

# KONKO REVIEW

*News from the Konko Churches in North America*

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# KONKO REVIEW

## ABOUT THE KR... by Ed.

It's been awhile since the last issue came out. You may or may not have noticed. What's important now, I suppose, is that you're reading this.

I'd like to apologize for the lack of the last 4 issues. Professionally, it's inexcusable. While there have been several major events which have occurred over that time, I'd especially like to apologize to the Gardena Church. As the host of the 2015 Conference, they deserved much more publicity support, both informational and promotional, and they didn't get it from me. I won't make that mistake again.

You may be asking, "why weren't those issues coming out? How hard is it to print it?" The truth is it's very hard when you begin looking at the basis of the *Konko Review's* (KR) mandate, as listed underneath the title: "News from the KCNA." I've edited for the past 6 years and read it for years (and years!) before that; after a while, the news and events all blurred together. I don't say this to put down the work of editors before me or the activities of others, but rather to point out that even an active and involved believer like me can become disengaged by the all-too-understandable desire to keep reading a format that hasn't been updated.

### *Where does it go from here?*

So why would things need to be different? With the advent of an improved KCNA website and social media available

to all, churches now have the ability to self-distribute news on their own timetable and with more detail than the KR can provide. That's something we can look into.

But moreover, we need to be relevant to a wider audience. For the past 35 years, the KR has used its larger scale, staff, and finances to share articles and news of the local churches with each other. I feel it's currently still more of an "internal" newsletter, filled with content for those who know the current situations/members of local churches. That intent worked well and was necessary until recently.

However, it's distributed not only to KCNA believers, but to their extended family members or people who may not be active in the church anymore. That's a lot of people unaware or unconcerned with these topics outside their immediate area. And while keeping people informed of organization-wide events is also very important, it's not substantial enough to act as either informational or propagation material for them without showing them why they should attend.

But what if we reconsider what the purpose of the KR could be: instead of continuing to recap the events of local churches, should it push forward as a tool for propagation and share the faith experiences of KCNA believers with all people? How would that change things?

### *What would I like to see?*

In the past, the Founder's Disciples shared their faith stories with each other and their disciples in turn, thus spreading the faith throughout their world. We don't have the direct access to the Founder as they did, but we too can share how our experiences with Mediation have affected us and how we apply that in our daily lives. Whether we have life-affecting emergencies or simple, mundane ones isn't important since this personal act is the part that others can relate most easily and how we can naturally propagate to others in our social spheres.

I know someone who, in many ways, has become my target audience when I'm thinking about what types of articles to request for issues of the *KR*. She married the son of a believer and even though she isn't an active participant in the church or KCNA, she still is supportive of our faith; (casually) interested in its ideas and appreciative of its people. Reading other believers' experiences and learning from them can be beneficial to her and us. Questions like "How do we view events in our lives?" "How do we relate to them and the people we encounter?" and "How do we explain our growth to others?" are all answered so subjectively, especially when dealing with Konkokyo. They are, however, topics which, if handled thoughtfully, can spark interest in those newcomers or renew deeper contemplation in active believers.

If people are going to honestly embrace this faith, they need to do more than simply repeat what they've heard before, they need to make intentional decisions about what they believe. What if we could have a *KR* that wouldn't stop at just telling you what's new, but gave new perspectives that made you talk about (or at least, consider) these decisions more often?

### *What would I like to do?*

My idea then is that the *KR* should change; not just for change's sake, but in the things we feel will better express that the *KR* is a tool to spread the inspirational, dynamic aspects of a strong relationship with Kami. This could be done in part by:

- Promoting the faith experiences of KCNA believers with each other and the general public,
- Providing news and articles as propagation for a more general readership and,
- Working more directly with contributors to align focus with updated goals.

This change in the *KR's* focus is merely refocusing KCNA's scale, staff, and finances to achieve these goals and that doesn't mean we'll throw away all that's come before. This is only a small step now, but one necessary to reflect my desire to provide an experience that will be as helpful to established readers as it would be interesting to casual readers.

That's one of the things that I wanted to convey to you; I don't think I could enjoy doing this job in this way if people don't truly gain an epiphany when reading an issue. *Aiyo kakeyo* (mutual interdependence) then isn't just about the understanding and necessary relationship between Kami and us, but in a more practical sense between other people and ourselves.

The task of re-evaluating the readership of the *KR* and making changes to reflect that is an important, and likely difficult, goal. This trial may not work out and will definitely take time to improve, but I believe in sharing this process with you and would appreciate your support in the future.

