

DAY TWO (July 16, 2006)
Our Social Ties:
Reaching Out to Others

Morning Session
Individual Relationships

2-1-P Plenary Address

2-1-1 Human Sexuality
The Reality of Our Diversity

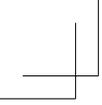
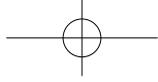
2-1-2 Husband and Wife
Rethinking the Notion of Husband and Wife

2-1-3 Family and Faith
Family Sustained by Faith; Faith Sustained by Family

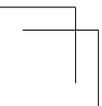
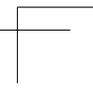
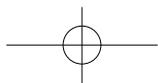
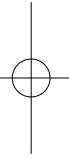
2-1-4 Ties Within the Church Community
Strengthening the Bonds of the Church Community

2-1-5 Friends, Neighbors, and Co-Workers
This Is the Way I Sprinkle the Fragrance of Teachings

2-1



2-1





2-1-P Plenary Address by Rev. Nakao



- Day Two Photo Gallery -



2-1-1 Participants and speakers Rev. Hayashi, Rev. Kokuryo, & Ms. Horiuchi on Human Sexuality



2-1-2 Speakers Ms. Okui, Mr. Kinoshita, & Mr. Kitamura, and participants for Husband and Wife



2-1-3 Participants and speaker Mr. Mikuni on Family and Faith





2-1-3 Family and Faith speakers (from left) Mr. Mikuni, Ms. Takahashi, & Mr. Murayama



2-1-3 Mr. Murayama explains his picture slide



2-1-4 Rev. Nakagoshi talks about the church community



2-1-4 Speakers Mr. Uesugi & Rev. Saito



2-1-5 A participant brings up a question for the speakers



2-1-5 Friends, Neighbors, & Co-Workers by Mr. Tsuji, Mr. Watanabe, Mr. Tanno, Mr. Ohno, & Mr. Ogawa

July 16th, Day Two Section Meetings

Photo Gallery



2-2-P Plenary Address by Rev. Morishita



Mr. Nakao makes staff announcements



2-2-1 The Aged & the Afflicted by moderator Ms. Nakamura, and speakers Ms. Suga-Nakagawa & Ms. Saltman



2-2-2 Conflict and Violence in the Community group discussions by Rev. Okazaki, Rev. Honda, & Mr. Iwamoto



2-2-3 Volunteer Work and the Community by Mr. Yuge and attending participants





2-2-3 A participant volunteers to step up



2-2-4 Speakers Mr. Tanaka, Mr. Patterson, & Mr. Black



2-2-4 Mr. Patterson does a presentation on Bridging Cultural Gaps in the Church & Community



2-2-5 A participant for Tenrikyo Church & Other Religions in the Community presents a question



2-2-5 Speakers Mr. Yamada (top), Ms. Sugandhi, & Mr. Takeuchi reply to the audience's questions

Human Relationships and Faith: Enhancing Relationships with the Teachings

Owen Nakao

(Rev. Nakao is the head minister of Tenrikyo Pearl Church in Honolulu, USA.)

We have been seeing big changes in human relationships in today's society, and we often find ourselves unsure of how to deal with some of these changes: homosexuality, same-sex marriages, divorce, single parenting, and so forth.

Homosexuality is something that has been with us for a long time, so it is not something new, but there seems to be a greater awareness and moreover an acceptance of homosexuality. The husband and wife relationship, long regarded as the pillar of relationships, seems to be waning as more couples look to divorce as a way to end their relationship. The relationship between family members is threatened by divorce and other pressures, such as both parents working and electronic entertainment which detracts from family activities, and other interpersonal relations.

What contributions can Tenrikyo make to sustain basic human relationships? And how should we, as Tenrikyo followers, accept or respond to these changes in human relationships? What dynamics are involved? I wish to highlight some of these issues and provide a few guidelines regarding the nature of human relationships as taught by the Foundress.

We are surrounded by a wide variety of human relationships—relationships between husband and wife, parent and child, brothers and sisters, relationships within a community, friends, co-workers, superiors, subordinates, company vendors, customers, competitors, neighbors, government, and so on. Indeed human beings are essentially “relational” or “social” beings; our lives are made truly meaningful by the very relationships we have. As much as we shape our own relationships, these relationships in turn shape ourselves. And faith should play an important part in this dual process.

I apologized to Tak Hayashi because I will be covering some of his area of homosexuality, but with over seventy participants signed up for human sexuality and with such a broad subject, I'm sure you will have plenty to talk about in the section meeting.

I am really encouraged that we will have a discussion on human sexuality:

“homosexual issues,” to be specific, because it is a subject that is too often avoided, probably because we don’t know much about it and therefore we feel very uncomfortable talking about it. When a Tenrikyo Church Headquarters minister was asked once, “What does Tenrikyo say about homosexuality?” He answered, “Please don’t ask me that question.” It was probably just as well, since he probably didn’t know much about the subject.

“Uncomfortable” might be a key word here as some of us may be in a “comfort zone” and perhaps not really facing up to issues not only in the community but in our lives as well . . . issues that may very well enhance our faith and our life but only if we face up to it. Yes, we become very uncomfortable if we make a point for which we always thought to be true and someone makes a comment that proves it wrong or it creates some doubt and shakes the foundation of our beliefs. Now that’s uncomfortable. But we should take it as a sign for further self-reflection and personal growth. The issue of homosexuality has made me feel uncomfortable, and it still does, because I didn’t know much about it and there’s still more that I need to learn. But because I didn’t know, I began to make assumptions, like homosexuality is unnatural; God didn’t intend it to be this way. Homosexuals become homosexuals because of the way they were brought up. Their fathers were probably weak and passive, etc. But later I found out that all these assumptions are untrue.

There is a weekly television program in the United States called 60 Minutes and one of its programs they were interviewing twin boys aged seven years old and one took an interest in regular boy things like GI Joe and toy guns, but the other one took an interest in girl things like Barbie dolls and doll houses. It was such a shocking and eye-opening experience to see twin boys so different. Many of you know that I have twin boys and they basically have the same interests: wrestling, judo, and video games. Obviously, the one with the Barbie dolls would be gay or is gay. His room and bed were decorated in pink, while his twin brother’s room had a blue theme. Their parents said in the interview that they brought up their twins in the same way, but one of the twin’s began to develop interests gear more for girls. This is definite evidence that it is not due to their environment that gay people are homosexual, since in this example, they are twins and they were brought up and raised in the same way.

Homosexuals are homosexuals because that’s the way they were born just

as heterosexuals are heterosexuals because that's the way they were born. For many of us, there is a lot to learn, and a lot to accept. For me, I have to really look at myself in the mirror and constantly question my faith. Am I a person who can truly accept gays as brothers and sisters? I would have to say that it is a work in progress, but I am making progress.

Of all relationships, married life has got to be the most challenging yet most fruitful. It has made me realize a lot of things. I suppose it makes a lot of people realize a lot of things. For me, when I got married, I realized that I am not by myself. I have a partner in life, another half so to speak. People usually say "my better half" in reference to their spouse, either because it's true or because they're trying to make up for some problems they've been having. For me it's both. I always have to think before I make a decision, "Will my wife approve of this or not?" If she doesn't approve of it, oh boy, watch out, I am gonna catch hell! Married life can go to extremes: sometimes it's like heaven or sometimes it's like hell. Or take for example, just leaving the house to go somewhere. I once scolded my wife about taking so long to get ready. I said, "Why do you take so long to get ready to leave and make me wait for a long time in the car!" Now she's just as mad. She scolds back at me, "Why don't you help me close the windows, turn off the lights, check the stove, and lock the doors!" On the outside, I still argue and I say, "Just leave it, we're late." But I finally realized why she was so late. I said to myself, "No wonder she's late, she should do those things earlier!"

Or, how about those times when she's in her bad moods? Oh boy! Watch out! But hey! I get mad too. I say, "It's easy to get mad, anybody can get mad." And I start slamming the doors and cabinets. I tell her, "I can get mad too, but the most important thing is to stay calm and do the things we're supposed to do!" Then I punch the door. Later, one of my kids ask me, "Daddy, why is the door damaged?" I answer, "Oh, ah, we were moving the bed and the bed hit the door."

The first few years of any marriage is a time of major adjustments. I was the type of person who didn't like to talk too much, so that would irritate my wife. At meal time I used to finish quickly, get up and leave. I thought talking was a waste of time. That didn't sit too well with my wife and she wasn't too happy either. But later, I learned that women are generally emotional human beings while men tend to be more logical. So I decided to change my behavior

to start listening and talking more even if it meant feeling uncomfortable about not getting things done. Now I've come to enjoy our talks. Sometimes we talk so long, instead of me, now she gets up in the middle of our conversation and just leaves. So now, I am the one left hanging with no one to talk to!

Oh yes, the husband and wife relationship . . . I think we should have allotted more time for that in the sectional meetings.

In the Mikagura-uta IV:2 says:

Second, Settle the minds of the two of you in one accord!
Then any and everything shall be realized.

I believe it means that the minds of both husband and wife must be one with the will of God, then we can realize the Joyous Life world.

Also, Mikagura-uta XI:2 it says:

Second, Husband and wife working together in *binokishin*;
This is the first seed of everything.

Again, it means husband and wife working together as one, helping others in *binokishin*. This is the first seed to happiness and the joyous world.

How about our kids? As kids go to school they are exposed to many situations and environments. They may stray off the path of faith. They get into video games or may get involved with drugs and gangs. How can we keep our children safe from the negative elements of society? As parents, we often wonder how much should we “push” faith onto our children. But if we think in terms of “pushing” then it becomes a very difficult task. Why? Because no one wants to have religion “pushed” onto them. We as parents ourselves don't want religion pushed onto us.

For our family, I think the focus was “practicing the faith” and having our children join us in “practicing the faith” such as rising early, doing daily *binokishin* and weekly *binokishin*, performing the service and going to mission headquarters to participate in the Boys and Girls Association activities. If faith is central to your life, transmitting the faith then becomes a natural process.

Yes, we still have our arguments, but when the arguments get kind of loud, my favorite argument stopper comes from my daughter, Annabella. She tells

everybody in a loud and impatient voice: “Calm down!” I say, “But . . .” She goes, “Calm down!” As if she needed to calm down more than anybody else. That statement in a loud and angry voice is so contradictory. I cannot help but laugh because, if anybody needs to calm down, she is the one that needs to calm down!

Just yesterday, with some of you, I attended the section meeting on the Truth of Origin, and in skimming over the Truth of Origin I just realized an important attribute in our relationships. In the Truth of Origin, after gaining their consent, God used various instruments in the creation of human beings. So even in the Truth of Origin, there is a sort of willingness, a collaboration, and teamwork involved. God received them and, after consuming them to test the flavor of their minds, determined their natures.

Yesterday, in Ms. Louise Sasaki’s plenary address, she shared a wonderful story of how Satoko improved her relationship with her co-captain by willingly taking on a supportive role. In a sense, I believe that Satoko “consented” and allowed herself to be “consumed” by taking on the supportive role and this helped to galvanize team spirit and teamwork, enabling them to take the state championship. She advanced spiritually and found greater meaning in her life and thereby enhancing her life as well as others.

In the Truth of Origin, the instruments, such as the orc and the turtle, by consenting and allowing themselves to be consumed, were able to advance into higher forms of life and thus take part in the marvelous creation of human beings.

In the *Anecdotes of Oyasama*; Story no. 132 “To Be Eaten Deliciously:”

Nakata, Yamamoto, Takai and other people who worked at the Residence, went to catch small fish in a nearby brook from time to time. There they often caught loaches, chub, shrimps, and other brook fishes. When they cooked them in soy sauce with vegetables and showed them to Oyasama, She picked up the biggest one and said, as if She were talking to a child:

“Allow yourself to be eaten deliciously by everyone, and come back the next time, advanced.”

Then She told the people present there:

“Thus, When you persuade the largest one to consent in this way, it is natural that afterward all will consent.”

She further taught:

“Everyone, when you eat them, please say, ‘delicious, delicious,’ to them.

