



The Founder's Grave Site

## Our Kami-ness

**Reverend Shinji Yamada**  
Director of KIC

**H**appy New Year to all of you! We are able to welcome the year 2011 thanks to Kami's divine blessings. I wish this New Year will be filled with pleasure and happy dreams for all of you.

Last November, I was appointed as the Director of the Konkokyo International Center (KIC) for another term. As my new term begins, I recall my first trip abroad in 1992. I visited the Philippines that year as part of a study tour of the Konkokyo Peace Activity Center, one of the Konkokyo's international volunteer organizations.

During our visit, we traveled to several impoverished districts and had conversations with some of the people living there. This was my first visit to such places. I was shocked and almost horrified at what I saw. People lived in an environment, that many would deem unlivable. People were living in sheds next to a huge garbage dump. The adults were in a constant search for jobs and the children suffered from the lack of food, health care and opportunity to receive education to better themselves.

We brought candy as gifts for the children. Expecting their smiles, we

distributed the candy only to realize that the number of children far exceeded the amount of candy we brought.

After handing out the last candy, a two or three-year-old boy remained, who had not gotten any candy. Realizing that we had no more candy left, he started to cry, and continued to cry. Witnessing this sight made my heart ache so much, yet I could do nothing for the little boy.

At that moment, a girl of about five or six unselfishly gave up her wrapped candy to the little boy and whispered something in his ear. Although I could not hear what was said, I presumed she told him to stop crying, since he did stop. This was a very touching scene. In their world of extreme poverty, the young girl's unselfish act of compassion impressed me so much.

We are all people born into this world as the children of Kami, the Divine Parent of the Universe. We all possess a kami-ness, a divineness, within our soul. The act of compassion exhibited by the young Filipino girl was a manifestation of her kami-ness. As I witnessed this act, I felt that all people in the world have kami-ness, though some live a more prosperous life, while others are placed in a most difficult situation.

In 1868, Kami revealed the Divine

Wish, "May there be peace throughout the world, prosperity in all countries, and safety for all people." Kami asked our Founder to spread this wish to the world and always pray for its actualization.

Today, I remember my experience in the Philippines as an example of Kami's Wish. When we look at the world of 2011, many of Kami's beloved children are suffering, not only from personal difficulties, but also from conflicts between races, nations, and religions, environmental destructions, various forms of discriminations, economical crisis, and other forms of suffering. This is Kami's sorrow.

Kami strongly wishes that we all become more aware of the kami-ness within us, respect the kami-ness of all other people, and help each person realize their individual kami-ness in order to fulfill Kami's Wish and gain happiness.

In an effort to realize the Divine Wish, the KIC will continue to make efforts to spread this Way of Faith and the message of kami-ness to the world to connect people with their Divine Parent. With the beginning of this new year, I hope that all of you will share this wish with me and the Konkokyo International Center.

# Wishes for New Year 2011 From Around the World

Last year, I went through many experiences which made it unique in a variety of ways. One of the moments that marked my life in 2010 was the service of the fifteenth anniversary of my great grandfather Fukashi Maehara's passing, led by my uncle, Reverend Ryoichi Iwai. Thanks to this service, I gained a more profound knowledge about my family and this brought up in me strong feelings of joy and pride.

Another moment which I enjoyed is being with my family since they are always there to support me whenever I need them. Without them, I would not be the person I am today. Also there had been some problems in my class as

## Paraguay by Yuri Amari Maehara



a group, but because we could confront these situations, our bond as a class was strengthened. This is why my wish for the year 2011 is to be able to spend the best possible moments with my classmates, since spending time with them brings me much of the happiness in my life. Also, I wish I can keep spending nice moments with my grandparents because they are, without a doubt, some of the most important people in my life and ones whom I consider great role models. Finally, upon the end of school this year, I wish to study medicine so as to fulfill my dream of helping others.

I teach Portuguese at a local high school and in June 2007, I met Reverend Tadashi Miyazaki, the Head Minister of the Konko Church of Butanta again in Sao Paulo. This occasion restored my faith in Konkokyo and I began going to worship at the church here every day. Ten months later, I started renting one of the rooms at the church and serving Kami by doing many works, such as translation. By the end

## Brazil by Felicio Naia Ferreira Junior



of 2009, I became certified as a Minister's Assistant by our Spiritual Leader. Presently, I am transcribing *Konko Daijin Oboegaki* in Japanese and although the Chinese characters are difficult, I enjoy studying with Reverend Miyazaki. Someday, I'd like to visit Konkokyo Headquarters in Japan, so this year I'm going to practice Konko Faith even harder in order to make this dream come true.