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## KONKO REVIEW

### ON BEING A MINISTER by Ms. Olivia Nikolaidis

*Ms. Olivia Nikolaidis is a believer at the Konko Church of Toronto*

*She is currently in Japan, where she attended the Seminary program, studied at local churches, and is currently working at the Konkokyo International Center as part of her training.*

This year I am beginning my training to become a minister. I found Konkokyo by chance; maybe some would say inevitability. It was in April 2011, a few days before my birthday, and I decided to take the 113 bus home instead of my usual route, because “13” is my lucky number. On the ride I passed by the Konko Church of Toronto, and I noticed the “chigi” on the roof, that are also seen on Shinto shrines. Curious, I looked up Konkokyo on the internet, and scheduled a meeting with Kishii-sensei. However, it wasn't until October 2011 that I considered myself a part of the Konko faith. It was only until two years later, in April of 2013 after my 20<sup>th</sup> birthday, that I really felt the desire to become a minister, from deep in my core; like a spiritual calling from Kami-sama. I don't know exactly how it came about; I felt this desire come up in my heart.

However, I did give it more thought as well. “Where is this feeling coming from? What do I want to do? And what does being a minister entail?” So many thoughts were running through my mind, but I knew I had this desire to become one and help people and Kami-sama through Toritsugi Mediation.

I also thought I don't necessarily need to be a minister to help people and Kami-sama. Even as a believer of Konkokyo, I can still do so much for Kami-sama and I don't need to be a minister to be proactive

in the faith and my daily life to help others or support them and pray for them.

But I realized something important during self-reflection on the topic. All the responsibilities of a minister are my true passion in life – to mediate for people in need as a representative for Ikigami Konko Daijin-sama, with the guidance of Tenchi Kane no Kami-sama. To do services and prayers for people, Kami-sama, and Mitama-sama. To continuously pray for the prosperity of everyone and the world, all while working even in mundane matters for Kami-sama and people. To carry out Tenchi no Dori, the Way of the Universe under Kami-sama every single moment. The title of “sensei” carries all these duties and responsibilities, and to fulfill and uphold all of these things are my sincere desire deep in my heart.

That being said, I was granted the opportunity last year to be able to carry out and fulfill this dream. The first part is training and studying in North America, and then I will go to Konko Headquarters (Hombu). I originally had planned to go when I was a bit older, maybe 25 or 26. (I'm 21 now) But this year, the opportunity was presented to me, and I immediately felt the need to say “yes”. In my mind, I can understand the reasons why it's important to train in Japan; it would be necessary to really understand the ori-

gins of the country and culture in which the Founder of our Faith lived and experienced.

In my heart, I can also see the spiritual importance as well. I feel going to Hombu will be a really unique and powerful experience. I will be in the same place where Konko Daijin-sama lived, and experience the same energy of the town, the atmosphere, the surrounding nature, and the history. As well, I feel like a lot of the learning experience will not only be from book studies, but as well hopefully being able to mediate with the present Konko-sama, and interacting with all the present-day people and a big Konkokyo community will be a very important learning process too – to learn from everyone, their stories, and from the energy and atmosphere really assists with my personal growth and as well sets the tone for my future; I feel like they will be life-long lessons, not only as a minister, but as a person too.

I feel like experiencing all these things will help me to connect to Konko Daijin-sama more so, and thus as well Tenchi Kane no Kami-sama. I want to experience the energy of Konko-cho, the place where the faith's seed was planted and blossomed into a big flower now...I just feel like it's very important.

Looking ahead...in 5 years time, I hope to grow more in understanding of Kami-sama's heart, and to fully have a heart like a clear mirror that reflects Kami-sama's. In 10 years from now, I hope I am allowed to have such a single heart and do many things with, and under Kami-sama's guidance. I think the training in Hombu will help solidify the foundation I am already building for this goal. Even so, I will still have much to grow and learn even as an elder.

After I become a minister, there's still so much to learn and grow. I need to remain diligent in my efforts, because every day is a new day. I hope I can provide Toritsugi Mediation for many people. I also hope I can help out Kishii-sensei, Toshiko-sensei, and Stephanie-sensei at Toronto church the best I can, and also, I plan to continue to be active within KCNA events and opportunities, and as well within my local community and doing many community service activities or helping out. I hope I can also build good relationships with other religions and organizations, and represent Konkokyo and Konko Daijin-sama well, but I think I should mature more, when I am much older for that goal. Overall, I hope I can do everything Kami-sama wishes me to do, and I hope I can fulfill them well. I hope I can live out my life together with Kami-sama, and help as many people grow strong, fulfilled, and realize Kami-sama's love for them.

