

Good Morning, everyone! Happy New Day, New Week, & a special “Thanks” for the service today! This is our monthly service for April 2020.

What is happening?! → The outbreak of Novel Coronavirus!

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It is spreading rapidly throughout the world. We cannot help but pray for the end of this pandemic to come as soon as possible & for the safety of all people in the world. Many, many precious lives have been lost because of it. All of a sudden death could come to anyone. We also cannot help but pray with a sincere heart that the souls of the dead would find their path to eternal peace & happiness.

The power of Coronavirus is tremendous. Various events have been canceled, schools have been closed, many places ordered residents to ‘shelter in place,’ and people all over the world are trembling in fear. The Coronavirus has shocked the world.

If we humans could change it to light the Wagakokoro (peaceful joyful heart), Wagakokoro would save the world and shine throughout the world. This would be similar to our Founder deepening his faith and changing Konjin, the most fearful deity of his day, to Tenchi Kane No Kami, the most benevolent deity.

Coronavirus goes beyond ethnic race & nations. People all over the world are combining abilities together trying hard to find a way to avoid getting it. Of course, such solidarity is necessary & important. At this time when people are united through it, as much as solidarity is important, I think, we humans should raise our hands and hold them together above our heads. It means, now is the time we humans should realize that before Kami we have no power, no ability & no talent. So holding hands over our heads, we join together to do our best to serve the world. By doing so, we humans can not only unite together to overcome Coronavirus, but also make true world peace a reality.

Let us imagine Wagakokoro wrapped around each Coronavirus. It will be done by not being scared of it, but respecting it with awe & modesty. Right now the world is human-centered. All things are done by people’s own power. Kami wishes to change it to the kami-centered world. When we humans realize this, we can do our best to respect everything that happens as Kami’s sacred doing. So then after Coronavirus disappears, what will be left is Wagakokoro.

We don’t need to go right & left due to fear of Coronavirus. Now is the time. Let us devote ourselves to deepening our unbreakable peaceful & joyful hearts to manifest the way to be blessed fully with a single heart of peace & joy.

The other morning during my silent prayer at 4:00 am, I could not help but realize how grateful it was to have Kami that I could totally cling to, and to have met Kami whom I could leave everything up to.

Furthermore, as I was worshipping the *Divine Reminder*, I keenly thought what an amazing teaching it was. If we follow the *Divine Reminder*, we can become one with Heaven & Earth and walk together with Heaven & Earth. Therefore we don’t need to fear the Coronavirus.

It was the era of four & half years when Rev. Soichiro Otsubo was accepting each & every happening with gratitude. It was at Kabame 1950 to 1955. I heard that more than 10 people with lung disease were sleeping at the worship room there. At that time, lung disease was a fatal illness. These people were babysitting his two children under 5 years old. It was not the Coronavirus of today. Also Kami asked Rev. Otsubo to sleep holding someone who got Miliary tuberculosis, the most dangerous TB. His breath smelled. So Rev. Otsubo turned his face sideways. Immediately Kami said to him not to turn away. In that way he accepted with modesty & in awe whatever, and whoever.

His wife silently followed him well enough in whatever he did, whoever he accepted. Meanwhile the believers came to seek Mediation without thinking of fearfulness. Can you believe that? I cannot help but feel the greatness of Rev. Otsubo's absolute belief in Kami and the tremendous value of his gratitude.

The Konkokyo headquarters following the government announcement of self-restraint for events, etc. due to the Coronavirus pandemic, decided not to have the usual Tenchi Kane No Kami Grand Ceremonies in April. They held it once on April 5, but no believers were allowed to attend. Only staff members were there to officiate in the Ceremonial Hall at 10:00 am. Believers all over Japan worshiped from their homes.

Also no one attends any services at KC Airaku. Since March 9 there have been no faith gatherings at church or at believers' houses. Instead, KC Airaku now tries to do web streaming among its members since March 10. They can now worship at home watching web streaming for every Morning Prayer Service, the Wagakokoro Day Services each Sunday & the four monthly services.

It seems similar, but not exactly like what our Founder faced in 1873. Paraphrasing from Memoirs of Konko Daijin:

*On Feb. 17, having heard a bulletin from the Oda Prefectural government, a family member mentioned, "Shinto priests will not be allowed to continue their activities," which worried the entire family. And the next day, Feb. 18:*

*Having been summoned, Hagio (his second son) quickly goes to see the village head and is ordered to put away the altar fixtures. Hagio informs the founder who promptly clears them all away making the worship room look dreary.*

This was the greatest difficulty in our Founder's life of faith. He respected it with awe & modesty as Kami said to him, "***You have shown sincerity even to the government.***" During those critical times, next to the worship room, he directed his heart toward Kami sincerely with all his heart, seeking Kami's wishes throughout this ordeal and asking Kami to show him the way for people to be fulfilled.

Then, the *Divine Reminder* came into being. It is what shows the way to fulfill both Kami & people. It dramatically changed the way of the Founder's Mediation. He started to talk about the importance of developing peace & joy in our hearts. The peaceful joyful heart is the essential foundation for human happiness. In order to deepen such a heart, we should realize everything that happens is Kami's sacred doing, which Kami taught him as well. The new Konkokyo was born at this time to embrace the whole world with this faith.

As I mentioned before, no one attends services at KC Airaku. Rev. Keiki Otsubo, the deputy head-minister, declared this to be a 'Faith Training period for the *Divine Reminder*.' The members there are doing their best to deepen peace & joy in their hearts and more than ever to manifest the *Divine Reminder* to the world.

They now realize something new is born both physically & mentally. KC Airaku is broadcasting each service online. The members living far away from the church feel like they are in the worship hall reciting together through web streaming.

Some young members of KC Chicago joined the Line group 'airakuU' with us. We are watching the *live* stream to offer our prayers together with KC Airaku. Now another person joined 'airakuU' from Italy. For those who do not use Line, I am sending the URL of the *live* stream of KC Airaku services.

How wonderful it is! In the midst of the Coronavirus shaking the world, there is no other time for Kami's wish to manifest the era of the peaceful & joyful heart so that the world would be completely embraced by it.

Our Founder received the following revelation Oct. 14, 1882:

**"Those who have faith should not worry about the unexpected. There will be unexpected illnesses not only in summer, but also in winter. No one is aware of the blessings of Heaven & Earth which enable people to live. Kami shall have people become aware of the blessings of Heaven & Earth by having Konko Daijin be born throughout the world where the sun shines, in every country, without exception."**

Coronavirus is the unexpected illness. That is why Kami now keenly wishes for Konko Daijin to be born in every country in order to let people be aware of the blessings of Heaven & Earth. Through this revelation of our Founder, I believe, we humans should realize even the unexpected illness is Kami's blessing, or we should at least try to understand Kami's wishes through such an unexpected happening.

Let us clarify the true blessings of Heaven & Earth and be of great service for Kami & people in the world. Now is the crucial moment. Now it's Konko Faith's time. The true value of Konkokyo is being tested. Let us all wholeheartedly take up a Wagakokoro whenever & wherever, and develop peace & joy in our hearts that resonates throughout Heaven & Earth and naturally influences our surroundings.