If you eat them with delight, due to the principle of giving joy, the next time they will be advanced. Each time they are reborn, they will progress closer to man.”

Oyasama gave these same instructions whenever there were rabbits, pheasants, mountain fowls, and other game given as offerings by various fraternities.

By this story, we can say that by allowing ourselves to be “consumed,” or in other words by being supportive in our relationships and by the principle of giving joy, we will advance in our spiritual maturity.

Further guidelines for our relationships can be found in many stories from the *Anecdotes of Oyasama*; Story no. 123 “Is Man the Object?”

Oyasama told Shirobei Umetani soon after he became a believer in the faith:

“Become a person with a gentle heart. Save other people. Change your habits and temperament.”

He was hot-tempered by nature.

Shirobei was working at the Residence, plastering the wall of Oyasama’s Resting House which was under construction in 1883. When he heard people maliciously gossiping that “the mason from Osaka, who cannot get work there, has had to come as far as Yamato for work,” he became very indignant. In the middle of the night, he quietly gathered his belongings and started to return to Osaka.

Walking on tiptoes, he was about to leave through the main gate when he heard Oyasama cough from her room in the Nakaminami Gatehouse. “Ah! Oyasama!” he thought; his feet stopped and his anger disappeared.

Next morning, while he was having breakfast with the rest of the people at the Residence, Oyasama appeared and said:

“Shirobei, is man the object? Or is God the object? Remember that God is the object.”

Story no. 137, “A Single Word”

Oyasama taught Isaburo Masui the following:

“Some are good within yet bad without, and there are also people with the opposite character. To be sure, anger, selfishness and irritability are inadvisable. A single word is important.

One achieves harmony in the family by the way one breathes in and out to form the very words one speaks.”

Further:

“Isaburo, you are gentle and sociable to everyone outside your house. When you are home and face your wife, you become angry and shout at her; that is the worst thing you could do. Never do it again.”

Masui suspected that his wife might have complained about him, but on considering that God knows and sees through everything, he simply decided he would never get angry again. Thereafter, he was never irritated by anything his wife said.

The next is story no. 156, “The End of a Relationship”

Saki Matsuda was born in Gojyono Village of Yamato Province. She had married once before but had divorced her husband, and later remarried at the age of twenty-three.

In 1883, at the age of thirty, she came to follow the path because of her convulsions. Sometime during the following year, a boil broke out on her right arm. The swelling had become so painful that she returned to the Residence and asked to be saved. She was received by Oyasama who said:

“The end of a relationship is the end of a life. You must not think of wanting to slip away.”

With these words, Saki resolved, “I will never slip away.” Then Oyasama breathed upon the boil three times. At that very moment, the pain in her right arm stopped and the swelling went down. Saki had been blessed with God’s marvelous providence.

Sometimes in life, we might think, “if only this person was a kinder person, it would make my life much easier,” or, “If only my boss didn’t pick on me, I would do a better job.” But nothing happens and we get discouraged and then eventually quit our job or cut our relationships or, in other words, we “slip away.” But we should question our faith. We should do what you call a “reality check” and ask ourselves, “Is this what my faith is about?” Our relationships with people, especially those that are seemingly negative, are really opportunities for self-reflection and spiritual growth. Allowing ourselves to be “consumed” like the loaches in the muddy ocean will enable us to propel ourselves toward higher levels of spiritual growth . . . spiritual growth that will bring greater meaning to our existence and lead us to the Joyous Life as brothers and sisters and instruments of God the Parent.

Human Sexuality and Scriptures: A Theoretical Perspective

Midori Horiuchi, Ph.D.

(Ms. Horiuchi is a professor of the Oyasato Institute for the Study of Religion at Tenri University)

Preface

According to the J. Williams' 50 Facts That Should Change the World, in more than seventy countries, same-sex relationships are illegal, and in nine countries, the penalty is death. The death penalty is the most extreme example of legally instituted prejudice against same-sex intercourse. Ms. Williams asks, "Why is sexuality criminalized in this way?" and reports as follows.

The countries that legislate against same-sex intercourse are a diverse group – they don't follow any common religion, and many of them would not be considered by most people to be particularly repressive states. It all seems to come down to the fact that some governments don't like people who go against the perceived norms of society. To an authoritarian and conservative regime, there is something threatening about someone who chooses to reject the 'traditional' path of heterosexuality, marriage and family.

A lesbian said, "It was helpless that I loved her and really wanted to live together, and it was a very natural feeling for me." Her saying that she is a lesbian comes naturally as though it is her persona and sounds as part of her nature.

Until today, a homosexual person was an object of dislike, discrimination, and considered abnormal. A homosexual person was stipulated as a "psychopath accompanied by a diseased sexual desire" by the American Psychiatric Association in 1952. Thus, homosexuality has been recognized as a sex perversion, that is, a sickness. It meant that homosexuality must be treated, and that a homosexual person should have to change one's abnormal sexuality.

Later, the APA disregarded the idea that homosexuality was a sickness, and WHO said, "Even in the slightest sense homosexuality cannot be considered an object of treatment." But homosexuality is still viewed as a sexual perversion,

that is, a sickness. Then, why does discrimination against homosexuality continue?

1. What is “sexuality”?

Human sexuality refers to the expression of sexual sensation and related intimacy between human beings, as well as the expression of identity through sex and as influenced by or based on sex. The sexuality of human beings comprises a broad range of behavior and processes, including the physiological, psychological, social, cultural, political, and spiritual or religious aspects of sex and human sexual behavior. Philosophy, particularly ethics and the study of morality, as well as theology, also address the subject. In most societies and legal jurisdictions, there are legal bounds on what sexual behavior is permitted. Sexuality varies across the cultures and regions of the world, and has continually changed throughout history.

“Sex” is a reality of living for all people living in this world, especially socially (in relating to the person), and is an acute issue because “sex” is one of the most fundamental concepts defining a human person, particularly in relation to basis of life. In this point of view, I think that “sex” can be said the root of “life.”

In Japan, sex is explained from various viewpoints today. The typical ones are the concepts of “sex,” “gender,” and “sexuality.”

“Sex” is a biological anatomy. The majority is formed at the embryo period, and, in general, becomes either man (XY) or woman (XX). One’s sex is determined by the external (body) feature at time of birth. On the other hand, “gender” is used to differentiate sexuality in terms of social and cultural difference. However, the distinctions between the two concepts have often been overlooked, and social regulations and structures have assumed male and female characteristics as intrinsically tied to biology, as a self-evident and unalterable feature; only recently has the concept of gender become more common to explain social and cultural particularities assigned to one’s sex. And, “sexuality” refers to the whole of all phenomena related to human’s character and conduct, and is called a character phenomenon. And, studies have shown that the perception of heterosexuality-as-norm, with gender as distinct from biological sexuality, was cultural and historical. (*Iwanami women’s studies dictionary*, pp.163-167, pp.293-296.)

“Homosexuality” under discussion here refers to the concept of “sexuality.”

It is thought that homosexuality is an unresolved problem, especially as a moral issue. That is, it is understood as a confrontation between a new sense of values and a traditional sense of values and homosexuality that has judged homosexuality to be immoral by the relation to morality.

At this juncture, “homosexuality” should be defined at the outset. For years the reality of a man’s sexuality had been talked about and explained from a biological paradigm. As can be seen in recent years various researchers have made it evident that homosexuality is a concept defined by cultural and social perspectives. In addition to this, gender identity and sexual orientation from the understanding of medical psychology clarifies the reality of various sexes, which further also gives a more rational explanation. In this manner, homosexuality is firstly an issue of sexual orientation, that is to say a sexual preference directed towards ones own sex. When mentioning “one’s own sex,” I imply a definition by gender not from a biological perspective. Instead, I propose to define homosexuality as sexual orientation and a feeling of love that is directed towards one’s own sex.

2. Sexuality and self-identity

As we see the above, in humans, “sex” is conventionally perceived as a dichotomous state or identity for most biological and social purposes, such that a person can only be female or male. However, when the criteria generally used to define femaleness and maleness is examined more closely, it becomes apparent that the assignment or determination of “sex” occurs at multiple levels. Environmental, biological, social, psychological and other factors are all believed to have some role in this process.

- Sex (biological levels), Gender (psychological levels), Gender identity→→
I am a girl/boy.

- Gender identity disorders→→Who I am?

- Sexuality (“female/male” social behavior, role, sexual orientation...)

“Primary” sexual characteristics are typically present at birth and directly involved in reproduction. “Secondary” sexual characteristics typically develop later in life (usually during puberty) and are not directly involved in reproduction.

Discordances between the biological and psychosocial levels, such as when

the gender identity does not match the anatomic sex, or between the various psychosocial levels.

Understanding of discordance is important. We can learn much about the processes of sexual differentiation, both biological and psychosocial, from people with biological discordances. In contrast to the small percentage of people with biological discordances of sex, a fairly large proportion of human beings may be “discordant” in one or more behavioral or psychological dimensions. The vast majority of these people who are discordant in some aspect of psyche or behavior do not have any detectable biological intersex condition, although some recent studies point towards biological factors in at least some of those conditions. Human societies respond to, or accommodate, these behavioral and psychological discordances in many different ways, ranging from suppression and denial of difference to acknowledging various forms of “third sex.”

In gender theory, the term “heteronormativity” refers to the idea that human beings fall into two distinct and complementary categories, male and female; that sexual and marital relations are normal only when between two people of different genders; and that each gender has certain natural roles in life.

Therefore, it is easy for people who do not enter the category of this dichotomy to be alienated by the society. However, “gender identity” is an important element of self-consciousness, and it is difficult without this to establish the self.

3. How shall we consider “homosexuality”?

Then what shall we as Tenrikyo followers do with these people who are homosexual? This is the very important and direct question for religious salvation, that is, what it is “to help others.”

Here I would like to consider this problem from four points of Tenrikyo teaching. There are the teachings of the truth of a thing lent, a thing borrowed, ten aspects of the complete providence, universal brotherhood, and husband and wife.

3:1 *Kashimono-karimono* (a thing lent, a thing borrowed) <body and mind>

In the scriptures, the truth of a thing lent, a thing borrowed is explained

many times. Here are some examples.

All human bodies are things lent by God.

Do you not know the free and unlimited workings of God?

Ofudesaki III:126

With human beings: the body is a thing lent by God, a thing borrowed.

The mind alone is yours.

Osashizu, June 1, 1889

With human beings: the body is a thing lent by God, a thing borrowed.

The mind alone is yours. From just one mind, any kind of truth will appear daily. I accept any kind of truth. You must understand the truth of free and unlimited workings.

Osashizu, December 7, 1888

Looking all over the world and through all ages,

I find no one who is evil.

Ofudesaki I:52

However many people may exist in this world, all are children of the same God. Their bodies are lent by God. Because God the Parent is, so to speak, a human parent who loves and takes care of, children are loved by God. All the minds are projected onto the body though all and are born and replaced many times over.

Osashizu, January, 1888

I bring you together according to the causality of your previous lives and protect you. This settles the matter for all time.

Ofudesaki I:74

God will lead us to Joyous Life regardless of the state in which we are born into this world. As seen in the preceding clause, the sexuality of “homosexuality” is not a physical sickness, but psychological characteristic that can be changed. Because a mind of our previous lives is projected onto

this borrowed body, each human is different. Moreover, it can be said that it is human to be different from one another. Humans are requested to have the mind to work through the body at the same time. Humans are asked to approach God's desire. This can be called "maturing" or "spiritually developing." However, it is easy for sexuality to be criticized as the "unnatural one" when it doesn't correspond to the genital and when not in a sexual relation with the opposite sex, and thus denied accordingly.

Therefore, we should not criticize "homosexuality," especially as an object of morality. Rather, we should think over God's love in the state of "homosexuality," because God says "Looking all over the world and through all ages, I find no one who is evil," and that "I bring you together according to the causality of your previous lives and protect you."