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## KONKO REVIEW

### YOUTH CAMP WEEK by Ms. Stephanie Tashiro

*Ms. Stephanie Tashiro is a believer at the Konko Church of San Diego and is a graduate of the Youth Camp.*

#### **What brought you back into participating as a leader in the youth program?**

I got an email from my sister asking if I would be interested. I think the program was short one staff member, and she was already volunteering for Young Adult Seminar (YAS). I never thought KCNA would ask for my help as a staff member, so I was surprised since I stepped away for a good 5+ years, I think. But I was grateful, because I saw the opportunity as a way to reintroduce myself into the faith. I remember having great, fun experiences while I was a youth camper myself, so I definitely wanted to get involved with contributing back to the program.

#### **Why did you step away for 5+ years? Was it because you "aged out" and moved on? Or maybe no connection to it?**

I do regret not returning to participate in YAS, but I know I won't get those years back. Going away to college and living away from home, my mother wasn't around to encourage me to go to church (physically, by offering rides). I also saw college as an opportunity to explore on my own, and living with 'hard core Christian' roommates, they encouraged me to go with them to their church services and bible studies, etc. Although in the end I didn't completely identify

with their beliefs, I guess I had a natural drifting away from KCNA, because I am terrible at reminding myself to pray, seek mediation, and going to services.

#### **Was participating what you expected or wanted?**

First off, what made me laugh was that my first conference back, one of my former youth camp counselors introduced herself to me, and I told her, "Um... you don't remember me? It's Stephanie." And her jaw dropped open, because she didn't recognize me. On a more serious note, I didn't expect to be as confused myself. The reason why I say this is that I realized I didn't know much about the faith; I used to go to church with my mother and not understand what was going on around me. My first year as a Youth Camp (YC) staff member, some of the campers asked deeper questions than I would have imagined, so I was unprepared to answer their questions a lot of the time. During a debriefing meeting after that first camp on staff, I expressed this concern to the other staff members, so I was advised that attending the Faith Training Institute (FTI) sessions might be helpful. They were indeed helpful, especially since I am not a minister or minister in training. Now, after being more educated about the faith, I don't feel like a fish out of

water during discussions, mediation sessions, or random questions from the youth campers.

### **How did participating benefit you?**

During my youth camp days, I went to camp because it was fun and I got to see my friends. Now, I can see a clear difference between the younger and older campers, especially during discussions. Regardless of age, though, I learn from all of them. They ask questions or make comments that make me think, “Hm... I never thought of it that way before.”

Previously working in maternal/child health and being an aspiring pediatrician, it makes me think about children and teenagers developing their mind and emotions. I also get exposed to talking to youth about common issues like bullying at schools, finding boyfriends/girlfriends, and getting along with family members.

However, the biggest benefit from volunteering as a YC counselor is what keeps me tied to KCNA. I admit I am not that religious, and I don't pray or seek mediation often. But what makes me come back at least once a year is the connection I feel to the people in KCNA, including the campers, my past YC counselors, the kids 10+ years ago who are now in YAS (and now taller than me), the reverends, families, and the people who randomly stumble across the faith and bring in their friends and families.

### **What's the connection you have with the people in KCNA now? How does that keep you “tied” to the faith?**

I know I can always reach out to someone via phone/text/Skype, Facebook, or email. Sometimes, I choose to seek advice from someone in KCNA rather

than my non-KCNA friends, because they can be more supportive and understanding, based on the situation. Both groups of friends are able to honestly point out my weaknesses and provide guidance, but I find that generally, the advice I get from those within KCNA is more positive and compassionate. Even being miles apart from each other, it's a great feeling to have, knowing that you have that uplifting support.

### **What were your goals (for yourself) as a staff member? What did you want to feel or accomplish at the end of the week?**

These have been my goals:

Physically, make sure no one gets hurt/ill. Make sure they stay out of trouble.

Make all campers feel comfortable with each other and the staff. I don't want anyone feeling left out or bullied, and I want them to be able to feel like they can communicate with each other and with the staff.

Become better at facilitating discussions. Make sure everyone can express their ideas, and effectively use up all of the minutes set aside for discussion.

Have the campers leave at the end of the week wanting to come back the following year.

Listen, learn, and give good advice. Be a positive person that the campers/staff want to be around.

## KONKO REVIEW

### 2015 SPIRITUALITY BRIDGE RECAP by Eri Yasuhara

*Eri Yasuhara  
is a believer at the  
Konko Church of Gardena*

This year's Spirituality Bridge, the fourth one, was held on July 16-17 at CSULB, before the KCNA/KMH Joint Conference started. I had attended two of the previous ones, but this was the first time I had been asked to facilitate the event (along with Alan Matsui), and to be honest, I wasn't quite sure what to expect. Well, it turned out to be an amazing experience, one that clearly demonstrated some of the Konkokyo concepts we hear about but may not think about that much in our busy daily lives—in particular, the concept of “divine arrangement” (*gotsugou okuriawase*) and the “workings of Kami” in general.

