

## *Annual Autumn Memorial*

Good afternoon, everyone! Happy New Day, Week & special “Thanks” for joining today’s service. This is our annual Autumn Memorial Service of KC Chicago for 2023.

Since our Spring Memorial Service we have had four of these ***Newly Departed*** of KC Chicago:

Mrs Shizuko Kusumoto passed away on May 6 at age 97;

Mrs Marguerite Gosewisch, grandmother of Mr Greg Lambros,  
passed away on May 25 at age 101;

Mr Michael Christopher Knupple passed away on June 16 at age 42;

Mr Harry Sayama, father of a friend of Mr. Paul Lyman,  
passed away on July 12;

Rev Nobuko Kikegawa passed away on July 22 at age 42; and

Mr Harold Nakaoka passed away on August 10 at age 102.

While welcoming these Mitama spirits to today’s service, I have asked Shodai Oyasensei & Our Founder to lead them to the world of peace & joy in the next world.

Our Founder taught, *When people die, they are reunited with Kami. A physical body may die, but the Mitama spirit keeps on living. The body came from the Earth, & will return to the Earth; while the Spirit, which was the energy given by Kami to sustain life on Earth, returns to Kami. Dying is the separating of your body to release your spirit back to its eternal condition.*

The earthly life of our late parent minister, Rev. Soichiro Otsubo, sought & portrayed the very essence of our Founder’s faith throughout his everyday life. He proved, by example, during his lifetime, that true faith is demonstrated daily by believing that the ***process of life***, whether easy or difficult, is the active working of the Divine Parent, for guiding our path of life toward divine fulfillment. Through constant communication & cooperation with Kami, step by step Rev. Otsubo developed his faith — respecting everything that happened in his life to the fullest. In this world, living that kind of reality sincerely & faithfully, he clearly came to understand the invisible world beyond of the Mitama spirits.

He has said,

*The next world is pitch dark. Therefore we need to polish the gem of our heart to receive divine light while we are here on earth. Thus we can live a happy life in this world & have a bright eternity in the next.*

*Mitama spirits do not directly manipulate actions in this world. There have been a lot of beliefs from long ago, that people believed whatever happened to us was the working of Mitama spirits. Even today a lot of Japanese people believe that phenomena which cannot be explained is the working of Mitama spirits. But, in fact, that is totally wrong; NO!... all of these incidents are Kami's doing. Kami uses illusions of Heaven & Earth to appear as Mitama spirits in order to guide humans to real happiness.*

Shodai Oyasensei also said, *"This world exists for the next world."* Therefore we should practice faith in this world to polish the gem of our heart and receive divine light. That **divine light** is what will be brought into the next world.

To do that, we humans should have the absolute conviction that everything that happens, good or bad, is Kami's doing to deepen the peace & joy in our heart. And thus, we can realize Kami is always working for us humans, and bestowing Divine Arrangement for everything to become better than expected. When we have absolute belief in Kami and that Kami is always working for us, we can receive **divine light** which will be brought into the next world. Remember our founder taught, *Know that heaven & earth will be your eternal home while you are living and even after you die.*

When we clearly realize that Kami is always working for us to develop peace & joy in our heart, we can gain divine light. With **divine light** we live a life of happiness in this world and have a bright world in the next. Let us practice faith. Let us respect each happening as Kami's sacred doing. Let us practice gratitude for Kami's sacred work. And, let us accumulate much **divine light**.

During these last six months we lost three **meritorious** people for our church, Shizuko Kusumoto, Michael Christopher Knipple and Harold Kiyoto Nakaoka.

Mrs. Shizuko Kusumoto was the youngest daughter of Shinkichi & Ume Nishimura. Shinkichi-san owned the Lane hotel in Seattle before the war where gatherings for the Konko Faith were held. In 1928 Ume-san became one of the church elders when KC Seattle was established. The Nishimura family has attended church services ever since then.

At the outbreak of WWII in 1942, the Nishimura family was interned in a concentration camp. After the war they moved to Chicago. Harold Kiyoto Nakaoka married Haruko-san, who was Ume Nishimura's oldest daughter.

The Nishimura family is who brought the Konkokyo into Chicago. In 1994, when my family moved to the United States for missionary work, the priority for KCNA was to establish a church in Chicago. Kami's great arrangements led me to do my missionary work in Chicago. Kami chose me to establish a Konko Church in Chicago. No matter how much I offer thanks to Kami, I cannot say *thank-you* enough! That is why Shizuko-san & Harold-san, you are meritorious here at KC Chicago.

Another one meritorious was Mr. Michael Christopher Knipple. He was the husband of Rev. Ichie Otsubo, who is Nidai Oyasensei's second daughter. Mike grew up in Pekin, Illinois and they lived there for 12 years. From our church, it's a three-hour drive. They would join our grand ceremonies during those years. Mike greatly revered Nidai Oyasensei and had wished to help Ichie Sensei serve Kami & people anywhere.

Kami's workings have recently been remarkable. In my sermon last month, I spoke of offering a "Prayer of Blessings" at the Opening Ceremony on Aug. 14 for the 2023 Parliament of World Religions.

All speakers were leaders of various religious groups or peace movements. The mayor of Chicago also spoke. Compared to them, I am nothing more than a grain of sand on the huge beach. However, Kami chose me and allowed me to recite a prayer of blessing. Each of them gave their speeches enthusiastically, but none were much

different from any other. I had been given an opportunity to demonstrate Konkokyo style ritual. It seemed to impress many people. Moreover, I had projected "The Divine Reminder" to be seen behind me. The venue was full. I think there were thousands of people there.

Shodai Oyasensei's earnest wish was that *Wagakokoro* would become the foundation of a global movement for seeking peace, justice and sustainability in the world. I have hoped to be able to play a part in that important role --- like a Japanese proverb says, "Even though pepper is small, it must be spicy."

As I was preparing for today's Autumn Memorial service, I welcomed all the Mitama spirits related to our church, to listen along with me to the speeches of Shodai Oyasensei. It was then I realized they, too, wished for me to have true faith, to receive true divine virtue, and genuinely show true gratitude; they wish that I do my best to establish the *Wagakokoro* era in this world.

I pray you would join the movement, too. *Wagakokoro* is the ultimate in reaching true peace and happiness worldwide.