In the Ofudesaki, the term *innen*, "causality" is mostly used in reference to "the causality of origin." *The Doctrine of Tenrikyo* (p. 55), which also stresses "our original cause" that leads us to the goal of God's plan, the Joyous Life, goes on to explain causality in terms of a strict cause-effect relationship. We can understand our personal causality through our body and its surroundings including its condition and situation. This is the first way to know God's will. The teaching of causality is not to be interpreted as a tool to cast blame. It is taught out of deep parental love.

3:2 *Juzen no shugo* (ten aspects of the complete providence)

God the Parent thought of creating human beings in order to see the Joyous Life and thus share in that joy. In the story of the beginnings of origin, God the Parent drew forth the necessary instruments for creating humankind. God gave the sacred names to the divine principles of these instruments (and models). These names relate to five male-divine and five-female-divine names, and are explained.

These symbolic instruments were used in the endeavor to create humankind. Their creative power did not cease at a particular time and place, but is still working in the present here and now. Ten aspects of the complete providence of the God are always working in our body. Therefore, when we know the truth of "body and mind," we are able to purify our minds to live the Joyous Life. The purified mind is said to enable humankind to lead to the Joyous Life. That is why we have both characteristics of male and female in us.

It is most important to emphasize the Story of Origin in order to save people.

3:3 *Ichirestu-kyodai* (universal brotherhood)

The Ofudesaki teaches:

To God, who began this world,
All of you in the world are equally My beloved children.

Ofudesaki IV:62

To Tsukihi, everyone is My child, whoever you may be.
Though I have been watching over you with nothing but love,

Ofudesaki XII:88

To Tsukihi, all of you in the world are My children.
Love for you fills Me: this is My single heart.

Ofudesaki XVII:16

It is very clear that we in the world are equally God's beloved children. The question is how we feel, accept, and realize this teaching. In case your brother or sister would reveal himself/herself as homosexual, would you reject or accept him/her?

3:4 *Fufu* (husband and wife)

As the Mikagura-uta says the relationship between husband and wife is the first and basic human relationship. This is understood as a typical manifestation of the teaching of *futatsu-bitotsu*, or one in two, two in one. In the Tenrikyo doctrine, the relationship of two opposing things is elucidated: that they are entitled to exist by mutually complementing each other and by helping each other to exist. Also this is used in order to explain the divine workings. In this case, it can be recognized as a power of reproduction. This is the foremost significance for a couple. The couple becomes the link that begets life after life. God emphasizes raising a child, too. As bearing a child is under the grace of God, it is more important for couples to raise a child properly. In the *Seibun-in* the following words are conveyed as Oyasama's teaching in regard

to raising a stepson.

Suppose the heart of parents whose dear beloved child is passing away, compare the mind of them with yours, and guess. How sad it is! The stepchild should be brought up cherishing all the more. (*Seibun-ün-sho*, p. 146)

And in the *Osashizu*:

Parents bring up the child every day. This is the truth of Parents.

Osashizu, May 7, 1889

Parents are origins. If you are parents, it is necessary to bring up the child in feelings of loveliness. The child (To health) grows up even what situation it is when the child is brought up with loveliness.

Osashizu, November 28, 1889

It is parents' missions to satisfy the child. It is parents' roles to bring up the child whatever any situation is. Parents must not get angry at the child when you bring up the child.

Osashizu, November 13, 1898

Thus, to help each other, to bear a child, and to bring up a child are taught as the role of parents, or the husband and wife. The question here is whether homosexual persons can become couples in the same manner as the husband and wife. They may be able to help each other and bring up children according to the teachings. In these days, many painful incidents between real parents and children have happened; for example, a parent killed a son or a daughter, or vice versa. So in my opinion, it is much better for a child to be brought up by those with love and responsibility. But a couple of "husband-wife" is always consisted of a male and a female.

Another question is marriage. As stated before, marriage itself is a very social and legal issue. It is necessary to take view of homosexual marriage as human rights also, because marriage concerns human rights issues. The dilemma is caused here.

Perhaps most important of all, though, we need to recognize that expression of our sexuality is one of the most fundamental of human rights. And like all other human rights, it should stand apart from the law, as something that needs

to be protected above all eyes. At least, we should not promote a marriage for which the person in question has no hope.

4. Conclusion

Homosexuality is found in all spheres of the culture and the race groups regardless of time and region. Like in Japan and ancient Greece and the Middle Ages within the limit of constancy, homosexuality was allotted. There are cultures that regard homosexuality absolutely as a crime, like Christianity and Islam, etc. In the modern state, the law succeeded a religious dislike to homosexuality, and a homosexual person had received severe punishment including capital punishment.

In Japan it is due time that people of “gender identity disorder” become mentioned in the open little by little, because “gender identity disorder” is recognized as a sickness to be cured by adapting body to mind. Generally speaking, Japanese must know about sexuality and “sex” in general.

In the world of religions, some accept homosexuality, but they reject same-sex marriage; or some try to change their sexuality to the normal; or some accept them but they think that a homosexual person must control his/her sexual orientation and desire; or some say that a sexual orientation of homosexuality can be understood but its practice must be prohibited.

According to the teachings of Oyasama, we all have possibility to realize to live the Joyous Life, therefore, we must consider ways for all to be saved, remembering her teaching in the Osashizu:

When a certain person has received something, people blame it because they assume that it is dust. It is very miserable.

Osashizu, October 9, 1889

Examining Our Path: Human Sexuality

Takahiko Hayashi

(Rev. Hayashi is the head minister at Tenrikyo America West Church in San Francisco, USA.)

In the course of my preparation for this presentation, I came across one helpful story in one of the many literature on this topic of sexuality and faith. This story was about a politician running for a seat in the senate. There was a controversial bill that was being debated at the time, and he was asked for his position on this issue. He replied, “Some of my friends are for it, and some of my friends are against it.” Then, he added, “but I want you to know that I am for my friends.” And apparently, he won the election in a landslide.

This can be a very familiar story about what we cynically think of politicians, as sitting on the fence and taking both sides as it suits them. And I’m sure that everyone here has one or two politicians in mind just about now. But, there is another way to think of this story—a more charitable reading—and that is, the politician was more concerned about people rather than principle, that he was more concerned about relationships that he built with people—real people—that he knew and lived with rather than for taking one side of an argument and sticking with it.¹

And I think that it is worth keeping this story in mind when we approach such a controversial issue such as human sexuality, and particularly, gay and lesbian sexuality, precisely because it is an issue about real people. It’s an issue about real people that we may know. It’s an issue about real people that we may come across some day, where we may offer our teachings as a way for them to grow spiritually, or, they may be the ones to help us grow spiritually as well. I don’t think we should lose sight of the fact that this is an issue dealing with people who are very much like every person in this room, capable of feeling joy and happiness as well as sadness and pain.

To take a quote from this little story, the topic of this section is indeed about “our friends” and how we intend to share our faith with them.

1 Thomas W. Gillespie, “The Pastoral Dilemma,” *Homosexuality and Christian Community* edited by Choon-Leong Seow (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), p. 113.

I wanted to begin my presentation by focusing on the personal element of this topic because this point was particularly reinforced within myself as I exchanged e-mails with two Yoboku who are gay and lesbian. One person's response was to note how "thrilled and delighted" this person was to hear that this topic was being taken up here at the Forum. The other person was a little bit more hesitant, expressing some anxiety that I was perhaps "opening a can of worms," that this discussion would only seek to expose people's private lives—their private lives, by the way, not mine or yours—and hold it up for judgment. There were times in the course of my preparation for this presentation that I also felt a little bit of anxiety, that our little discussion today, intended really to open space for further discussion, would lead rather to a premature closure of the discussion, at some level.

Despite these concerns, I felt that it was important to hold this discussion today at the Forum, and the reasons are twofold. First, for those of us living in America, this is a very ubiquitous issue. Same-sex marriage is an issue that we hear about quite often, and many religious leaders are taking a stance to promote what they believe is the authentic response to this issue. Naturally, the question then arises, "What is Tenrikyo's stance?" I remember when I was teaching a class at the Spiritual Development Course at the Mission Headquarters in Los Angeles, this same question was asked. I gave my response, but I do think that we can learn from each other in ways to approach this issue.

Secondly, the same-sex marriage issue is generating so much controversy not only because it is situated in the "Culture War" that is taking place in American politics today, but also because sexuality is a very important part of how we identify ourselves today in the twenty-first century.² I think that the passion that is brought to bear on this issue arises because in talking about sexuality, we are talking about fundamental questions of who we are. What is normal for being a human being? What does it mean to be human in relation to other human beings, and to be authentically faithful to God's teachings?³ And to the extent that Oyasama's teachings are intended to help us grow spiritually as a human being, we then need to examine the intersection between this issue and the teachings of our Path.

2 Jack Rogers, "Sex, Philosophy, and Politics," *Homosexuality in the Church: Both Sides of the Debate* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), pp. 161-2.

3 Ibid. 162.

Parameters

Now, having argued for a general premise to guide our discussion as well as for the reason why we should have this discussion in the first place, I want to add couple more parameters for our discussion today, with the hope that these parameters will help us focus on the central issues of today's theme.

I have already outlined some of these parameters in my summary listed in the Forum Program, so I will simply note them.

First, I want to emphasize that we need to keep in mind that we are all first and foremost Tenrikyo. That is, we are the instruments of Oyasama, of God the Parent, who created world and human beings in order to see human beings live a Joyous Life and thus share in it. Thus, our discussion should proceed with these grand aims in mind and never steer away from it.

Second, I want to emphasize that this is a Tenrikyo discussion about this issue. I make this point because there are a lot of issues in regard to human sexuality, and I'm sure a discussion on the Federal Marriage Amendment or on Governor Arnold's ambivalent position taken last September between same-sex marriage and domestic partnership would be quite interesting. Or, does same-sex marriage indeed threaten the sanctity of marriage, or is stability in married life more threatened by lack of affordable childcare? But, for practical purposes, we only have two hours, and thus, I would like to place the focus of our discussion on human sexuality in the context of Oyasama's teachings and practice.

Third, I note the complexity of this issue and the difficulty of reaching a conclusion after a mere two hours. My goals for these two hours are, first, to share our views on this issue, and second, to listen to views of others. My hope is that you will walk away from this discussion with an enriched understanding of the complexity of this issue. On the other hand, I don't envision a conclusion to be determined today. I want to ask you all to pay respect to the divergent views that people do have, and not insist on an answer to be settled through these discussions. And of course, our panel today is comprised to three individuals sharing their opinions, nothing more and nothing less, on this issue, and is not intended to represent or direct those of the church as a whole.

Finally, I want to add one more parameter that I don't mention in the summary, and that is, in talking about gay and lesbian sexuality, I want to focus our discussion on gay and lesbian sexuality in a context of a monogamous,

mutually nurturing relationship. That is to say, we are not here to talk about abuses of homosexuality; for example, promiscuity, lust, and so on. I make this point because I think that any discussion of abuses of homosexuality would equally apply to abuses of heterosexuality.⁴ On the other hand, if you consider homosexuality itself as an abuse of sexuality, that is an opinion that we will consider within the scope of our discussion today.

What is Our Vocabulary?

Now, as I noted that this discussion will be a Tenrikyo discussion, I think that we need to confirm the kind of vocabulary that we would use, as Tenrikyo, to discuss this issue. In the American media, we often hear the debate shaped by phrases such as “homosexuality as sin.” The term, sin, would in turn, lead to terms such as Judgment, Heaven, and Hell. These are, of course, terms drawn from the Christian scriptures, but I also feel that there are more phrases, such as “belonging to Christ,” or “ordination,” where clear boundaries are drawn between those within and without.

In Tenrikyo, our vocabulary is different, and I think that we need to keep in mind the implications in the difference in vocabulary. The key words that we use are dust, Joyous Life, Spiritual Maturity, use of mind, causality, and *tanno*.⁵ I want to ask you to think about what the implications are, when we use such vocabulary. Briefly, I would argue that the kind of clear boundaries drawn through the use of Christian terms don't apply in the language used by Oyasama.