In planning Spirituality Bridge, Alan and I had decided on an “activity-based” agenda and asked participants to engage in some concrete, practical activities that might help our Konko faith to come alive—a “faith in action” approach. One of these was a Thousand Cranes (*senbazuru*) project that resulted in what I still think of as a succession of “miracles;” for me, the activity really revealed the divine workings and “arrangements” of Kami.

In Japan, people sometimes fold one thousand paper *origami* cranes as a way of expressing their “one thousand” prayers or wishes for something. They can be arranged in many ways, but the most common is to string them together in a number of strands, gather them up, and hang them,

sort of like a mobile. Perhaps the most famous “thousand cranes” story is about a young girl who was two years old and living in Hiroshima when the atomic bomb fell in 1945. She died of leukemia ten years later, but while she was hospitalized, she started to fold cranes out of any scrap of paper that she could find, hoping and praying that she might recover and live a normal life. Her tragic story and desperate prayers for recovery have inspired numerous people and groups over the years to fold one thousand cranes and take them to Hiroshima or Nagasaki, as an offering for peace. This being the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of the atomic bomb, we thought it an appropriate project for Spirituality Bridge to create our own Thousand Cranes, a concrete object that embodied our prayers for peace, so that “Kami's wish for true peace / And the well-being of all people” might be fulfilled. As an additional way to “live our Faith” and express our gratitude to the natural world through recycling, we asked participants to bring squares of left-over wrapping paper to be used in making the cranes. We were hoping that the group of thirty participants would be able to make significant progress on folding the cranes at least by the end of the conference—perhaps five or six hundred. The plan after that was to ask for help from members of the Southern California churches to complete the

task after the conference and mail the finished product to Japan. But Kami-sama made other “arrangements.”

The first “miracle” happened when the project was announced during the first session, on Thursday afternoon. Dr. Megumi Segawa, one of the participants, raised her hand and said that if we could finish the thousand cranes by Saturday night, she would take them to Japan with her! She had planned to leave early Sunday morning with her son Max to fly to Japan for a visit with her parents, who live in Osaka. The second—and to me, the biggest—miracle was that, perhaps inspired by this generous offer, the group succeeded in finishing all one thousand cranes by the next day, before the regular conference even started. (Let me note here that this was a very mixed group of people, including those who were quite proficient in origami as well as several who had never folded a crane before.) The next step was to string the cranes together, a task for which around twelve people volunteered in teams of two and worked through Friday to finish. When we had completed 25 strings of 40 cranes each (total 1,000), another miracle happened. Among the participants was Rev. Edna Yano of the Honolulu Church, who had made Thousand Cranes before and knew how to complete the process, including packing them. She expertly braided the 25 strings together, tied them, folded the strings carefully in half to fit into Megumi-san’s suitcase, and even vacuum packed them in a very large zip-lock bag, to ensure safe transport. There were other remarkable signs of a “divine hand” at work: Megumi-san had brought a hard-sided suitcase, perfect for our purposes—the cranes could have been damaged in a soft-sided bag. She also had room in that suitcase, because she had packed an extra empty bag into which she transferred some things from the big suitcase, giving

her plenty of room to take our Thousand Cranes with her. Kami-sama had taken care of everything!

The “divine arrangements” continued in Japan, too. Megumi-san had already contacted her parents when it appeared that she would be taking the cranes to Japan. They in turn consulted the younger minister of the Osaka church, who looked into ways that the cranes could be taken to Hiroshima. He also made arrangements for Megumi to be interviewed about this project by Konko Shimbun (Konko Newspaper) when she went to Hombu. The cranes were also entrusted to the Osaka Church until then. At Hombu, she presented our Thousand Cranes to representatives of the Konko Youth Group, who in turn presented our cranes along with other Thousand Cranes to representatives from Hiroshima and Nagasaki at a big gathering for youth and children. Our Thousand Cranes, made with the sincere prayers for peace of every member of Spirituality Bridge at the Joint KCNA/KMH Conference 2015, became part of a much larger offering of prayers—and cranes—from Konko Churches all over Japan and are now hanging at the Memorial Park in either Hiroshima or Nagasaki.

A final, remarkable development: When Megumi received mediation from Konko-sama at Hombu, she told him all about our cranes and her mission to deliver them. He then gave her thirty *goshinmai*, to distribute to every participant in the Thousand Cranes project!