I have so many hopes and aspirations — to be free of debt, to have health for my family and friends, to be joyful and patient, to be happier and more giving. New Year's Day always feels like a chance to start over, but we are actually given a new beginning every morning with the sunrise. It is my hope to make each day better than the last and that, as a relative newcomer to the Konko Faith, I learn to turn to Kami more often for guidance. I often find myself struggling in

## Washington, USA by Lia Nagase



my busy life with two small kids, a dog, a husband, a house, a business, a big community of friends and family, and other responsibilities to both myself and others. I, like so many people, get caught up in the minutia of daily life. I aspire to be the kind of loving, calm, giving, centered person who sheds positive light wherever I go and who sees the beauty and opportunity of every moment on this earth, and I will look to Kami to guide me to that.

I love working in my garden. Working in the soil, planting seeds or cuttings, and later watching them sprout into new living things have always given me great pleasure.

I have four bins of skinny, squirmy, little red worms, busily eating my kitchen and garden waste. Everyday, the worm colony produces a brown liquid, a rich, dark "tea" that feed to the plants. The plants respond by producing nutritious fruits and vegetables! I am so grateful that I can participate in this amazing cycle of nature: Feeding the worms that feed the plants that feed me. Science would explain this transformation of plant cells to rich, nourishing soil as the work of living organisms, but what about Kami, I am now thinking,

## Hawaii, USA by Karen Taniguchi

Just being in the garden activates my inner voice. It speaks to the plants and working worms, praising, encouraging, and often just appreciating. What is this thing, my inner voice? Could it be more than me, speaking to myself, but me, speaking to Kami, in appreciation of what is before me, or maybe Kami talking to me, telling me to open my eyes and see all that I am blessed with?

And so from these ordinary activities of my life in the garden, a thought has been sown in my mind, and I am beginning to marvel at the amazing relationship of science, nature, and Kami in my life. I feel that I need to nurture this thought and make it grow, too.

Last year was a big point in my life since I entered University in Tokyo and started living alone there. I'm very grateful that I'm having an exciting life now, which I never imagined a year ago. I am becoming more clearly aware of the importance of thinking about Kami because I've been too busy

**Japan**  
by Kiku Ishizu



and often forgotten to do so. Therefore, I want to be closer with Kami. I'm going to face various problems this year, so I think I should make efforts to think about Kami first without trying to solve problems on my own.

Happy New Year to Konkokyo believers around the world!

Last April, Konkokyo of Korea celebrated its tenth Anniversary. The church was moved to a place in front of Seoul Station and its worship hall was renovated in October. These blessings were the results of the work of the Divine Parent of the Universe and the Founder, as well

**Korea**  
by Kab Ro Lee



as the consequence of many ardent prayers from Headquarters. This year, with great gratitude, I resolve to do my best to show my appreciation of Kami-Sama by advancing our church activities and guiding many people in trouble to Konko Faith for salvation. I do hope to be used for Kami's work more than ever. I wish you and your families' health and happiness in 2011.

Happy New Year! I am very grateful and glad that my family and I could cheerfully greet 2011 together.

My last yearly theme had been "To Live a Real Life," and my new theme for this year is "Live Happily." I would like to send happiness to people through my actions by:

- Making use of words and thoughts based in Konko Faith for daily family life, work, and social interaction,
- Keeping my house clean,

**Australia**  
by Michi Rippin



left is Michi

- Not only producing wedding ceremonies (which is my current job), but also developing a new job where I can be involved in making customers and others happier in the long term,
  - Enriching my mind by learning about fine arts and culture,
  - And joining volunteer groups.
- I would like to live with a smile, always thinking that every day is New Year's Day.

This year, our house's renovation will be finished. A prayer room is already completed and we will soon have several bedrooms for our guests.

Last September, we obtained other two houses in the same village, south of the mountain Harz in the middle of Germany's beautiful countryside. One is for a library with almost 5000 books about Japan and China, while

**Germany**  
by Herbert and Kiyoko Furumoto



left is Kiyoko

the other is for an exhibition of German and Japanese toys. Both are open for everyone, especially Konkokyo believers. This year, we will have a meeting of Konkokyo believers in Berlin and international guests are welcome. We hope to establish a Konko Center in Germany; we must work hard, but it is a pleasure to work for Konkokyo.

Hello from London to everyone.