4 For example, I will consider any discussion arguing HIV as a consequence of gay and lesbian sexuality as an irrelevant and poorly-informed stereotype for the purposes of our discussion today.

5 For example, we use the word “dust” instead of “sin.” If we were to take the position that homosexuality is wrong, what would be the implication in saying that it is a “dust” instead of a “sin”? I'm going to leave that question on the table for anybody who wishes to take that position. More importantly, we don't believe in a Heaven or Hell as the final resting place of our soul. Rather, we are taught that God created this world—and none other—as a place to realize Joyous Life. Thus, we can experience this world in light of God's desire for Joyous Life, or we can experience this world in darkness of our own making, where our self-centered use of mind has accumulated dust in our mind to the point where we cannot see God's desire for us. Spiritual maturity becomes a key word for us, and not so much Judgment, a term that emphasizes a finality; that is, once again, a clear line. I think that for us, our life is a journey that we set upon together with those around us, in hopes to realize Joyous Life here and now, through aspiring to achieve spiritual maturity at each step of our journey.

Three Areas of Reflection

I think that this topic should be raised in three interrelated contexts: first, in the context of our teachings; second, in the context of the church; and third, in the context of our and the church's responsibility in society as a whole.

Tenrikyo teachings

In regard to the teachings, I think that we would look first and foremost in the model presented to us in the Truth of Origin and, in brief manner, in the second part of the Seated Service, which reads as follows:

Representing heaven and earth
I have created husband and wife.
This is the beginning of the world.

We are taught that husband and wife represent something greater than the sum of two human beings. They are the foundation of the world, of society, of the human race.

Further, the Truth of Origin is a story of the creation and re-creation of human beings by the providence of God the Parent, who created the prototypes of husband and wife and the divine instruments of man and of woman to carry out this creation. Thus, precisely for such reason, husband and wife form the foundational relationship of all human beings.

The implication is that, first, the model of husband and wife found in the Truth of Origin clearly refers to a man and a woman. And second, sexuality is a gift from God, taught to human beings primarily for the purpose of procreation.

And if that is the end of the story, I think the answer is simple; that is, homosexuality employs the sexual organs in the manner not intended by God the Parent.

I think there are some who would argue that this statement is all we need to talk about in regard to this issue. Our moral concern, therefore, should be to employ our bodies in a manner consistent with God's intentions for them. We should not let our moral standards be compromised by a concern to be inclusive.

And yet, when the word "inclusive" is put on a table, another verse that is

also critically important comes to my mind.

All of you throughout the world are brothers and sisters.
There should be no one called an outsider.
Ofudesaki XIII:43

No one is to be called an outsider. No one. Clearly stated, in our faith, we draw no lines separating us from them. That is, there is no one outside the blessings of God the Parent. There is no one outside the creative providence of God the Parent. Furthermore, God teaches, “Sixth, Do not unreasonably stop anyone. I welcome any and everyone who is willing” (Mikagura-uta VII:2). The key criteria that God provides in terms of those who wish to follow God is the desire that one has to do so. Our willingness to follow is the key criteria. I think that it is also important to note that this verse is directed not at the person whose status is in question; rather, the verse is directed at those who may be in a position to stop others from coming to God.

Here, at this juncture, we may once again stop our inquiry, for our conclusion then can be to say that gay and lesbian sexualities do not conform to God’s intentions for the use of the body, but God’s message of inclusiveness implies that they too have a place within our church and within God’s designs for a Joyous Life.

I was first tempted to stop at this point of inquiry. It is a very comfortable place to stop, because this position really doesn’t challenge us in any way; that is, it doesn’t challenge us to think thoroughly about what it means to apply our teachings in our daily life when things don’t quite fit the model as it should.

And sexuality would not be the only case when such lack of perfect fit exists. I would actually dare say that it happens in many other cases as well.⁶

The other reason that perhaps we should not stop here is because the claim, that gay and lesbian sexualities don’t conform to the model but they can still join us, seems to place them in a peripheral place in the church. Are we truly engaging in a dialogue with “our friends” by concluding in such manner?

At this point, I began to think about what it means to apply the scriptures

⁶ If gay and lesbian sexuality do not conform to the model, what is the nature of the gap between the model and this departure from the norm under question? Would it closer to somebody who is left-handed? Abnormally tall? Sterile? Or, should the deviation be categorized as something more in defiance with the model?

in our daily life; that is, I think we need to stop and think about how we are to read our scriptures and apply it to our lives. More specifically, how are we to take our scriptures as a guide to lead our lives?

Whenever I have the opportunity to teach the Doctrines or the Mikagura-uta, I ask the students to never use these books as a weapon. By that, I don't mean just the idea of throwing the book at people that we don't like. Rather, I am talking about refraining from using the teachings as a tool to criticize other people. I ask them, instead, to settle the truth of what they find in the scriptures and apply it in their own lives. If they encounter someone that does not abide by what they find in the scriptures, the first thing that I ask is to think of these people as a mirror, as an opportunity for us to grow spiritually.

That is to say, generally speaking, there are two ways to use our sacred books. The first is what I will call the "checklist" approach. The scriptures are juxtaposed against what we find in our lives, and we look for things that match the teachings and things that don't match the teachings. I think that this approach is valid, to the extent that it allows us to see where our teachings stand in times of confusion. It helps us when the issue becomes too muddled and we require clarification as to which path to take.

But, if we limit ourselves to the checklist approach, sometimes, our use of it begins to go in an unintended direction. The words that we use—the vocabulary through which we understand the world around us—become polarized. That is, everything becomes black or white. This is a likely consequence, because we place the scriptures on one hand and our view of the world on the other, and compare how the two don't match. And thus, the consequence is a polarized language in which we describe the world around us as "in accord with scripture" and "not in accord with scripture." And sometimes, in the course of this approach, everything becomes us against them.

The "settle-in-the-mind and put-it-into-practice" approach helps to alleviate this situation. In this approach, the scriptures are not used to judge the world around us; rather, the scriptures are meant for us to "ponder from our innermost heart" (paraphrase Mikagura-uta VIII:6) and put into practice even if our minds are only "somewhat purified" (Mikagura-uta VIII:7).⁷ And if we

⁷ I make these two references to Song VIII of the Mikagura-uta based on my interpretation of this song, which I believe is a song about God helping us move forward spiritually although we may lack a complete understanding of God's teachings.

The song begins by God asking if there are any stones or standing trees - symbols for

do so, then, I do believe that we can come closer to a world of Joyous Life by the very fact of our acting in the world. Oyasama will walk with us and see to it that our action will allow us to grow spiritually.⁸

By arguing for this approach, I don't mean to leave you in a cloud as to what stance we should take in regard to the issue of gay and lesbian sexuality. Rather, I just wanted to highlight the fact that our teachings were meant to be put into practice. If there is ambivalence in your thinking, then, read the scriptures, ponder over them, and then, put them into practice. The central point in the Truth of Origin, I will argue, is about God's desire for us to live a Joyous Life, and Oyasama will certainly lead us towards that goal, in whatever form as necessary and appropriate, if we take action towards those goals.

And on that note, I turn to the second context in which we should address this issue, and that is in the context of the church, as a place where we seek to put Oyasama's teaching into practice.

Church as a Nurturing Place

We are taught that "the church is a place where the truth of single-heartedness with God is conveyed and where single-hearted salvation is practiced"; the church is to be a "model for the Joyous Life by bringing peace the materials for the construction of a world of Joyous Life. God then tells us that God will not ask anyone for assistance and that God will carry out this construction, and yet, this construction will be carried out in the hands of the people of the world. God then reminds us neither to "hesitate" nor to "hasten"; rather, the important thing is to ponder from our innermost heart. And yet, God tells us to put our thoughts into practice—that is, to "begin the construction at once"—even before our mind has only been "somewhat" purified; we don't need to wait until a thorough purification. Once we begin to put God's teachings into practice, God then informs us that God has already determined where the stones and standing trees are, and that God will prepare them accordingly; that is, through our initial efforts to answer God's calling by engaging in the construction, God will move us forward. Finally, we are told that, as consequences of our participation in the construction (that is, putting God's teaching into practice) and of God preparing and placing us accordingly, the "hearts of all equally have become completely purified."

We may not fully understand how Joyous Life is to be achieved, but if we ponder from our innermost heart and seek to implement what little we can grasp, God will carry us through to the end.

Song VIII is, thus, God's way of encouraging us to act.

8 To say a little more about the "settle-in-the-mind and put-it-into-practice" approach: I believe that through pondering on the teachings, we are able to internalize, not so much as blueprints or categorical understanding of the teachings, but a sensibility for what is Joyous Life. The second step is to then practice these sensibilities upon the world in which we live; that is, we seek to project the goodness of the teachings into the world through our daily conduct.

and harmony into the community by promoting spiritual growth among the people through mutual help.”⁹

I believe the key word here is “mutual help” because spiritual growth or Joyous Life cannot happen as an individual act. I think that one of the cornerstones of our teachings is that Joyous Life is to be realized with others, together with others, in our concern and care for others.¹⁰

Keeping in mind this very basic premise of what the church is for, I want to think about how we should address this issue within the context of the church.

I think that one thing that we are often told at the church is that we don’t get to choose who our fellow faithful will be. I’m sure everybody has an episode or two where, at the Spiritual Development Course or at the Oyasato Seminar, we had to room with somebody that disagrees with our sensibilities. In such case, we are told that nothing is a coincidence and that God brought us together so that both of us could reflect upon minds and grow together. Everything—both positive and negative experiences that we have at our church—is intended by God for our spiritual growth, and if spiritual growth is to take place in the context of the bonds that we make and share with others, then, the fact—the reality—that we share our church with people who are gay and lesbian would imply, in my strongest conviction, that those people were meant to be there, and that those people were meant to be there for the sake of our mutual spiritual growth. And the truth is, we have already been blessed in such manner.

I had an opportunity to interview two such people—both Yoboku—through e-mail in preparation for this presentation. One question that I posed to them was whether they had any kind of negative experience due to their sexuality. I’m delighted to report that they had none whatsoever, that they consider their Tenrikyo community to be their family, and they find their relationship with the community to be an enriching one that they would “absolutely” recommend to others.

9 The Doctrine of Tenrikyo, Chapter 9. The full quote is as follows: “The church is a place where the truth of single-heartedness with God is conveyed and where single-hearted salvation is practiced. In order to enhance the functioning of the church, it is necessary for the members who assemble there to be in accord with the truth of the Jiba and, with the head minister as the center, to be unified in mind. Then the church will become a model for the Joyous Life, bringing peace and harmony into the community by promoting spiritual growth among the people through mutual help.”

10 “Ponder from your innermost heart to understand. Through saving others, you will be saved.” Ofudesaki III:47.

One person wrote back with a list of things on what this person finds so attractive about Tenrikyo:

Tenrikyo is relevant to me in that it satisfies my deepest spiritual longings and I feel very close to others and to the universal order of life/God.

1) I love that a simple housewife (through divine inspiration) started this religion without anyone agreeing with her at first.

2) I love that the lay people who knew Oyasama had to carry out and develop the religion. They were simple people.

3) I love that I belong to a Spiritual family and have a branch of the church that I am accountable to and who look after me.

4) I love the simple intention of Tenrikyo, which is to be joyful and to spread the teachings.

5) I love that there are not a lot of hard and fast rules to its practice. They are suggestions.

6) I love that we dance, play instruments and sing in unison as a spiritual practice.

7) I love the carrying down of very old folk traditions mingled with modern ones.

8) I love that I can start my own church through Tenrikyo.

9) I love that our church all eat together and face one another and “play” together and go over the important issues of life together.

10) I love the principal of *binokishin*. That it is done unselfishly for no expected return. I love how when we get together we do housekeeping duties. I feel a part of the bigger whole when I contribute like this.

11) The music itself is beautiful and we make it ourselves and that young and old join in together.

12) I love that we all travel to Jiba. We all get to see one another from all parts of the globe. I feel very much a part of a global village there.

13) I love that we pray to Oyasama and to the Elders.

14) I love that Tenrikyo is a gentle religion that is all inclusive of other religions.