Needless to say, this year’s Spirituality Bridge was a very special one for me and, I hope, for the other participants. We did other meaningful projects, too, such as writing thank-you letters to soldiers and veterans, to express gratitude for their sacrifices. Even as we pray earnestly for peace, it’s important to remember and ap-

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## KONKO REVIEW

### FAMILY CAMP by Mr. Christopher Uzunoe-Chin

*Christopher Uzunoe-Chin  
is a believer at the  
Konko Church of Portland*

Hi! My name is Christopher Uzunoe-Chin. I am now 13 years old and graduating from Family Camp. I went to Family Camp I think 5 times. I had A LOT of fun traveling and learning things over the years; like the history of the different churches, why we pray, learning how to treat others through a puppet show at the “Konko Theatre,” making flashlights that actually work from recycled things (which my dad taught), and learning about Mosaic Art by making stained glass-looking art pieces. However, my favorite activity was when I got to learn how to pan for gold!!! We actually got to take some real gold home too! That was sooo cool. I still have it on my desk today. Oops, maybe I shouldn’t have told everyone about that. There were a lot more things I learned but I kind of forgot because I am getting older now.

Family Camp was really like “family camp” for me. My cousins were students,

my aunt was a leader, and my mom was the coordinator. So, it was really comfortable for me, but I think anybody would feel comfortable joining because one of the rules of Family Camp is that you and the Parent have to participate and do the activities TOGETHER. I like how we got to spend time with my parents and talk about Kami Sama and even do a talent show about “perseverance” with my whole family, I got to be Darth Vader, my sister did her Taekwando and my brother was, well my brother and my mom was the bad and mean guy. It was so much fun. I am nervous but excited I get to go to Youth Camp next year with my sister and cousin. I hope I will have a lot of fun like I did at Family Camp.

Thank you KCNA, Family Camp Staff, and the Konko Church of Portland for supporting me all these years in Family Camp.

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## 2015 SPIRITUALITY BRIDGE RECAP (CONT. FROM PAGE 10)

preciate those who serve, and have served, our country. And, as we always do at faith gatherings, we made new friends, shared stories, and inspired each other with examples of how we try to live our faith every day. But the Thousand Cranes project demonstrated in an unbelievably clear and concrete way, the fact that, if we pray

with sincerity and do our part—whatever that is—Kami-sama always takes care of us and arranges things in the best way. I just want to express my deep and sincere gratitude to every single member of Spirituality Bridge this year, for doing your part—and more!—to make this an event to remember and treasure.

## YOUNG ADULT SEMINAR ANTHOLOGY

*What I Gained From the 2015 Young Adult Seminar*

This was my first year of YAS and I gained so much. I gained new insight into my faith, and I now feel much more connected to my faith compared to how I felt during other times of the year. I have made new bonds with people who I will cherish forever, and I strengthened the bonds that I already had. I have also gotten to see more of what it's like to help others develop their own faith. However, most importantly, I made memories that I will never forget with the people who mean the world to me.

-L

In YAS I was introduced to a large variety of people – newcomers to the faith, and the old and experienced. Since they are adults, they are independent, going on new paths. They shared new topics and experiences that I knew nothing about, helping me learn and prepare more for my own future. I also gained more friends. The reason is pretty simple – everyone is awesome. I love to see the variation in the how and why people believe. It really helps fortify my own foundation in the faith.

-D

Young Adult Seminar was wonderful. It was a bit similar to Youth Camp, but very different in that I felt I carried a responsibility. I had to become less lazy, and force myself to really dig deep. There were a lot more open-ended questions. This year I feel like I am really starting to see the ways everyone defines faith for THEMSELVES. Now I can firmly stand by my beliefs and accept that everyone's view and practice of faith does not have to be the same. I also gained so much knowledge and expanded my viewpoints because of our discussions. Now that I'm in YAS and am one of the youngest, I feel like I am able to start fresh again and learn from those that are older than me to deepen my faith.

-S

I gained a better understanding of where I am with my own faith and a much deeper respect of the younger minds that have just entered YAS. I was impressed with some of the points that were brought up by my peers in the group discussions and have high hopes for future generations.

-T

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# KONKO REVIEW

## YOUNG ADULT SEMINAR ANTHOLOGY (CONT. FROM PAGE 11)

I learned this year about respect and the impact of the faith. I learned that helping others to grow is a big part of it. To want to learn is to grow. Having friends and those with close ties makes it grow exponentially. To care for others is the basis of happiness and our relation with Kami.

