

Happy New Year!

Thank you very much for joining us to welcome in the New Year. Thank you also very much for the prayers & support you've given KC_CHI throughout the past year. Furthermore, today there are many young Americans who were unable to attend this service but are praying in spirit with us near & far. May each & every one of you enjoy a happy, healthy & prosperous New Year!

This year Konkokyo celebrates the 140th Spiritual Birthday of our founder, Ikigami Konko Daijin and the 150th Anniversary of the birth of the Divine Reminder.

This year KCNA's theme is to "Renew and Maintain Our Communication with Kami Through Sacred Mediation, Daily prayer, and Teachings."

Here are my New Year's poems for commemorating these anniversary celebrations:

"What reason is it
The founder, Konko Daijin
Has to us been sent?
Is but for to fulfilling
The Way of Kami and Man"

「何のため 金光大神 差し向けし 神人の道 栄え行くため」

"In earnest I wish
To embody and pass on
The Divine Reminder
So as to truly reveal
The Divine Parent's Glory."

「ひたすらに 天地書附 体現し 神のヒレイと なすよしもがな」

We hear every day people all over the world are struggling because of world-wide turmoil. More than 100 years ago, our founder said, "Though they say the world is becoming civilized, it is not. It is collapsing."

People nowadays live far more convenient lives in modern society due to technological development but, they tend not to realize their relationship with the Universe and Kami. Too many are apt to live centered on material matters.

It seems as though we humans; with all our advantages, have forgotten the importance of cultivating our hearts. Even though we have been aware of the vital importance of the heart, we have not yet learned how to develop our hearts in our daily lives. I've come to realize that it is our sickened & collapsing hearts that is collapsing the heart of the world we each live in. One of the responsibilities for that, falls on ministers & priests like me. We have failed to show the public an example of faith that is practiced single-heartedly to bring peace & joy.

Welcoming the precious New Year, now is the best time to clearly understand the reason why Kami sent the founder to us, revealing to the founder & entrusting him with the Divine Reminder.

Looking at our founder, what happened to him at age 42 in 1855? He was stricken with a serious illness. The doctor thought, there's no hope for his recovery. However, he was saved by Konjin through his sincere faith in that deity, even though Konjin was

thought to be the most fearful deity at that time. He realized for the first time that he had come across the deity who would help people. Since then he did his best to seek & understand Kami's true heart with all his heart.

Then on October 13, 1857 our founder sincerely accepted the request of his younger brother, Shige'emon who was possessed by Konjin and acting like a madman. The request was to build a house for Konjin.

Kami was pleased with our founder's acceptance of this request and later it became known as Kami's first request. He also realized this was his first blessing from Konjin and the start of his faith. Since then he tried to respect each & every happening in his daily life as Kami's sacred doing, whatever happened & no matter how difficult it would be. Through these efforts he always felt Kami near him and heard the Divine voice. He became closer & closer to Kami.

Then he received the Divine Call on Nov. 15, 1859. After receiving the Divine Call, Konko Daijin began to mediate between Kami and people for mutual fulfillment. He did his best, day-and-night, without thinking of himself, to fulfill Kami's wish for everyone to be saved and become a living spirit.

Fourteen years later he was ordered by the government to remove the altar fixtures and stop his mediation. This was the most critical moment in his ministry. Leaving the worship room and praying to Kami, he asked if there was any other way for people to be saved and fulfill their lives, without a place for worship and a mediator like himself. In reply, he received the following Divine Reminder:

Tenchi Kane No Kami
-Divine Parent of the Universe-
Ikigami Konko Daijin
-Divine Mediator-

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 Divine Reminder has become the central teaching of the Konko Faith. It has created a core of grateful and caring hearts, united in joy and harmony. In short, demonstrating this Divine Reminder, or practicing our peaceful & joyful heart, is the essential foundation for human happiness.

As I mentioned at the beginning, we celebrate the 150th anniversary of the birth of the Divine Reminder this year. The time is now for each one of us to embody the Divine Reminder and to truly reveal the Divine Parent's Glory. Anyone can do it, at any time, at any place, because the Divine Reminder was revealed in this world for that purpose.

Throughout this year and beyond, I will do my best to do so.

This is the prayer I always keep in mind:

“May the history of human conflicts, whereby we are ruled by force, come to an end, and the Wagakokoro Era, where Kami and humans worship, rejoice, and enjoy each other, become manifested. It is for this very reason that I ask You, Kami, to nurture my Wagakokoro, so it can resonate throughout the heavens and earth and enriches the world. With my Wagakokoro I would like to help more Konko Daijins – who would know ‘All is Divine Love’ – to be born one after another in all the countries throughout the world and in every state of the United States.”