15) I love that we sit on the floor of the tatami mats.

16) I love visiting Jiba. The sights, smells, sensations and how people are unforgettable and so special.

17) I love the Sazuke and how we go into hospitals and be with people who need us.

When I read this list, I wondered to myself whether I could truly say that I “love” Tenrikyo with equal passion as this person.

I do believe that a church is a place to share the passion for our faith, and to such extent, I believe that this person sets a wonderful example.

And I do believe that if we open our minds to allow ourselves to learn from the passion of such people—and we certainly should—then, theirs is not a peripheral place in the church; rather they become, just like any other person, an important and cherished partner in the journey for spiritual maturity.

The question still remains as to where this spiritual growth is to go. The model of husband and wife is a model for Joyous Life. How are we to encourage spiritual growth if some cannot adhere strictly to the model? Are we to insist that they do? Or, are there other aspects of that model that they could certainly implement in their lives?¹¹

These are questions that I will place on the table for later discussion.

Church’s Responsibility in Society

The third context in which we need to discuss this issue is the context of the church’s responsibility within society as a whole. If our mission is to bring Oyasama’s message to a larger group of people, this is a responsibility that we cannot avoid.

Questions arise; for example, how shall we respond to calls for civil unions and domestic partnership, or even same-sex marriage? These are real issues, and difficult ones, and for such reason, I will defer to Rev. Bobby Kokuryo to address these issues.

In regard to holding a ceremony for same-sex marriage, in the context of the church, I think the key element is not about one’s rights to hold such ceremony, but rather about responsibility and obligation that one embraces

¹¹ In a discussion with a gay person, I was told that this person certainly recognized that the central model of husband and wife was a man and woman. Yet, this person also deeply appreciated the way in which the model emphasized the element of “oneness in two” that defined the relationship between husband and wife. The centrality of relationship as a mutually-reinforcing dichotomy was something that this person felt was important in all human relationships and something that this person sought to implement in this person’s own life as a key teaching of Tenrikyo.

in the ceremony itself. Through the wedding ceremony, one is making a commitment and taking a vow to shoulder the responsibility that comes with making a bond—a very unique bond—that will last a lifetime.

The not-very-nice way of saying the same thing is that marriage does have an element of “ball-and-chains.”

And if two people are willing to make such a commitment for each other, I think that’s a cause for celebration.

There is one other, rather modest contribution that we, as followers of Oyasama, can make towards this current global debate on human sexuality. If anything, this debate is marked by controversy, by rhetoric characterized as vicious and unforgiving. According to the language that we hear in the American media, on one hand, we have the bigots and the homophobias, and on the other hand, we have Satan’s henchmen and the terminator of tradition.

Our greatest asset is our teachings and the willingness of everyone in this room to put it into practice. In regard to the debate on human sexuality, our contribution can also be measured by how we engage in this dialogue.

Thus, I really hope that addressing this issue—a topic that is very current in our lives here in America—will become a sharing and uniting experience, rather than a dividing one. I don’t think that we need to agree about everything that others may say. But, this experience can be a truly enriching accomplishment if we can show to the world—if we can set an example to the world—that we can come together and talk about issues such as this and walk away a better Yoboku.

The Question of Tenrikyo Same: Sex Wedding Ceremony

Robert Kokuryo

(Rev. Kokuryo is the head minister of Tenrikyo Granville Church in Vancouver, Canada)

Hello everyone. It's certainly wonderful to see all of you here today. My name is Robert Kokuryo, everyone calls me Bobby and I am the head minister of Granville Church in Vancouver, Canada. I am a third generation Japanese Canadian, born and raised for most of my life in Canada. I am married with three children and our family's history with the faith started with my father.

In this section's topic regarding "Human Sexuality," the subject of my presentation is titled, "The Question of Tenrikyo Same-Sex Wedding Ceremony."

The subject matters related to this topic are very broad and I am by no means an expert on human sexuality or the subject of same sex marriages. Nor am I speaking on behalf of the rest of our faith or even the other presenters for that matter. This presentation reflects my personal opinion and I hope we can all share our thoughts and perspectives to further our understanding of our teachings and the world around us. I don't think any of us are hoping for a consensus, but rather an honest effort into exploring this subject matter. I will be talking about the movements of other faiths, but as Tak mentioned in his article for *Voices*, the wonderful publication for young adults, I think what needs to be underlined for everyone is to keep in mind the practice of looking at the subject matter within the context of our faith. Even then, I assume the majority of us will be talking from the perspective of peoples in an English speaking country. Perhaps others, from non-English speaking countries may have a very different view of this subject. Regardless of our own thoughts, I would really like all of us to be able to come away from this Forum with a renewed desire to further our understanding and our implementation of the teachings.

First of all, let me give you some general information regarding wedding ceremonies in Canada where same sex couples are officially recognized as being able to be legally wed. Marriage ceremonies are registered, performed

as a provincial (or a state function for you Americans) in Canada. There are still some provinces in Canada that do not allow for same sex marriages to be conducted in their own province. The province I live in, British Columbia, was one of the first in Canada to allow same sex marriages, even before the federal Canadian government recognized it. The people who can conduct/solemnize marriages can be divided into two general groups. Those who are with religious organizations and those who have civil authority (non-religious) to conduct wedding ceremonies. Both groups need to register and be officially recognized as a person who is allowed legally to perform such ceremonies. The Canadian and provincial governments have said that if those affiliated with religious organizations do not want to perform same sex marriages, they do not have to.

As I mentioned in my summary, my involvement with this section began when I spoke, hypothetically, about a potential dilemma, at least for me anyway, if I were to be asked to perform a same sex marriage for a Yoboku, who has been affiliated with our faith for quite some time. As far as a typical marriage or wedding ceremony between a man and woman is concerned, I think it is pretty much left up to the head minister of each church to whether or not to officiate the ceremony. For me, I will officiate a ceremony if at least one of the parties involved is affiliated with the faith or has been inspired by witnessing a prior wedding and has requested that their wedding be conducted by me, a Tenrikyo minister. If the parties are unfamiliar with the teachings, I will typically have the parties visit our church or at the very least, I sit down with them to explain the concepts of our faith. I am sure other ministers have experienced being told by observers how wonderful the Tenrikyo wedding ceremonies are and I have married a few couples who were not involved with the Path but were inspired enough to formally request a Tenrikyo wedding ceremony. I have turned down a request for a wedding ceremony because the parties involved seemed to be just interested in someone who could speak English and Japanese and the fact that I did not charge a fee. They were given my name by a company that organizes weddings in Canada and they were not too interested in the basis of the ceremony, meaning the teachings, so I found and introduced them to a couple of bilingual marriage officiants who would be able to conduct a civil service. Getting back to my hypothetical dilemma of being asked to officiate a same sex wedding ceremony for people affiliated with the faith, as a

sanctioned head minister of a church, could I, in good conscience, read prayers and have the couple exchange vows in front of Oyasama when it would not be 'allowed' here at the Jiba in front of Oyasama at Her sanctuary?

Typically, to hold a wedding ceremony at the Foundress's Sanctuary, any person affiliated with the path can apply by filling out an application form and if the date and time is open, you can have your wedding ceremony conducted right in front of Oyasama. It may be the only time you and your spouse would be allowed to enter the (I'm not sure of the terminology) upper dais in front of Oyasama's Shrine. You would need to include in your application who would officiate and assist at the ceremony and the actual ceremony itself is completed by performing the seated service at the main sanctuary. The officiant and the assistant would play the wooden clappers and counter and you would be allowed to sit inside the barriers right behind them.

The ceremony is open to all people in our faith, yet if I were to ask to hold my same sex wedding ceremony there, I would not be allowed. How do I know I would not be allowed? I asked them. There is an office at the Church Headquarters dormitory, the 'honbu tsumesho' which handles the scheduling, etc. of marriage ceremonies at the Foundress's sanctuary. I visited them and asked if there ever has been a request to hold a same sex wedding ceremony here. They said no, but were aware of the recent movements in other religions and countries regarding same sex marriages. I then asked them if a party came to request a same sex wedding ceremony, would they be allowed to hold one. They said that they would not be able to answer right away, and that they would have to consult, I guess, the policy making/interpretation section of Church Headquarters. But, they 'assured' me that it would not be allowed because our teachings are clear in regards to defining husband and wife.

My concern is this: I received permission through Church Headquarters to fulfill a calling as a head minister of a Tenrikyo church. I am a registered minister of the Tenrikyo church, thus I was able to acquire a license to legally perform marriages in my province. I could physically solemnize the ceremony, but I feel it would be more of a "covert" operation.

I could do what ministers or congregations of other faiths do, which is to perform same sex marriages regardless of what the official stance of their faith is. The Canadian government would approve, since I am legally able to marry couples in our province. There are even specific instructions in our provincial

marriage forms when stating the name of the “groom” and “bride” if the couple is of the same sex.

In the past two years, there have been close to 4,000 same sex marriages registered in the province of British Columbia, the province I live in, with non-Canadians making up more than 50% of them. Of these non-Canadians, Americans by far make up the majority of those who were married to the same sex. In fact, there is a Vancouver based Canadian Tourism Commission, which has put out a nice glossy ad in the gay American travel magazine promoting tours and the benefit of being able to get married in B.C. I’m not sure about the other provinces in Canada, but in the state of Massachusetts in the United States, where same sex marriages are allowed, there have been over 8,100 couples married in the last two years.

Regarding other faiths and how they stand in regards to same sex marriages, in Canada, there are only a few churches that officially endorse same sex marriages. The United Church (the biggest Protestant group) in Canada would probably be the largest organization. But it’s interesting that even though it is an official policy of their organization, they leave it up to the respective congregations and ministers to decide whether to marry gay or lesbian couples. As well, even though the Canadian diocese United Church has declared solemnizing same sex marriage as okay, some of their affiliates in other parts of the world have a very opposite view.

On what could be considered the opposite end of the spectrum, the Roman Catholic Church is very clear on its policy of same sex marriages, an emphatic “no.”

Generally speaking, as a whole, most of the religious organizations in Canada have as an official church policy, one where they share a similar understanding of marriage as a union of man and woman forming a community of life for the children born of this bond. But there are movements, groups within these religious organizations including Catholics, Protestants, Anglicans, Jews, Buddhists, etc., that certainly promote, encourage and in some cases, perform same sex marriages.

Many, maybe most of the faith traditions have rejected the view of marriage extending to same sex couples as it is incompatible with their understanding of the fundamental nature of marriage. They affirm the “union of man and woman” doctrine of marriage. Currently, I think that our faith, as a whole,

regards marriage as the union of man and woman only.

The Buddhist Churches of Canada are currently in debate about this very subject, but a Buddhist minister stated that a fellow minister had performed a same sex marriage ceremony and he stated, “The reason I have not performed a same sex marriage is only that I have never been asked to do one.” Then, there are those faith traditions that have agreed to undergo more discussion and dialogue such as the Anglican Church in Canada.

In the Canadian Armed Forces, they have specific guidelines for their chaplains to treat everyone with respect and dignity. It is up to the chaplain to act as their faith and conscience dictates and in communion with their denomination. If they are requested to bless a same sex marriage, they are to be concise about their position and if they cannot oblige, they are to refer the couple to someone, either another chaplain or a civil minister who can fulfill the request.

I will not go into the theological aspects of human sexuality here because I am sure Professor Horiuchi will be delving into that subject (though, at the time of this writing, I do not know what she will be talking about).

In line with this topic, though off the subject; in Canada, as we begin to deal with the second round of debates regarding same sex marriage, it looks like there may be a shift from focusing on individual rights, etc. to a wider range of policies including the outcomes for children and families. Initially, when talking to many of the same sex marriage participants, they emphasized their rights to receive the same legal benefits as those in traditional marriages. But it isn't just a legal issue. As a woman involved in a same sex marriage ceremony stated, “. . . we want to be married in the full legal sense. The central reason is that I believe legal recognition brings with it a higher degree of community recognition. I believe that a union between two people is stronger when it is public and when it receives the affirmation of the community of which it is a part. I am convinced that the larger the community of acceptance is, the more likely the union will be supported and in the event that it breaks down the more likely things will be settled in a manner that is fair to both people and any children.”