-R

This year, I made some more friends, and I was able to reconnect with friends I made last year at YAS. I learned some interesting things my friends have been through their entire/recent lives, and it makes me appreciate more of the things I have.

-J

YAS this year was another adventure for me. I look back and wonder what I've gained, and I realize it's everyone's thoughts and opinions. I know I don't like to speak up in discussion, but being in YAS has made me realize that it's okay to listen and that there will always be a time for me to speak. Coming into YAS I knew most of the old participants. But over the couple days we had I got to know everyone. I had really nice conversations with a few, and when I thought I gained another friend, actually I gained another family member. I am really thankful to be back here at YAS and I don't know what I would be doing right now if I wasn't here. I never lost trust in Kami but now I feel that I have more trust in Kami bringing me back to YAS.

-R

Through my experience at the Young Adult Seminar, I've gained a sense of self and the aspiration to be someone greater. I'm at awe that I was surrounded by an atmosphere of acceptance, compassion and love. The people of the Konko Faith are my family. The jovial conversations and jollification when we are together is quite surreal. I am fortunate to be a part of this family. It's a dream that will flutter through the end of time. The people of YAS have aided my growth. I feel like a wilted tulip that was given water for another wave of blooming and maturity. I've gained trust and confidence as I took a friend's hand into the ocean. I cannot swim, and for me to dive into chance etched a valiant foundation of faith. Not only that, but there were a few individuals who sought mediation from me. I was absolutely taken aback, but deeply grateful that I was able to listen and construct guidance for these individuals. I'd like to personally thank them for helping me realize that I'm not alone, or rather – we're not alone. We do not have to endure tribulation by ourselves. We have the people of Konkokyo. We have the presence of Kami-sama. We stand together. Thank you for this beautiful experience.

-P

## How to Help, Guide, and Pray For One Another With a Compassionate Heart of Kami

In order to this, one can make a variety of changes. Some of these are simple actions which one can perform in his or her daily life. Others are improvements to an entire lifestyle which one strives to achieve consistently. Here are some examples that we thought of in the 2015 KCNA Young Adults Seminar.

### Simple Actions

Hold the door open for someone  
 Treat a friend to a meal  
 Help elders carry heavy objects or cross the street  
 Cheer someone up  
 Offer a listening ear  
 Give directions to somewhere  
 Help an injured animal  
 Help someone study  
 Pray that someone will have a good time at an event  
 Eat the apple and the burger  
 Compliment someone  
 Help someone seek help

### Lifestyle Changes

Teach something  
 Choose eco-friendly options  
 Volunteer in your community  
 Be an aid or assistant  
 Be of service to Kami  
 Express your gratitude and appreciation to someone or Kami  
 Pray for someone's well-being and safety  
 Make people feel accepted and happy in their social groups or find one that makes them feel so  
 Recognize other people's comfort zones  
 Listen patiently  
 Try to understand other people's circumstances

There are many other ways in which we can do this, but the reason why we do this is not because we want appreciation or recognition. It is because humans are naturally empathetic and want to help each other. Helping each other makes us feel good. It is also the wish of Kami.

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## KONKO REVIEW

### ON REV. HARUKO ISHIWATA by Rev. Byron Ishiwata

*Rev. Byron Ishiwata  
is the Head Minister at the  
Konko Church of San Jose*

*This was given at the  
Autumn Grand Ceremony at  
the Konko Church of San  
Francisco on Nov 16, 2014.*

I am happy to be here for your Iki-gami Konko Daijin Grand Ceremony and the celebration of the 200<sup>th</sup> birthday of Konko Daijin. I know that this is not a memorial service but I would like to talk about the life of my mother Rev. Haruko Ishiwata. I thank you all for your generosity and support of my mother and all of your donations will help with the repairs of the church.

My mother unfortunately suffered a stroke on Labor Day and never recovered, passing away on September 12. I thank you all for your support for her and the San Jose church over the years. She lived in San Francisco for awhile when my family first arrived in California in 1932 before finally settling in San Jose. My mother attended services here at least 4 times a year for about 60 years. My mother drove here every week for 8 years from 1976 to 1984 when she was the Chief Administrative Minister and the Assistant Chief Administrative Minister. She was not a good driver and Kami sama protected her as she never got in an accident or had her car break down on her. That was back in the days when there weren't any cell phones so if you got stuck on the road, especially the freeway, you were really in trouble.

Our bridge to the beginning of the San Jose church and Konkokyo in America is gone. My mother was at the first service

in Seattle in 1928 and San Jose in 1932. She personally knew the first pioneers of Konkokyo in America and the Northwest, like Rev. Katashima and Rev. Hirayama. I don't know of anyone else that's alive that would have been at that first service or known as many pioneers of our religion.

