is ACTS, which stand for:

- Adoration
- Confession
- Thanksgiving
- Supplication

These points of prayer sound very much like the directions we are given as believers in the Konko faith. Could we make an acronym to help us remember the essential aspects of our own prayers?

Early in my Konko faith practice, I received a lot of guidance from Rev. Nobuharu Uzunoe of the Konko Church of Gardena. Rev. Uzunoe advised me to pray in a specific order:

- Express Gratitude
- Offer Apologies
- Make Requests

How might we make an acronym out of these goals? Perhaps, GAR (gratitude, apologies, requests) might work? Hmm. I picture a long slender fish [see below]. Will that help me remember the content and order of my prayers? What if I changed the words a bit? Then "Thank, Sorry, Ask" could become TSA. Hmm, that's not quite right. So, I am sticking with GAR for now.

What would help you to frame your prayers? The adage "whatever works" applies here. If you have a way to remember and say your prayers regularly, then keep at it. If you are not sure how to do it, consult your reverend or try out an acronym of your own. You may come up with a better one than mine!



COMING SOON! THE NEW KONKO DAIJIN BIOGRAPHY

After 17 years of dedication, the translation of the new biography of the Founder, Konko Daijin, has finally been completed. The Konko Daijin Translation Project was formed by the late Dr. Katsumi Miyai, fondly known as “Doc”. The committee members met monthly at Doc’s house for many years. While the members of this committee are saddened that Doc was unable to be here for the completion of this project, we sincerely hope that the final product fulfills his vision and honors his memory.

The book is being published by Konko Headquarters under the title *From Farmer to Founder*. It covers in detail the development of Konko Daijin’s faith and his relationship with Kami, including his conversations with Kami. The book also includes biographical sketches of many of his disciples and stories about his immediate family members.

We look forward to seeing this new publication in the hands and hearts of many Konko Faith believers.



Debra Hamano is a believer at the Konko Church of Gardena. She is also a long-time member of RIC and the Translation Committee.

KONKO REVIEW

KCNA OFFICE NEWS

- Konko Daijin Translation Project has been completed. The book is currently being printed at Honbu. RIC and KCNA will review before final print.
- Alex Yasutake stepped down as the Young Adult Seminar Coordinator on October 10.
- George Way was recommended by the Youth Program Director on October 10 and was appointed by KCNA CAM on October 11.
- KCNA Urgent COVID-19 Essential Supplies Subsidy Proposal was voted on by HOD Delegates on September 21 and was approved for up to \$150. Approved by HOD Delegates 12:1.
- KCNA Office held a meeting to discuss 2021 KCNA activities. In order to avoid cancelling 2021 activities like 2020, KCNA currently is planning to recommend that all activities and meetings be held virtually.
- Konko Church of San Francisco changed its 90th Anniversary date to November 21, 2021.
- HOD Task Force is working on the following projects: Shine From Within to E-Book, Believer's Handbook, and Rev. Kiyoji Konko's report on KCNA pioneer ministers.
- MBR Task Force is working on the following translation projects: Konkokyo Scriptures Jinbutsushi (history/data of characters in the Konkokyo Scriptures), and Kami to Hito Tomoni Ikiru (Theology Book).
- 2020 MBR and HOD meetings will be held virtually, not in-person, due to COVID-19.
- 2020 is Rev. Amy Uzunoe-Chin's last year of her first term as KCNA's Chief Administrative Officer. She will be serving her second term from 2021 to 2024.

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Konko Churches of North America
Konko Review
Publication Division
1911 Bush Street, #4A
San Francisco, CA 94115

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FROM THE DESK OF THE EDITOR

Just a few more months and 2020 will come to an end, and what a year it has been. Life brought us COVID-19, catastrophic wildfires, hurricanes, floods, and record heat; but let's all remember the blessings we received, too. Want to share your stories of faith or your reflections of this year? I know that I, and I'm sure many others, would like to read about them.

Although I don't know anyone who would call COVID-19 a good thing, for me, good things have come out of it. I may complain about being bored (though I really shouldn't because Kami-sama continues to give me health and happiness) but I have learned to appreciate the time I have been given. Time to think about what is important to me and to appreciate life, time to reconnect with friends and strengthen my faith, and time to appreciate nature and feel closer to Kami-sama. On the funny side, I experimented with cooking—with some pleasant results and some never-try-again recipes—and came to realize even more how so very grateful to Kami-sama I should be for my husband who will eat almost anything without complaining.

Please share. Submissions are always greatly appreciated. Email to: konkoreview@konkofaith.org.

Take care,

Tomiye Akagi, Editor