The substance of the news is shifting to the fate of children and the assertion that traditional marriage protects children who do best when raised by their own mothers and fathers. In France, the French National Assembly

recently published its findings in a 450 page report on Family and the Rights of Children, decisively rejecting same sex marriages, homosexual adoption, and artificial reproduction for homosexuals arguing that these violate a child's right to a stable family with biological parents. Legislators must ensure "children, confronted with 'mutations' in family models, be taken fully into account and not suffer from situations imposed on them by adults" and children's interests "must take precedence over adults."

In British Columbia, it has become law to introduce teachings about sexual orientation in its curriculum. There will be classes like Social Justice, teaching about heroic deeds of all people including those who were homosexuals.

I feel that as long as we interpret the teachings, or as long as the teachings are interpreted and practiced as such at Church Headquarters, I cannot in good conscience officiate a same sex marriage. I am torn by wanting to be inclusive and at the same time, be faithful to the teachings as practiced today. What do you think?

While it may not be a good comparison, I remember a man who was missing fingers and could not receive the Sazuke, the Divine Grant, meaning obviously that he could not become a Yoboku, which meant he could not become a minister, which meant he could not become a head minister. I remember a minister encouraging the man telling him that there were many other ways to do "salvation work," by performing the service as spiritedly as he could, by doing *binokishin*, by transmitting his sincerity to others and to God. The man after much anguish and soul searching was able to accept this and determined himself to put the teachings into practice as best as he could. I saw his face and thought: here is a man who has been saved. He has become of a mind that wants to save others.

I am not saying that the door for same sex marriages is closed. I don't know of any teachings or have heard of anything in which Oyasama said anything about homosexuals. For that matter, I don't know if Oyasama ever said anything about not being able to receive the Divine Grant because someone was missing a finger or fingers down to their second index.

But as you can see from my answers to the questionnaire, I am not so concerned with whether a person who is gay or a lesbian or for that matter a transgendered person, can become a Yoboku. To be honest, I haven't thought too much about whether being gay or lesbian was due to our causality or

whether it was a result of dust. Actually, it doesn't really concern me. I believe we can all lead spiritually nourishing, productive, fulfilling lives as instruments of God the Parent and Oyasama regardless of our sexual orientation or for that matter, whatever situation or condition we find ourselves in. I believe that gay or lesbian ministers can perform their duties just as well as straight ministers.

It is just the concern of being able to conduct a ceremony for only some people and not for others.

I hope to hear your thoughts and advice on this concern.

Section Summary Report

Organizer: Takahiko Hayashi

We had a two hour and fifteen minute session with no breaks, lots of questions, lots of comments, and a hope that this discussion will not be the last one in regard to this important issue.

Our section was devoted to the issue of how to address gay and lesbian sexuality as a Yoboku.

Professor Midori Horiuchi began by giving us a theological perspective drawn from passages of the Ofudesaki and Osashizu. She noted that all ten aspects of the complete providence of God always work within our body, with the implication that both male and female characteristics reside in all of us.

I was the second speaker in the section. My basic point was that we can all grow spiritually through our encounter with this issue.

Robert Kokuryo, our last speaker, spoke his mind about the dilemma that he faces in Canada, where same-sex marriage is legal. He felt that he could not, in the last instance, perform a same-sex wedding at his church, but he conveyed to us as to how torn he was in terms of knowing that there was a ceremony that he could do for some and not for others.

In the discussion following the presentation, there were many passionate comments from various members of the audience.

One person pointed to *innen* as explanation for one's sexuality and argued that *innen* was God's doing and something beyond human understanding. Thus, he argued that our response should be based on looking to God for guidance in this, and all matters.

Another person encouraged the use of a template based on three approaches to an understanding of the teachings; that is, the mind like a child, mind like a parent, and a mind based on single-heartedness with God. He noted that we are capable of coming to a better understanding through dialogue and willingness to open our minds before God.

There was also a person who argued that there is a distinction between God's divine words and our human language, and that we should be careful to always look to the divine words to shape our understanding of what is right.

Another person expressed an ambiguity as to whether the church should

or should not provide a definite stance on this issue; however, her concern was that there were already Yoboku who are gay and lesbian, and she often consulted with them with an encouragement that each person can find a way to become Oyasama's instruments.

The model of husband and wife also became a focus of discussion. One person expressed ambivalence as to whether such model should become an absolute one, or whether there were other ways to understand this model. Another person made a comment that this teaching of husband and wife came from God's gift of life to human beings. God intended for human beings to survive as a species, and thus, this model of husband and wife—as man and woman—allows us to recreate ourselves through the providence of God the Parent. How we employ this model is up to each of us, but we should also see this model in such light. On a similar note, another person commented that marriage should be interpreted not as a civil right but as a component of our existence; that is, marriage as understood in Tenrikyo refers to the providences of *Izanagi* and of *Izanami*, which takes place within our human body since the time of creation. He made an analogy to how human body has DNA, and argued that the providence of man and woman are blessings that work within each of us and is a given fact of our existence. How we go about in response to this blessing is up to us.

This theme of “up to us” was also prevalent in some of the comments. There was some who juxtaposed faith and church, and argued that our faith should be the primary basis, and the choice that we make will then shape the path that we take in our future. One young member of the audience commented that our teachings have very few absolutes, but rather places value in the process of searching for what is right.

There were others who spoke from experience in dealing with certain facets of this issue. A woman who worked in childcare noted that some of the best parent models in her workplace were gay and lesbian couples who worked hard to raise their children. A schoolteacher noted that children of same-sex couples were often the most popular students in the class. Both expressed hope that understanding and openness would be the key marker of our response to this issue. As Tenrikyo followers, we need to be supportive of everyone who comes to our door.

A common feeling was that the time was ripe and that the general direction

of this issue in society was towards acceptance.

In the end, I felt that people were interested in speaking about this topic, not simply because it was a trendy thing to do, but because people had a genuine interest in it. If so, I would like to add one comment given later to me by one of the participants in the section. He noted that we needed to address the issue with greater knowledge of the teachings. Unless we further incorporate the teachings in our arguments, he felt that we could easily lose our mooring and simply drift with the winds. The danger here was that a hundred years from now, we could easily take an opposite position if that was the dominant opinion of society as a whole and feel equally good about it for ourselves. The answer should not be based on how good we feel about our response, but how close it is to the truth of Oyasama's teachings. Some food for thought until our next discussion.

Marital Communication and Marital Satisfaction

Tamio Kinoshita

(Mr. Kinoshita is an associate professor of English Education and Communication Studies in the Department of European and American Studies at Tenri University)

In this rapidly changing modern society, marriage is a social institution that has many different components. These include legal, economic, sexual, emotional, and religious factors. In this “Husband and Wife” section meeting, I would like to focus my attention on its emotional component of marital communication and marital satisfaction. The emotional component of husband and wife relationships will be analyzed from the following three perspectives: (1) verbal and nonverbal interaction in marital communication; (2) factors to determine marital satisfaction; and (3) some structural differences between the male brain and the female brain. Through these analysis, I will seek to affirm, Tenrikyo’s style of marital communication.

First, I would like to talk about some characteristics of verbal and nonverbal communication patterns between men and women, primarily emphasizing marital communication patterns between American couples and Japanese couples. In marital communication, it is often the case that each partner complains about his or her spouse without knowing the fact that there are marked differences in communication patterns between men and women. For example, in most Western countries and Japan, women are more talkative and more emotionally expressive than men. Especially, American and Japanese wives grumble that their husbands don’t talk or express their emotions as much as wives expect them to. It’s a surprise on the part of most Japanese, who regard most Americans as talkative and expressive of their emotions using body language effectively, that most American men are much less talkative and express much less emotions than most American women.

If we compare Japanese couples with American couples, however, American couples are much more talkative than Japanese couples. According to my research, for example, on average American married couples spend about 70 minutes per day for their marital communication on weekdays and about 120 minutes per day on weekends, whereas Japanese couples spend about 20 minutes and 40 minutes respectively. I wonder how much time devout

Tenrikyo missionaries in Japan and in other parts of the world spend for their marital communication every day?

Second, I would like to identify several factors to determine marital satisfaction based on an analysis of the previous observation of verbal and nonverbal communication. At the same time, dysfunctional marital interaction will be considered since marital communication often involves marital conflicts.

Obviously, talkative and emotionally expressive couples are more satisfied with their marriage than less talkative and less emotionally expressive couples. Among happily married couples, everything is communicated between husbands and wives, and therefore, they usually don't have any major secrets between husband and wife. Especially, happily married couples exchange more positive remarks and show more positive feelings and emotions including good facial expressions and smiles whereas unhappily married couples tend to exchange more negative talks and exhibit more negative feelings and emotions.

Also, more positive verbal expressions such as words of gratitude and praise as well as more positive nonverbal expressions such as consideration to the spouse, positive facial expressions and smiles, and high-spirited vocal elements are exchanged between husbands and wives among happily married couples. In particular, expressions of affection are a key factor which determines marital satisfaction. Although in the early stages of relationships, partners pay a great deal of attention to each other and behave positively and thoughtfully in many ways, in the matured stages of marital relationships, partners are often reluctant to show attention and affection to each other.

Among the most important ingredients in a happy marriage are sexuality and intimacy, which reassure partners that they are loved, valued, and attractive. Sexual love is a crucial and binding force in marital relationships. It seems to me, however, that especially middle-aged Japanese Tenrikyo couples are reluctant to have enough sexuality and intimacy between husbands and wives, because they indicate that they are too busy in missionary work or too shy to do so despite the fact that they can readily extend helping hands to others.

Recent research proves that mental health is important for maintaining a satisfying marriage. Each spouse's level of anxiety and depressive mood predict not only his/her marital satisfaction but their spouse's satisfaction. That is to say, the more anxious and depressed either spouse is, the more dissatisfied he/she is with the marriage. Depression is found to influence both husbands and

wives more than anxiety in how satisfied they feel about the marriage. These findings show how important it is to observe and to be aware of the spouse's mental health when dissatisfaction occurs in a marriage.

Third, by presenting some scientific evidence to differentiate the male brain from the female brain, I would like the audience members to find some clues to better understanding of the communication and behavioral patterns of the opposite sex.

Since the times of ancient Greek philosophers, human beings have been fascinated by perceived gender differences between men and women. Plato suggested, for example, that male-female differences are complementary: man and woman were once two halves of the same creature, split by the gods and are destined to search for their lost counterpart. Plato's successor Aristotle, however, described women as inferior beings incapable by nature of autonomy.

Since the late 1980s, there has been exhaustive research into the male and female brains. Men and women are fundamentally and biologically different from each other in terms of the structures of their brains, having different communication and behavioral patterns. For example, Barbara and Allan Pease compare and contrast men and women in the following manner. Why men really can't do more than one thing at a time. Why women make such a mess of parallel parking. Why men should never lie to women. Why women talk so much and men so little. Why men love erotic images and women aren't impressed. Why women prefer to simply talk it through. Why men offer solutions, but hate advice. Why women despair about men's silences. Why men want sex, and women need love.

We, Tenrikyo Yoboku and followers, should be well aware of the characteristics and roles of the husband and those of the wife so that we can constantly maintain mutually complementary relationships on the basis of the truth of "two in one." Respecting each other's role, both the husband and the wife should engage in *danjiai* (discussion) communication by disclosing everything in his or her mind, asking questions or expressing opinions and feelings and emotions without reservation. During that thorough dialogue, two-way, on-going communication channels are opened on the basis of a free exchange of opinions, acceptance of diverse personalities and individualities, and mutual understanding and respect. As a result, a mind of unity is attained between husband and wife through such Tenrikyo-style communication.