As I write this, we in England are in the midst of the Poppy Appeal, which happens at this time every year to raise money for soldiers who have lost their lives or been wounded in service, and for their families. Many volunteers sell poppies to the public to raise money for this cause. There are not enough funds to take care of the many injured and needy, so the British Legion tries to help this cause. Many who work for this cause do not support war, but they care about the soldiers. They may not be able to help everyone, but they do their best. We who live in peace and have enough money to eat and have a place to live, must try in some way

**UK**  
by Sandy Sams



to help those less fortunate. There are so many ways to help — volunteering one's time and energies, contributing money, sharing thoughts, and offering prayers. The sacred rice (*goshinmai*) is also a wonderful way to share good energy and protection. We live in difficult times which may remain for some time. Let us do what we can to help others. It is a joy to do this, and we also help ourselves at the same time. Wishing all a very happy Christmas and a Happy New Year. May we have opportunities to carry on Konko-Sama's work. Many blessings and love.

# Let's Generate the Wind of Faith in Australia

The Konkokyo International Center (KIC) held a Konkokyo Faith Gathering in Sydney, Australia on December 4 & 5 (Sat.-Sun.). Reverends Yukie Morimoto and Harue Ochi were KIC staff members sent there on assignment.



gave a sermon in which she stated, "All human beings have the heart of Kami. Thus, we feel sorry and want to do something, when we see someone in difficulty or pain. Although it is very important to have such a feeling, we must not stop there. Kami wants

These gatherings have been held for the purpose of supporting local believers in their faith practice and as an opportunity to initiate overseas Konkokyo outreach efforts. In Australia, the first gathering took place voluntarily in 1999, with participation solely by the local believers.

Later, however, KIC took over conducting them and recently held the sixth one.

On Day One, Dec. 4 (Sat), a faith enrichment workshop was held for Japanese believers living in Australia, in which five people participated. At the seminar, Reverend Ochi first gave this account of her own experiences, "I had been suffering from atopic dermatitis for a long time and using an ointment. However, I was concerned about having to use it my entire life. Since Kami gave me my body, I decided to discontinue using the ointment and left it up to Kami to allow my recovery." This was followed by a lively discussion among all the participants, in relation to her presentation. Day One's program ended before lunch. The participants had a chance to get to know each other better by eating lunch together.



us to keep Kami's heart in mind and take concrete action to help others."

After lunch, an animated film was shown, with two *Kibi-mai* sacred dances later performed in the afternoon.

The animated film "Konko-Sama — Tales of *Toritsugi* Mediation," which was made to

commemorate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Establishment of Konkokyo, was viewed in English. All participants watched the film very enthusiastically and later shared individual impressions, such as,

"It was easily understandable even without knowledge of Konkokyo, and was really a moving story," "I like how you should leave your angry feelings behind," and "I want to see other films, too."

In the *Kibi-mai* performances, first the dancing duo of Reverends Ochi and Morimoto performed "*Ametsuchi* (Heaven and Earth)." Their beautiful costumes and breathtaking dance enchanted the audience. Reverend Ochi then danced a solo, "*Ontouka* (Tenth Day)." The audience admired her superb and elegant dance, with comments such as, "Amazing!" and "Good for meditation and inner peace."

After the *Kibi-mai* sacred dances, all the participants had their commemorative pictures taken, followed by free discussion. During this time the participants engaged in a Konkokyo teaching lotto game, whereby each drew a random Konkokyo teaching on a slip of paper. They were told to apply their selected teaching to their daily life, from now on.

The two-day Gathering was a content-rich event. The animated film and *Kibi-mai* sacred dance performance were ways that enabled Konkokyo to be widely and readily conveyed to nonbelievers. KIC will make efforts to further improve gathering programs, not only to share our Faith with local believers, but also to share our faith with nonbelievers.



service, sacred rice packets from the Konkokyo Headquarters were distributed to the participants. Then, Reverend Morimoto

## Believer in Brazil Training at Konkokyo Seminary

**M**s. Solange Santana dos Santos of Brazil trained two months at the Konkokyo Seminary in Okayama, Japan, to become a Konkokyo minister.

She conducts a painting class, and in April 2008, she was invited by her student, Reverend Takako Oishi, to participate in the Grand Service for the first anniversary of the Konko Propagation Hall of Rio de Janeiro where Solange began to learn about Konkokyo.

During the days of her training, Solange lived in the Konkokyo Seminary dormitory with her fellow students. She worshipped at the Main Worship Hall every day and learned the doctrine and history of Konkokyo through lectures. Though she did not speak Japanese at all, her classmates warmly accepted her. When they gave prayers aloud at Worship Hall of seminary, they tried to read the prayers more slowly than usual for her benefit. Her classmates also memorized some

Portuguese greetings and spoke them to her.