Life is full of subtleties and how we got to be where we are today could have been drastically and easily changed.

My mother was engaged to marry a businessman before she married my father but he passed away shortly before the wedding in Japan. If she did marry the businessman, she likely would have never returned to the United States after getting married and I would have never existed.

My grandparents originally wanted to open a church in Vancouver but were told by immigration in Canada that they could not emigrate to Canada because they were not blue collar workers. If they were successful in being able to live in Vancouver, I would have never lived in San Jose or the Bay Area.

If you have older parents or relatives, I've learned that you should do a few things to help them during their final years:

**If they live alone, call or check on them often to be sure that they are ok. If they don't answer right away, call back in a half and hour.** If they still don't answer, you need to stop by or have someone stop by. Make sure that they haven't fallen down and in danger.

**Try to keep them entertained.** It's easy for them to feel lonely and depressed as most of their friends have likely passed away. They don't have people to visit them or to talk to on the phone. Have family members visit often as they represent their main reason for living. Have them talk to people that they haven't seen for awhile over the phone. I had my mother talk to her friends and relatives in Japan often and it made her very happy to be able to speak to them. She also enjoyed watching TV Japan and was worried about her friends in Japan whenever there was an earthquake or typhoon.

**Help them exercise every day.** Take them out for walks. My mother walked to church everyday and walked up and down 11 steps to get to the church. I feel that helped her to live a longer life by improving her blood circulation and respiratory system.

**Document the family history before they pass away or become unable to remember.** Unfortunately some people get dementia or Alzheimer's Disease and lose their ability to remember things. You need to get your family history documented while your parents and grandparents are younger. There's no need to wait until they become older and they may not be able to recall your family history later on.

I thank Irene Sugai's father Mr. Kamikihara for taking many pictures of my family and the church. He has taken a lot if not all of the photos here that adorn the

inside and outside of this hiromae. He also took my baby picture and brought his photography equipment to San Jose. It's the only picture of me as a baby and I cherish the picture dearly.

But you need to have someone who knows the people in the pictures to identify who is in the pictures. I found a few photos of people that I have no idea who they are. I wish that I had asked my mother sooner but now it's too late. Hopefully some of my other family members will know who they are.

**You have to be proactive on what your loved ones want if they pass away.** I'm surprised that I have a few clients in my accounting business that don't have either. Everyone needs a will or a living trust to say what happens to your assets when you are gone.

I had a client who passed away that had a living trust but it was ambiguous as to what was to happen to his assets. He had verbally said that he wanted some money to go to a small college in Illinois but I don't believe that he wanted all of it to there. As a result, the college sued to get 100% of the assets which were about \$8 million dollars. After a lawsuit between the family and the college and half a million dollars of attorneys fees, the case was settled 5 years after his death and the college got \$1 million and the rest went to the family.

**Have a birthday party at and invite all of the friends and family on important birthdays.**

We had a big 65<sup>th</sup> and 88<sup>th</sup> birthday party for my mother. The photos and video taken during those parties document not only the memories of my mother but also the many friends that she had that lived for only a short time longer after those parties.

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## KONKO REVIEW

### ON REV. HARUKO ISHIWATA (CONT. FROM PAGE 15)

I recently went over the photos of my mother's 65<sup>th</sup> birthday party in 1982. That was 32 years ago and there are so many of the old church members that I knew but had forgotten about when I was little that passed away a long time ago. The party serves as a benchmark of one's life and rekindles fond memories of those who are no longer with us. People from this church like Rev. and Rev. Mrs. Matsui, Mrs. Kayano and her son George were there too.

I also went over a video of my mother's 88<sup>th</sup> birthday party in 2005 and out of the 100 attendees, about 20 people are no longer with us 9 years later, which is a pretty high percentage.

When I think of the old days of the San Francisco church during my lifetime, I think about the 1960s when I was a small child. I have memories of the senseis of course, like Rev. Shinko Fukuda, Rev. Hiromichi Kimura, Mrs. Shigeko Kimura and Rev. Michihiro Yuasa. I also think about the members like Mrs. Fujimoto, Mrs. Ayabe and Mrs. Oikawa. They were the members who traveled to the San Jose church for the taisais. It's nice to be able to see pictures of those people who were around for only about the first 20 years of my life and then passed away.

Also, I would like you all to think about what you would do if a loved one passed away. For those of you who attended my mother's service, that were a couple of large posters of pictures and also a slide show of my mother's life. I think that is something that she would have like to have seen.