Husbands and Wives

Daisuke Kitamura

(Mr. Kitamura is a Yoboku of Tenrikyo Minami Hong Kong Church)

When I was first approached by Reverend Ichise to participate in the Tenri Forum as a speaker in this section, I was highly reluctant to do so. The reason for my reluctance was largely due to fear and feeling of inadequacy to speak on such a topic. While I have been married for eleven years, I have to admit that I have not been a good husband for most if not all of that period. At the end of last year, I also believe that my wife and I were very close to becoming part of a national statistic for the number of divorces that occur in a year. With that as a prelude, you may understand my fear and reluctance. My decision to speak was based on my desire to face the mistakes that I had made and more importantly to learn from others as part of my growth. It was also with the support from my wife, who has agreed to try to rebuild our marriage that I was able to come up with the conviction to attend.

Let me start off by touching on a common theme throughout this forum that we may common across more often. Self-centredness. Self-centredness is a common theme that we will commonly face when we start to look at the problems that grip our society. When we start to adopt such an approach in thinking, we start to loose sight of the things that we cherish and we tend to develop an inability to feel the true meaning of joy. We pursue short-term goals that may give us momentary satisfaction yet we lose touch of what is truly the meaning of a Joyous Life.

What can we associate with self-centredness? Most importantly we can associate the eight mental dusts, of miserliness, covetousness, hatred, self-love, grudge bearing, anger, greed, and arrogance. In the pursuit of self-satisfaction, we may refuse to share things and covet what we do not have. We develop a hatred and anger when we do not get the things that we want and we become arrogant in who we believe ourselves to be.

The husband and wife is the cornerstone of marriage and the foundation upon which a family is built upon. Two people get married I believe because of a common set of beliefs and feelings. There is a mutual love for one another and a commitment between both parties. In short, I believe it is a mutual

commitment to seek a Joyous Life together. The Mikagura-uta has two verses that reflect the importance of marriage.

I have created husband and wife.
This is the beginning of the world.

And also,

Husband and wife working together in *hinokishin*;
This is the first seed of everything.

The Reverend Kinoshita has touched upon the Tenrikyo teaching “the truth of one in two.” A marriage is based on this principle for it is when the husband and wife think of each other that happiness in a marriage can be achieved. In my previous paragraph, I place emphasis on the word “mutual.” Mutual feelings for each other, mutual respect and mutual trust. It is a healthy balance between the two people that makes a marriage work. As we can all expect, when one party or both adopts a self-centred approach, that marriage stands a large risk of disintegrating.

Recent statistics show that while marriages are on the rise, so is divorce.

In Korea in 2004, there were 310,944 marriages but there were also 139,365 divorces. A number that has increased from 42,116 in 1988.

In the United States, the probability of your first marriage ending in divorce after three years is 20% and before the first ten years, 33%.

In New Zealand 20,500 couples were married in 2004, while 9,972 divorced. About 33% of all New Zealand couples will divorce before their 25th Anniversary.

It is no secret that divorce rates are on the rise, but what is the reason? The *Daily Mail*, a UK newspaper, put it simply in an article on the October 20, 2005 issue.

“It is because we are a part of the “me” generation who thinks that we have the god given right to be fulfilled in every area....Behind Britain’s burgeoning divorce statistics, are couples who simply could not be bothered to make it work. They imagined that it would be all champagne and roses and a life long passion; that a ring on their finger would be a guarantee of constant happiness.

... They did not realise until too late that a marriage needs to be worked at.”

My parent’s generation seemed to have been very different. Divorce was not an option. For some this was partly due to the stigma attached, but more often than not, there was not a need to consider it as an option. There is a phrase in Japanese “*buruki yoki jidai*” which literally translates to the good old times. It was period where the marriage was based on mutual sense of happiness and joy that was tangible and more importantly long lasting.

What is it then that has changed?

I go back to the *Daily Mail*. Their study of the UK divorce statistics showed that the principle cause of divorce still remains infidelity at 27%. Infidelity is an act that is driven by temptation covetousness and greed, a pursuit of satisfaction. A very self-centred pursuit.

Another cause of divorce was the pressure of modern life. Despite a growth in income and comforts, the improvement in our standard of living has led to a pursuit of materialistic gains as a means of happiness which was short lasting and to be followed by further short term goals to feed an insatiable appetite.

This pursuit of a material return has led to the fragmentation of the family with couples pursuing their own agendas and often at the disregard of our spouse and family: a very cynical result as we tend to believe that the pursuit was for the benefit of all. A husband comes home from work tired and exhausted, and in turn ignoring his family. Maybe an incident at work which has annoyed or angered us is all we want to convey and discuss as opposed to a greeting. Worse still, what if that incident is the source of frustration and anger which is vented on our family? In summary, in pursuing our self-centred objectives, we lose the ability to communicate.

This has led to the emergence of the post-retirement divorce, a factor which is increasingly globally. Between 2001 and 2004, while the divorce rate for under 35 couples declined, the rate for couples aged above 60 grew by 30%. Husbands who are so entrenched in their work and career that they have ignored their families and failed to communicate to their spouses. Upon retirement they realize that they cannot cohabit. A name familiar to all. Sir Anthony Hopkins. When he divorced his wife of 29 years, his comments were, “I live a separate life and now realize I am not good at relationships.”

If I may now indulge in a bit of self-healing by sharing with you my story. My wife and I married in 1995 when she was 25 and I 22. We met at *Shuyoka*

(Spiritual Development Course of Church Headquarters) and had a brief but wonderful courtship. We talked, we laughed, and we both felt a sense of belonging. I recall after our engagement she became pregnant. At this time, I had just started my career in banking and was in London working on a three-month project. It was our first Christmas but one spent apart. Just before Christmas Eve, I became really sick and was lying in the hotel when she called. She told me she had miscarried the day before around about when I started getting sick. I could not help but feel that my fever was related to this and in a way her pain and sorrow was transmitted to me before the call. We were both determined however that we would grow through this sorrow together and we married that following April.

The deterioration in our marriage can be traced to my desire to progress in my career as a banker. It became my goal and objective and I became guilty of neglect. Late evenings after working at the office were spent in silence as I was too tired to carry out a conversation. While the rare early nights were spent with my colleagues as we built on our camaraderie and what we called team chemistry. In focusing on my career, I had slowly broken down my line of communication with my wife and left her for her own in a foreign land. Truly an act of neglect.

This issue came to head when we had a serious argument in November last year and it was only through this argument that we were able to communicate. That said, it took me a while to realize the mistakes I had made and the grave nature of my faults. I was able to remember a phrase my wife's *kaicho* (head minister) had said to her prior to our marriage. Once you get married, you must throw away yourself. It was words of advice that I did not fully comprehend but now do.

Communication is an effective sharing of thoughts and ideas and it is through communication that we can establish the mutual trust and love that is so beneficial to achieving the balance that is required.

I would like to end with the story of a real life couple that I read in the Hartford Couant. The couple is not unlike any other couple, but their story tells us of the success of mutual trust, mutual understanding, and a mutual feeling for one another that is strengthened by communication.

Jeff and Sharon were not two peas in a pod but a perfect match. He was too shy to date and she was outgoing. There were several differences, he was

punctual, she was not. He was careful with money and learned, yet she did not even maintain a savings account. They married in 1980 and remain together since. What has kept their marriage going? They are still talking, exploring, and being together. More importantly, she has learned to cook and he has learned to enjoy going out for dinner. He has learned that you don't have to honk a horn to get someone to leave for the movies and eventually she learned to be more punctual. Truly a case where two become one.

Section Summary Report

Organizer: Tomoharu Matsui

Mr. Kinoshita, an expert on marital communication, analyzed three factors that affect husband and wife communication. The first one was the male and female patterns of communication in Japan and America, and he indicated that women talked more than men whereas American couples communicated verbally with each other more than Japanese couples did. As for the second factor, which is marital satisfaction level, he said that couples having more verbal and non-verbal communication were more satisfied in marriage life. Third, he discussed gender differences in the brain structure and behavior patterns, introducing some comparisons made by Barbara and Allan Pease. In the end, Mr. Kinoshita reminded the audience of the tendency that Tenrikyo missionaries might not have enough communication with their marital partners with their claim that they are too busy and too shy, although Oyasama taught the importance of *Danjiai* discussion, mutual communication and understanding.

Mrs. Okui first discussed some reasons for marrying by comparing love marriage with arranged marriage, and indicated that the romantic love was not always the ideal reason for marriage. She also mentioned a drastic change of marital situations in the US such as increase in divorce and unmarried couples, and what some major religions have to say about marriage and divorce. She then focused on the Truth of Origin as the source of guidance for the marriage as well as the whole life. Finally sharing two stories and her own experiences, Mrs. Okui gave the audience some practical advice for living a desirable marriage life and emphasized the importance of making efforts and connecting the mind to God after getting married.

The last speaker, Mr. Kitamura, touched upon some statistics of divorce rate in some countries around the world, and indicated two major reasons why divorce has increased; infidelity and materialistic pursuit in the modern society. He then shared his experiences of marriage life, saying that he was too busy pursuing his business career to maintain necessary communication with his wife. He said turning away from self-centered pursuit and increasing mutual communication between husband and wife would be very effective for

a success in marriage.

The first question raised from the audience was about the reason for marrying. Is there any “right time” for marrying when we feel like breeding or would it be better to wait until we find the “right partner?” The speakers said it did not matter if they could find “a right partner,” and the point was to make sure that they made it work in their marriage after getting married.

One of the major issues discussed during the discussion was the gender role. Female roles in the modern society have changed, and some people say this might have caused an increase in divorce. One of the speakers said that there were some gender roles which we could change, but males and females are equally Yoboku and there was no discrimination in the eyes of God. Another speaker added that the woman’s role in Tenrikyo was great in that they were part of the Kagura service and there were many female head ministers in Tenrikyo churches. Oyasama taught that God the Parent entailed both paternity and maternity, and other than bearing and raising children, there was no specifically prescribed gender role in the Tenrikyo teachings. One from the audience said, however, that Oyasama used symbolic terms like turtle and orc to distinguish male from female characters, and that the teachings could guide us to prescribe some specific gender roles. Another participant shared his experience of living as a househusband, and he said it was really difficult for him to accept the fact that his wife went out for work as the breadwinner and he stayed at home to do cleaning and cooking and told his friends that his job was the housework. But that way, he said, he could understand what it was like to be a housewife and realized how much we need to be appreciative.

Another question was about what Oyasama specifically said about divorce. One of the speakers said that Oyasama mentioned in a Divine Direction that if it is unavoidable, we could divorce but we were encouraged to maintain a good brother-sister relationship after divorce. Another participant asked how we could know the limit before we get divorced. A speaker answered that we needed to search for the way to connect ourselves to the truth, and clear and calm our mind in order to make a right decision. Another speaker said that it would be better to delay in making a decision because we could not usually make an appropriate decision when both parties were confused and could only see the negatives. We tend to blame ourselves as well as our partners. We are advised to take a step back, go and talk to our best friends and ministers, reflect

upon ourselves to see if we are doing this for our partner or for ourselves, and humbly acknowledge if we see faults in ourselves.

Another participant asked if it would be better to give up one's faith when his or her partner has a different faith. The speakers all said that both parties could maintain their own faith by respecting and learning from each other. Tenrikyo followers can prepare themselves to accept other religions by keeping the mind of sincerity and humble attitude, and by communicating with other religions. And because Tenrikyo and other religions actually share some basic principles, such couples can keep an open-minded attitude and let God decide when the partner start a faith in Tenrikyo.

Lastly, a question was raised as to whether we were actually able to change our personality in marital relationship; many people failed and ended in divorce because they could not.

One speaker shared his experience saying that although he used to be argumentative, his wife was very good at listening and he had learned to do the same. He also noted that men were not as good at listening to others as women. Another speaker shared her experiences of making conscious efforts when living with her husband as she was prepared to face some possible difficulties in her marriage life due to her parents' divorce. She said that working it out had been the important goal for her life, and the teachings really helped her to examine who she was, alter and maintain herself, and keep a loving and trusting relationship with her husband.

This session was full of discussion in terms of theoretical as well as practical matters on marriage, divorce, and gender differences we might want to extract from the resources Oyasama taught.

