

## July Monthly Service

July 17, 2022

Good morning, everyone! Happy New Day, Week & special “Thanks” for joining us today. This is our monthly service of KC Chicago for July, 2022. I trust you are all enjoying the best of health & excellent spirits on this beautiful summer day.

My parent minister, Rev. Soichiro Otsubo taught us, “Like the joint of a bamboo tree, each and every joint of your faith should be taken seriously. From that joint come new buds, and then branches.” I now feel I am experiencing one such joint of my faith.

The news spoke of, “A man & another gunman were shooting at each other in Chinatown, Chicago on Friday, July 1. The gunfire struck the man and two other women. A 24-year-old woman was struck in the torso and later died at the hospital.”

I knew by Sunday night of July 3 that the woman Jenni, who died in the encounter, was a friend of my son Daichi & his girlfriend Gaby. During the next regular morning prayer service, I prayed for the eternal peace & happiness of her Mitama spirit. Then during the morning of July 4, I conducted a memorial service for her Mitama spirit and asked Daichi & Gaby to join with us. It was then I realized that her Mitama spirit was at first lost in darkness and was able to find a ray of light for salvation through our service for her

After the service I talked about this ray of light she had found. And added, “Our life is such that it exists today, but may not tomorrow. Her sudden death makes us realize again the preciousness of life. When we express our appreciation for that to her Mitama spirit and try to treasure our life, I believe her Mitama spirit will be pleased.”

I will list Jenni’s name as a Mitama spirit of KC Chicago in my Mitama prayer book and continue to pray for her eternal peace & happiness.

Another news report was, “Gunshots rained from a rooftop onto a Fourth of July parade in Highland Park, killing seven and injuring dozens. Celebrations were called off across the region amid fears of more violence.”

Two days later I received a phone call from Rev. Takao Kishii, head-minister of KC Toronto. He was concerned about our safety, because Highland Park is located north of Chicago and we live north of Chicago. When I received his call, my knowledge of this mass shooting was vague. After his call I investigated both shootings. Through this call of Rev. Kishii, I keenly realized Kami’s intention: “Those shooting incidents that happened, one in the City of Chicago & the other in the State of Illinois, are my responsibilities, because I offer prayers every day for peace and prosperity of both Illinois State and Chicago.”

This has made it an important joint of my faith. Since then, my prayers for true world peace, safety & prosperity of the USA, State of Illinois & City of Chicago have deepened.

And on the night of July 7, I heard another shocking news report. On Friday morning, Japan time, Shinzo Abe, Japan's most influential former prime minister, was speaking on behalf of a junior politician from his party near a train station in Japan's old capital city of Nara when he collapsed, bleeding, on the street. He had been shot in the neck by a gunman.

During the next morning prayer service, I offered my sincere prayers for his recovery and many thoughts welled up in my mind. After that service, pursuing Kami's wish for this incident, I opened the *Wagakokoro* sacred book in Japanese. The word of Rev. Soichiro Otsubo, "saddened," jumped out at me. Through this word Kami showed me two meanings.

The one was Kami's sorrow for the way Kami's beloved children take each other's lives around the world. As Kami revealed to our founder: "Right now the world is human-centered. All things are done by people's own power," the history of human conflict, in which people rule by force and try to solve everything by force, has not changed one bit. I realized again Kami's deep sorrow about this side of human history.

After that morning service, I learned that Mr. Shinzo Abe had passed away. I extended my appreciation to his tireless hard work for the betterment of Japan & the world, and prayed for his *Mitama* spirit to rest in peace. And then I felt that the political tide was about to change drastically from now on.

It is truly an urgent task that we create the "*Wagakokoro* era." It is earnestly desired to put an end to the "history of human strife" and to "manifest the *Wagakokoro* era," in which Kami and humankind worship, rejoice, and enjoy *Wagakokoro* with each other. And through this, it is our earnest desire that true world peace will be realized.

For that purpose, Kami taught me the other meaning of "saddened." It was the time of the critical illness of our founder at age 42. When he described that time in the "*Memoirs of Konko Daijin*," he wrote the following:

"As I write up to this point, I am filled with deep emotion (the same character as "saddened" in Japanese). Then Kami encouraged, 'Konko Daijin, these deep emotions are not only your own. If I, Tenchi Kane No Kami, were a poet, I would express these emotions through poetry. However, I am incapable of doing so. I am overjoyed, and even overcome with emotion to see how man has been able to be saved and how Kami has been able to be realized.'"

Now I am keenly aware of Kami's wish that each one of us manifest the world of mutual fulfillment (*Aiyo Kakeyo*) with Kami. And, be moved so emotionally as our founder was.