**When you say goodbye to an older person, say goodbye like it's the last time that you ever see them again.** There's usually no warning when someone is

going to die and once they are gone, it's too late. Toward the end of her life, whenever I went out, I tried to be sure that I had a good look at her before I left home each time in case it was the last time that I was able to see her.

My mother always said when it's her time to go, that she would like to go. She lived a long full life and said that she was very tired and had done all that she could in her life. She said that she would continue to pray for us, even after her physical being is gone.

I prayed for her help often during the Giants playoff games and the World Series and I believe that she helped Giants win the World Series for the 3<sup>rd</sup> time in 5 years.

She lived a wonderful life and was strong up until the time of her stroke. She continued to help prepare for the church services by hand writing the envelopes for the church service announcements, making the go-shinmai and cleaning the altar. She served as the head minister until the very end. Her memory was excellent and could recall her life growing up in Seattle as well as her life history like it was yesterday. She was a role model for me and was a very proud person and didn't walk with a cane or walker. If I serve as the head minister of the San Jose church as long as she did, I'll be 93 years old and I don't know if I'll be alive or what capacity I'll be in.

I hope to follow in her footsteps and if I'm able to be half the person that she was, that would be a great accomplishment.

## Konko Grams

**Quarter Page (approximate size)**

**3.5" wide by 4" high**

**\$30**

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Konko Grams are holiday greetings you can place in the first *Konko Review* issue of each year.

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Please have your artwork/design ready for printing. This would include any graphics, word layout, or fonts desired for your Konko Gram. However, if you've ordered an ad in the last two years, you can ask the Editor to update any text for this year.

**Season's Greetings orders will be due no later than December 18, 2015.**

Please contact the *KR* Editor or the KCNA office for more information.

# KONKO REVIEW

## Konko Review

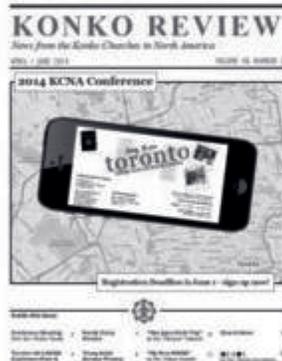
### New(s) from the Konko Churches in North America

Welcome to the online home for the Konko Review! All files are in PDF format; Adobe Reader may be downloaded from Adobe's website.

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Have questions or comments? Contact the editor today at [konkoreview@konkofaith.org](mailto:konkoreview@konkofaith.org)

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## CONTACT INFORMATION for Local Churches & Propagation Halls

### CHURCHES

<b>Chicago</b>	6447 N. Albany Avenue Chicago, IL 60645	773-465-5406	masanoritakeuchi@sbcglobal.net
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<b>Portland</b>	1330 S.E. 92nd Avenue Portland, OR 97216	503-256-4201	edouzunoe@yahoo.com
<b>Sacramento</b>	2006 6th Street Sacramento, CA 95818	916-498-1233	yomisu@gmail.com
<b>San Francisco</b>	1909 Bush Street San Francisco, CA 94115	415-931-0453	sanfrancisco@konkofaith.org
<b>San Diego</b>	c/o 4408 Verley Court San Diego, CA 92117	858-278-1283	kcnaoffice@konkofaith.org
<b>San Jose</b>	284 Washington Street San Jose, CA 95112	408-295-3837	sanjose@konkofaith.org
<b>Seattle</b>	1713 South Main Street Seattle, WA 98144	206-325-4498	tkshyuasa@yahoo.com
<b>Toronto, Canada</b>	398 Kennedy Road Scarborough, ON M1K 2A6	416-261-9619	tokonko@gmail.com
<b>Vancouver, Canada</b>	5319 Sherbrooke Street Vancouver, BC V5W 3M3	604-876-7365	vancouver@konkofaith.org
<b>Whittier-Rose Hills</b>	11513 Sierra Sky Drive Whittier, CA 60601	562-699-5019	krwrh8@gmail.com

### PROPAGATION HALL

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## KCNA OFFICE NEWS

- **Olivia Nikolaidis (Toronto)** went to Japan in May to complete her MTP program training. She attended Gakuin and is currently at the Konkokyo International Center.
- **Rev. Hashimoto** will be going to Japan for the Konkokyo Establishment Day Service & Believers' Seminar from November 14-15 and to meet with Hombu.
- **Rev. Uzunoe-Chin** will be going to London, England from November 18-23 to participate in Konkokyo International Center's annual gathering there.
- HOD Budget Conference Call meeting on November 10, 2015 @6:30 PDT.
- HOD/MBR meeting on December 11-12, 2015 in San Francisco.

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