

Good Morning, everyone! Happy New Day, Week & special “Thanks” for joining us today. This is the 2021 Tenchi Kane No Kami Grand Ceremony of KC Chicago. I trust you are all enjoying the best of health & excellent spirits on this beautiful spring day.

This year’s KCNA theme is “Pursue the life-changing benefits of Mediation.” Rev. Lisa Uzunoe will be the guest speaker for our (KCNA) East Regional Seminar. It’s to begin virtually at 1:30 today after this grand ceremony. Lisa Sensei will be talking about *pursuing the benefits of mediation*. So today, I thought I would share two experiences with Mediation -- which changed the course of my life.

**One**, is the Mediation which is quite *rare* and might *interest* you, because I had it in a dream.

In 1966 when I failed the entrance exam for Tokyo University, I decided to take training under the guidance of Rev. Soichiro Otsubo (the founding minister of KC Airaku). Although I only trained for four months, I had many, great experiences that deepened my relationship with Kami. These experiences are what sustained me throughout the turbulent university days that followed.

The next academic year I attended a different university. This was during the Vietnam era and I was soon caught up in the anti-war movement on campus. Students all over the world supported the Vietnamese people’s right for self-determination. When I saw these courageous students with my own eyes, I couldn’t remain on the sidelines. I joined the radical student movement. For five years I devoted myself to student demonstrations. I felt, as a Konko believer, I should fight for people who were suppressed, or being discriminated against. I really wanted to reform the world.

My mother would be weeping as she told me over and over, “I understand your feelings, but it is so dangerous that you should not be doing that yourself.” I always told her, “As a Konko believer who wants to help people in difficulties, I should fight more than anyone else.”

My father was the mayor of Imari at that time. If I had committed a grave crime as a leader of the radical student movement, he might have had to step down from his position as mayor. Whenever he sought Mediation with Rev. Otsubo about this matter, Rev. Otsubo had said, “Masanori-san is going through what he has to. So, it is better for you to just respect it with calmness.” Therefore, my father said nothing to persuade me not to fight.

These radical movements were sometimes very dangerous, almost to the point of dying. However, the *more* active I became in student demonstrations, gradually,

the *more* I felt I couldn't leave this world without first seeking the kind of faith Rev. Otsubo was teaching. It was something he called, "A *Wa-Ga Kokoro World*."

*Wa-Ga Kokoro* literally means, "peaceful joyful heart." So, a *Wa-Ga Kokoro World*, would mean a world in which everyone has peace and joy filling their hearts to overflowing. Needless to say, I was deeply troubled by conflicting loyalties in deciding just what I really should do.

It was then I had a divine dream which determined the rest of my life. In that dream, our family sought the sacred mediation of Rev. Otsubo. My father introduced me to Rev. Otsubo. He said to me, "Masanori-san, the feelings which inspire you to fight for suppressed and discriminated people are the same as those which Konkokyo tries to help and support people in difficulties." I didn't want to accept this. I thought, only praying and not acting was being a coward. Therefore, in my dream, I didn't say anything. Then, Rev. Otsubo said to me, "If you continue to join radical movements, your life will be over in four or five years." Then, my father introduced my sister, Emiko, to him. Rev. Otsubo said to her, "Emiko-san is good. She is so sincere. The sincere heart will please Kami most." So, you can see at *that* time I was not very sincere.

I thought long and hard about this impressive dream. Ultimately, I decided to return once more to the Airaku church. I eagerly wanted to know the proper way to seek human fulfillment. Finally, I became a trainee under his guidance and stayed for nearly twenty years. It was my great treasure to spend 20 years of my life under the guide of Rev. Otsubo. It was like touching & feeling - his presence with Kami. Nothing could be more precious than *that*.

Now the **second** Mediation story is when I decided to propagate the Konko Faith in Chicago.

Rev. Nobuharu Uzunoe & his wife, Rev. Michie Uzunoe, upon learning my great desire to do missionary work in America, invited my wife & I to be associate ministers at the Konko Church of Portland. In September 1994, my family moved from Japan to Portland. We trained under the guidance of Revs. Uzunoe for two and a half years to become accustomed to life here in the USA. In June of 1997 we moved to Chicago to establish a Propagation Hall for serving Kami and people in the heartland of America.

When my family moved to **Portland**, my earnest wish was to establish a Konko church in New York City. But the first priority for KCNA (Konko Churches of North America) was to establish a church in Chicago. At that time, Rev. Uzunoe was the chief administrative minister of KCNA. So, during my training in Portland, Rev. Uzunoe & I always *discussed* where I should go for my missionary work. Then, 40 days before the 65<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration of KC Portland we were

discussing it again at the Mediation place. So, I sought the Mediation of Rev. Uzunoe. I declared, that during those 40 days I'd do my best to train myself to determine the place of my mission, either New York or Chicago.

Then strange things happened one after another. I had three driving accidents. First, I hit the right bumper of my car; and second, the left bumper. Thirdly, in the rain and lost my way, so slowly I tried to enter another road. But suddenly a car rushed in front of me. The front bumper of *my* car hit the door of *their* car. To my surprise, a beautiful lady came rushing toward me - from her car and shouted, "Are you killing me?" My car did not have any damage needing repair from these three accidents. That in itself was amazing!

Then our new-born baby, Daichi, got sick with a fever of 105 degrees, lasting 5 days. We had no choice but to pray to Kami and renew ourselves. So, we did our best. And, miraculously, he was able to recover. After that, our older son, Mitsunori, also got sick with a fever of 105 degrees and just kept screaming, "*itai*, 痛い - *It hurts, it hurts.*" He soon recovered as did his baby brother.

During that 40-day period, I couldn't imagine I would be able to train & receive any direct divine message. But, through each of these unexpected events, I realized with Kami I was able to train. It was Kami guiding me with and through each event. Therefore I felt that I could not help but leave everything up to Kami. So, I put faith in Kami, was able to get rid of my own desires, and thus allowed Kami to open the way. My wish for doing missionary work in New York just disappeared.

After the anniversary celebration of KC Portland, I sought Rev. Uzunoe's Mediation, sharing these thoughts with him. He replied, "Then, you shall go to Chicago to establish a Konko church there." And so it was, in June 1997 my family moved to Chicago. My missionary work in Chicago began Aug. 1<sup>st</sup> of that year.

My father wrote to me in Chicago. In his letter he included this line for me:  
***Chicago is the propagation place for receiving my master's blessings or protection.***  
He used the pronunciation of Chicago for Japanese words which meant: *the master's protection, or master's blessings*. Let me explain. *Shi* (of Chicago) means **master**; *Kago* is the **blessings**, or can be **protection**. I'll read it again:  
***Chicago is the propagation place for receiving my master's blessings or protection.***

Through those two mediations, the Divine works I had received guided me into the ministry and brought my family to Chicago. As my father put it, with "the blessings and protection of my master" I now serve Kami & people in Chicago. The appreciation I feel never runs out. Through mediation my life continues to be blessed. The benefits truly are life-changing.