

KONKO Church of Chicago
Monthly Service February 04, 2024

Good morning! Happy Sunday in this *new* week of Kami's blessings! Thank you very much for joining today's service. This is our monthly service for February 2024. I hope each one of you is in good health & excellent spirits on this beautiful winter morning.

Our founder gave the following teaching to his disciple, Rev. Fujimori Kondo:

*Those who conscientiously practice faith
should not mock the dreams they have at night.
Kami teaches good and bad even through our dreams.*

I, myself, have respected dreams as divine ever since being awestruck at age 18 with such a dream that anyone could not help but admit as divine. Since then, I have tried to understand the messages and wishes Kami is giving through dreams; and sometimes, they have influenced me to take a course of action in my life.

What was your first dream in 2024? On New Year's Eve, I was busy preparing for the New Year's Day Ceremony and went to bed after 11 pm. Then I had my first dream in the new year and woke up soon after midnight at 12:13 am on New Y

ear's day.

In my first dream of 2024, *Shohei Otani was seen off by a nameless lady from the boarding house, and was heading out into the match vigorously & enthusiastically.* Shohei Otani is a major league baseball player, who always thinks of how to get better as a baseball player, and always gives 100% energy to his games. I couldn't help but feel that Kami wishes me to always think only to deepen peace & joy in my heart and put my 100 % energy each & every time to developing my peaceful joyful heart throughout my life. Furthermore, Kami wishes that Konkokyo (Konkokyo Headquarters is located at Otani in Konko town in Japan) would come out into the world by putting out my *100 percent Wagakokoro*, and then *the world would be saved with Wagakokoro.*

Then soon after I had this awesome divine dream, a 7.6 magnitude earthquake struck the Noto Peninsula in Ishikawa prefecture, Japan. The earthquake and accompanying tsunami caused extensive damage. We would like to express our sincere condolences and sympathy toward the people affected by this massive earthquake.

I sent a *Line* message about it to more than 50 young Americans, and others:

This year, from New Year's Day, the earthquake in the Noto Peninsula, Japan marks an extraordinary beginning. When I saw photos of the disaster-stricken area and the complete destruction of Konko Church of Wajima, I couldn't help but pray for a speedy recovery and Kami's wishes to be fulfilled through this earthquake. The third son of Wajima Church, Rev. Teruo Tedoriya and his wife Mie Sensei, are currently trainees at KC Airaku.

During any prayer services everyday since then, I could not help but pray for smooth recovery from the earthquake in the Noto Peninsula. And especially the next morning, I opened the *'Wagakokoro sacred book'* while praying that Kami would help me understand the Divine Parent's thoughts about the earthquake.

What caught my eye was a poem by Shodai Oyasensei, *'Even when asleep, the paper fan moves — the parental heart.'* We, humans hardly grasp how deep Kami's parental love is. Even through the devastation caused by this earthquake, the only way to follow Kami's Will is to try to understand Kami's deep parental love, which is saying, *"Each human is dear; please receive real salvation."*

An earnest believer in another state followed with her *Line* message:

"Oh, poor Wajima Kyokai!! It's hard to wonder why this could happen - however, Kami Sama must have a big idea in mind. We as humans have such a small mind, but Kami Sama can see so much into the future and past, and knows all the possibilities. I hope that they pray and deeply understand each step that Kami Sama wants them to take, and follows this path. Even when things are dark, it means that bright things will come, if you follow Kami Sama's *nariyuki* plan!! That's what I think."

Another earnest believer sent her message:

"Thank you for your message, I'm sorry it took me so long to respond. This type of event is something I struggle with understanding Kami's heart. My prayers go out to everyone affected by the earthquake. In a way, it is a small blessing that it took place on new year's, when so many people were not at work to celebrate new year's."

This message stimulated both of us to understand the significance of the emergence of Konkokyo, which deepens the importance of both Kami's point of view and our human point of view about this natural disaster.

Immediately, I sent a reply:

Thank you very much for your kind reply. I think those like you who have deep hearts for people often struggle to understand Kami's heart through this type of event. I think it good to feel struggle. It's important is to seek Kami's heart deeper and deeper without giving up.

Here is an important message of Rev. Otsubo for pursuing Kami's heart: *'I wish to know the heart of heaven and earth. If there is a way for it, Heaven and Earth, please show me the way in my heart.'*

Our founder sought Kami's Will, no matter what. That is why, in the midst of the greatest hardship of removing the altar fixtures Kami showed him the *"Divine Reminder"* which is the ultimate message for saving humanity. Soon after that, Kami also showed him the ultimate path to touch Kami's deep love for us, saying, *"Everything that happens is Tenchi No Kami's doing. This includes major upheavals."*

I believe that understanding this point is important in order to truly understand the significance of the emergence of Konkokyo. Please feel free to ask me anything.