She reflected about her experience in Konkokyo Seminary: “First, I would like to thank you for everything. I was worried whether I would be able to survive in a foreign country which I did not know at all. However, I am eternally grateful for all the kindnesses of Reverend Michio Matsuoka, Director of Konkokyo Seminary and the other teachers. I feel strong gratitude for the warm and sensitive attention of my classmates, especially those who shared the same dormitory’s room with me. All teachers taught me with great sincerity. I will use what I learned at Konkokyo Seminary for the rest of my life and will promote the propagation activities. The atmosphere of 3:45 a.m. procession to the Main Worship Hall (*Odemashi*) by the Spiritual Leader was so mysterious, but which impressed and blessed me. I am glad from the bottom of my heart to have come here.”



## Overseas Ministers Training Workshop on Church Propagation Took Place



**T**he Overseas Minister Training Workshop took place at Konkokyo Headquarters, Okayama, Japan, on October 10-13 with representatives in attendance from North America, Hawaii, and Brazil. There were presentations by ministers on the themes of

“What was/wasn’t accepted in the local cultural background?” and “The Real Situation of Overseas Churches.”

They exchanged views during discussions and talked about the challenges of propagating overseas to non-Japanese people and new generations

of Japanese descent who don’t speak Japanese. Some of their comments were: “It is important to understand and enter the local culture to convey the value of this Faith to people,” “Easily recognizable Konkokyo words and manner are necessary to propagate,” “An attitude of sharing teachings with others is better than giving them unasked for,” and “When Konkokyo rituals were adapted for local situations, I found that some remained the same, such as Tenchi Kakitsuke.”

The participants were encouraged by the exchange of information and discussion of their difficulties with others and renewed their motivation for overseas propagation.

## 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Service of Konkokyo Propagation in Paraguay

On September 5, 2010, Konkokyo Asuncion Activity Center held the Grand Service for the fifteenth anniversary of propagation in Paraguay. Believers living there and those who belong to the Konkokyo church of Sao Paulo in Brazil participated in the event.

The service was conducted by Reverend Hiromichi Maebara, serving as the officiant minister for this occasion. In *Saishi* Main Prayer, Reverend Ryoich Iwai said, "About thirty years ago, the

propagation in Paraguay started when the activity center was founded. This action was like planting a single seed in the



city of Asuncion, Pirapo, and La Paz, which resulted in the development of the propagation until today. I pray that, from this service on, the propagation activities may expand and we may convey the great teachings of the Founder, Konkoku Daijin,

to more people." The service was so impressive because of the sincere feelings of participants as a unified whole.

## Transfer Service of Konkokyo of Korea

On October 16, 2010, a Transfer Service for the Konkokyo of Korea was conducted and celebrated in a nearly complete remodeled worship hall. Reverend Shoichi Izumi, Director of Propagation Affairs Department of the Headquarters, made a special appearance at the service.

The service was conducted by Reverend Jin Koo Lee and at the conclusion of the service, Reverend Izumi delivered a congratulatory speech. In one portion of his presentation, he said "In addition to the pleasure of doing sacred work



in this worship hall, let's have firm faith and pray for the further development of Konkokyo of Korea."

The remodeling of the new worship hall was finally completed in mid-November and was beautifully done.

The address of the Konkokyo of Korea is:  
24-22 4F Dongja-dong,  
Yongsan-gu, Seoul,  
Korea



## New York Gathering Update (by Ms. Saomi Okamoto)

The autumn service took place on October 23 at 1 p.m., in a room overlooking the Farmer's Market, near Union Square. It was an honor to have Mr. Nobusuke Fukuda, his wife Fumiko and two relatives attend our service, increasing attendance to nine people. Nobusuke is the second son of Reverend Yoshiaki Fukuda, who came to San Francisco in 1930 to be the founding minister of the Konkokyo Church of San Francisco.



Nobusuke is 2nd from right, his wife Fumiko is on his left

Mr. Fukuda's presence inspired our monthly study group members. It was our pleasure to translate the book "An Extraordinary Guy who Became a Kami," written in 1967 about Reverend Fukuda by Mr. Masayuki Fukubayashi, his best friend in high school. We truly hope that our work helps the Fukuda Family learn more about Reverend Fukuda's earlier years, and is helpful for English propagation of the Konkoku Faith in the future.