Then she sent the following question about what *Kami's doing*:

“Do you think these kinds of tragic events are Kami Sama's way of pushing people to rely more on each other and Kami? When something terrible happens, the best case is to lean on one another and what we have already been blessed with for support. I believe Kami Sama wants to promote unity and peace between people and the Earth. So maybe these events are to show us how important it is to show kindness and generosity to people, and to treat our world with respect.

I don't think Kami Sama wants us to suffer or be punished, but to teach us. I also think events like this will always happen, and that sadness can't be completely eliminated from the world. But we have to keep trying to be kind to others anyway.”

These words of hers deeply touched me. I replied as follows:

Thank you very much for sending your deep thoughts about such an event as the earthquake. Your thoughts are so clear that they made my thoughts about it deeper.

From the human point of view I think it great to think Kami does not want people to suffer and wants to promote unity and peace between people and the Earth through such tragedies. Therefore, I totally agree with you from this point of view.

But, on the other hand, how should we look at it from Kami's point of view?

Our founder and my parent minister, Rev. Soichiro Otsubo sought Kami's heart as sincerely as possible through everything that happened in their lives. Kami gave the following teaching to our founder: ‘Everything that happens is Tenchi No Kami's doing. This includes major upheavals.’ Rev. Otsubo realized that ‘All is Divine Love.’ ‘Everything’ and ‘all,’ includes natural disasters such as an earthquake, I think.

I also exchanged messages with an earnest believer in Japan about this earthquake. She wrote back to me as follows:

Our founder wrote in 1872 as follows: ‘*An earthquake struck on February 6 at around six in the evening.*’ Kami-Sama said, ‘*I, Tenchi Kane No Kami, am disturbed. The world is chaotic.*’”

I've been thinking about what this revelation, ‘The Earthquake disturbed Kami,’ means. I cannot imagine that Kami's wrath would cause earthquakes and take lives.

When faced with so-called natural disasters such as earthquakes, we are painfully reminded of the magnitude of the power of heaven and earth, and the powerlessness of humans, but it is precisely at such times that we

deepen our reverence for heaven and earth and learn to change our human-centered, self-centered way. I wonder if Kami wishes us to reflect on our past and change our feelings. I wonder if such a wish of Kami's is imbued in the word "disturb," which seems unbecoming of Kami, the Divine Parent of Heaven and Earth. I accept it as such for now.

How do you think of this revelation to our founder?

Here is my reply message to her:

I totally agree with you.

In the past, there was a kami-centered world, but ever since then, humans have done everything with their own power and ruled by force. And the thousands of years of human conflict have not changed in the slightest. I feel Kami's deep sorrow for this in the words 'Kami is disturbed.'

I believe that Kami earnestly desires to create a world of mutual prosperity between Kami and humanity, where Kami and humans can worship, rejoice, and enjoy each other. It is hoped that with the emergence of Konkokyo, people will awaken to the gratitude and wonder of doing as Kami wishes, and that a new advanced Kami-centered world will emerge, overcoming the human-centered world.

I believe that natural disasters such as earthquakes are manifestations of Kami's deep parental love for us, asking us to understand this.

And in another *Line* message to her I added:

'I think earthquakes and natural disasters are Kami's lament that 'we humans are not walking the path of mutual prosperity between Kami and man.' Kami wishes for us humans to understand them as such and to change the human-centered world into Kami-centered world. I think it is important to receive any disasters in this way.

The same goes for the difficulties and problems we face. Just as with earthquakes, hardships do not go away just because we have faith in the Konkokyo.

I think we should try to see them as an expression of Kami's wish for humans to "truly renew themselves and live the truth" When we respond to them as such, I believe that we come into contact with Kami's living work more precisely and therefore everything becomes more and more true.

'Everything that happens is Tenchi No Kami's doing. This includes major upheavals.' Konko Daijin, who 'knows this true blessing between heaven and earth,' appears throughout the world and says, 'I am aspiring for the blessing to embrace the whole world with this faith.' This is the earnest wishes of Kami and our founder, I believe."

That reply of mine seemed too long, but it is most important; the point being to live with Kami.

Some people may see the catastrophe as just a natural phenomenon. Some people may think that the difficulties and problems are caused by us humans. That may be the case, but when you can realize "*Everything that happens is Kami's doing*" or "It is *the manifestation of Kami's love which wishes for true changes in our human way of life and true prosperity for humanity,*" ---- from that point on, I think, a completely different way of life will open for us.

We'll come to live a life of mutual fulfillment between Kami & us humans; co-prospering; worshiping, delighting & enjoying each other while truly feeling the *work of Kami*, like we are constantly walking within and through the midst of Kami.

With such absolute belief in Kami, we can accept whatever happens with gratitude, Kami's glory surely appears and definitely leads us to develop a true Wagakokoro. Let us deepen such an unbreakable Wagakokoro that does not shake at any time.

What we aim for is a Wagakokoro, and what we attain is 'All is Divine Love.'