The Tenrikyo Faith Changed My Life

Stacy Takahashi

(Ms. Takahashi is the wife of the successor of Tenrikyo Itakano Church and resides in Osaka, Japan)

I was born in Kaimuki, and raised in Kaneohe. My father's family grew up with *Seicho No Ie* as the family religion; my mother's family had belonged to Jehovah's Witnesses, but neither of my parents had liked religion. Therefore, we as a family grew up without religion in our home. And yet my sisters and brother and I, after growing up, all started to feel a need for God in our lives. Other than myself, every one had joined up with the Christian Church.

As for myself, being a single parent at the age of 25 with a child two years old, I started to feel a need for God in my life. A dear friend from work had introduced Tenrikyo to me through the Sazuke. He would pray for Chanel whenever she wasn't feeling well. There came a day when my friend advised me to go to Tenrikyo Hawaii Mission Headquarters. That had been my real first encounter with the Tenrikyo faith. This was almost 20 years ago. When I first entered the doorway of the office beside the *shinden* (sanctuary), everyone who had greeted us had the most warm and welcoming smiley faces. I will never forget that day. That was my first impression of Tenrikyo.

It has been eighteen years since I first moved to Japan with my husband. We now have six wonderful children. My husband, because of his faith in God the Parent, gracefully and happily adopted Chanel. They share a very deep and strong love as father and child. This, I believe, is due to his faith in Oyasama. Chanel graduated from Tenrikyo Oyasato High School and she also graduated from Tenrikyo *Senshuka* (Junior Seminary). She is now a fine Yoboku. I had five more children after her: Yudai (Joshua), 17, and Hiroaki (Jordan), 16, both attending Tenri-Kyoko (Tenri Seminary) High School, Hiromichi (Dean), 15, Toshiki (Rex), 14, and Aimi (Edwina), nine years old. Including my mother-in-law and our church's Reverend, we are a big happy family of nine.

We spend our days doing *binokishin* (voluntary work) and *noigake* (missionary work), along with devoting ourselves to our upper church and participating in the Boys and Girls Association as well as the Young Men's Association.

Watching the children grow with the family faith within the teachings of

Oyasama inspires our everyday life. Through every family pain, we try to keep our hopes up when times are hard and days are hard to go by, using Oyasama's Path to keep our everyday to come on the bright side.

When I had first moved to Japan, I entered the English *Shuyōka* (Spiritual Development Course of Church Headquarters) along with Chanel, five years old, and Yudai one and-a-half years old. The two children had come down with the measles and had to be hospitalized due to their extremely high fever. Being just a baby, Yudai's body could not handle the fever so well. His body had been covered inside and out with a rash so bad that they couldn't even get an IV started on him through his arms. Instead, they had to go by his tiny feet veins to get one started, and even then, his fever would not come down. Due to the blistering rash, he couldn't even take anything in by mouth. His fever had gotten so high that the doctors were all ready to give-up, and had told me that he may not last another night. With these frightening words, I called our reverend, and she came to the hospital to tell me that I had to return to *Shuyōka*. It had almost been a week since I had been absent. She said that was the only way to save him. So accepting her words as Oyasama's words, my husband and I went straight back to Jiba and prayed for forgiveness. That night after our reverend had prayed upon him the Sazuke, his fever broke, and by morning his fever had come down till it was almost gone.

Another time when he was ten years old, he had been hit by a van on his way to school. Directly hit on his back, he had been thrown almost fifty yards from the school gate. The hood of the van had a dent in it, as if it had hit a telephone pole. The policemen, firemen, insurance people and the doctors could not believe he survived such an accident. He had but one small scratch on his left knee.

My third son was stillborn. From the time I first moved to Japan, I was given the opportunity to take care of the foundress of our church, the children's great-grandmother. By the time my third son was to be born, I had been full of complaints in my heart concerning the care of grandmother. Bishop Nagao had come to visit me in the hospital and bestowed the Sazuke upon me, saying that God the Parent was telling me that I needed to make a change in heart concerning the care of great-grandmother. When I had gone into labor, in the delivery room, all of a sudden the doctor became very anxious and at that instant the doctor said "Stacy, your baby isn't breathing, so you're going

to have to help me.” I knew instantly that it was due to my selfish feelings towards grandmother; reflecting upon myself, I then again made another firm resolution to Oyasama. Just then, I felt as if I had been a waterbed that busted—but there was no crying. He had been silent, blue in the face and his body had been almost purple like a blueberry. The doctor said, “Your baby isn’t breathing.” Immediately, she gave him mouth to mouth resuscitation for another six minutes. He gave a little cough, and then he was immediately rushed to the pediatric emergency ward. That night, the pediatrician had come to see me, and he said that due to the fact that the baby wasn’t breathing for over thirteen min, he would have brain damage, and that we should keep a close watch on him for the first few years. He is now fifteen years old, stands 5’ 7” tall, weighs about 58kg, and has a grade point average of 380-400pts.

As for my second son, we discovered that at the age of seven he had petit molls. And in Japan they don’t provide special education in elementary school. They said that he would have to attend SPEC, Special Education Seminary School for children who don’t lead a normal childhood life. Having faith in God the Parent and trust that Oyasama is always with us, I discussed his situation with his teacher. She said, “Bring him to school. I will watch over him.” She had been more than happy to help him in any way possible. By the time he finished elementary school, the neurologist said that he had shown no signs of epilepsy to the brain, and that his petit molls were gone. He is now 5’ 8” tall and a healthy 10th-grader now attending Tenri Kyoko Gakuen High School.

Being blessed with six children has made my faith in God the Parent and Oyasama grow stronger and stronger. My faith doesn’t stop here in Japan.

Just last year, my step father, who works at Hawaii Gas Company, was in a bad accident at work. There was a big blowout with a few of the tanks, and he had been blown into it, being burnt from head to toe with 3rd-degree burns. He was told he would need plastic surgery, and they didn’t know if he would be able to use his hands again. After receiving the phone call, I was given permission to fly home with the blessings of our reverend and my husband’s prayers. After nine days of administering the Sazuke upon him, he received the marvelous workings of God the Parent and healed as if he had never been burnt. The doctors said he didn’t need surgery and by the third day of Sazuke he had started to try to use his hands. It was my step father’s first

Sazuke experience. Overwhelmed with joy and full of gratitude towards God the Parent, he, his mom, my sister and my mom all wished to return to Jiba to receive the truth of the Sazuke.

I have to make a confession. I don't really have a social life. When I entered the faith to better the future for Chanel, I made a promise to God the Parent. I promised to devote my life to the path of Oyasama in return for Chanel's well-being. But instead, I got more than I asked for. I was given a whole new future with a bigger family instead. I believe that decision by my husband and me to devote all our healthy daily work to the path of Oyasama is the reason for our family being gifted with a bright and happy future. The life of Oyasama will always be my family's daily faith.

Handing Down of Tenrikyo Faith from My Parents, Then to My Children

Scot Mikuni

(Mr. Mikuni is an English teacher at Tenri Kyoko Gakuen High School)

The transmitting of faith from one generation to the next is something that I had always assumed happened naturally, without any particular effort. I believed it to be something that occurred over time through religious exposure and personal experiences. However, when I was asked to give a talk about the transmission of faith in my own personal life, it was the first time I seriously considered the significance and difficulty involved in the actual process. I was suddenly overwhelmed with many questions pertaining to how well the Tenrikyo faith is being passed on to my children, and even more importantly, how well the faith had been passed on to me. I began to question my own faith in Tenrikyo, and the method in which I try to convey the teachings to my children. Do I consider myself to be a devout follower? Am I earnest in my belief? Are my children going to have the same conviction in Tenrikyo as I, myself do today? These are some of the many questions I began to contemplate.

As a child growing up in a Tenrikyo Church, I had never questioned my religious faith. I was born in a church, my grandfather was the head minister, my father was the successor, and I simply did not have a choice. I was Tenrikyo, and that's just how it was. Throughout my childhood, my parents had always surrounded me with Tenrikyo. *Koteki* on the weekends, Tenri Judo on Thursday nights, the Children's Pilgrimage to Jiba in the summer, Sunday school, monthly service, the morning and evening service every day, and the mission headquarters activities throughout the year such as the annual bazaar, the fourth of July picnic, and the Young Men's Association and TSA activities.

I am quite certain that this exposure to Tenrikyo had significant influence in my firm conviction today. However, simply being born into the religion and growing up in a Tenrikyo environment, does not assure the transmission of faith. There are many people I know who were raised in such an environment, who are not at all earnest in their belief in Tenrikyo, some even having turned to a different faith. In my case, I probably did not realize the importance of my

parents' intention at that time, but I believe the exposure instilled somewhere deep in my soul, a sense of awareness about the teachings of Tenrikyo. A sense of awareness that would gradually have meaning as I matured over time.

According to my father, throughout my childhood I was accident-prone. At the age of 6, I experienced my first divine guidance by God the Parent; the first of many to come. It was a typical Monday morning and we were walking to school. All of a sudden, my brother broke the grasp of my mother's hand and had started to run across the street. Unaware of the signal having turned red, I too, let go of my mother's hand and ran after him. My mother, who was in shock at the time, later told me that I had flown at least 15 feet after being struck by a Volkswagen. Miraculously, I did not hit my head or break any bones. I was lucky enough to have escaped with only a few minor scratches and bruises. She reminded me that I hadn't gone to pray that morning and that was the reason why it was important to offer our prayers every morning regardless of how late for school we were.

On my ninth birthday, I was being packed on the back of my bicycle when my right heel got trapped in the bicycle chain. My father came dashing out of the church and desperately tried to free my heel from the chain without disconnecting the dangling skin of my heel. The doctors weren't sure if they could reattach the skin to my heel properly, but with God the Parents blessing, the wound healed completely and I am not at all affected by the injury today. My father never let me forget that the accident had happened during evening service.

Whenever I got sick or was injured and had the Sazuke administered to me by my parents, they would always associate the illness or accident with Tenrikyo. Whether it was one of the divine providences of God the Parent, the teaching of "A thing lent, a thing borrowed," or about one of the anecdotes of Oyasama, it was always correlated to one of the teachings. Unfortunate occurrences and adversity in our lives, my father would always tell us, such as an illness, getting into a car accident, or even problems that occurred within our family, were all God's way of urging us to self reflect. It was all due to God's divine guidance and all out of God's parental love to guide us back onto the path when our minds tended to stray.

In the Ofudesaki:

Illness and pain of whatever kind do not exist.
They are none other than the hastening and guidance of God.

Illness and pain throughout the world:
You do not know that these are the road signs or guidance of God.

As a teenager, I often felt ashamed of being Tenrikyo. Most of my friends were Christian and the others were Buddhist. Many of them went to Church on Sundays, and attended rallies and various religious events once or twice a month. I envied them and the special religious bond that they seemed to share amongst themselves. They would come over to my house and ask me, "What exactly is Tenrikyo?" and "Why do you chant in Japanese, dance and play musical instruments every day?" At that age, being ignorant and utterly embarrassed, I often responded, "It's a fairly new Japanese religion. Kind of like Shinto." This was the answer I always gave when I was asked about Tenrikyo.

When I was in junior high school, a friend of mine invited me to one of her bible study classes. I vividly recall consulting with my mother about whether or not it was a good idea to attend the Christian event. My mother told me to have an open mind and said that it would be a good learning experience for me. She seemed convinced that it would only deepen my faith in Tenrikyo. I was skeptical at first and even felt a bit of guilt, but I truly wanted to be more like, and closer to my friends. And if that meant converting to Christianity, I had my mother's blessing.

I attended the bible study that weekend and to my dismay, felt uneasy and apprehensive the moment I entered the room. A feeling of betrayal to my parents and God the Parent overwhelmed me. When the bible study began, I found myself inadvertently blocking everything out and wishing I had never come. The class lasted for an hour and a half, which seemed a lot longer to me, and after a few refreshments, I had had enough. I told my friend that I didn't feel so good, which was the truth, snuck out the back and walked home. When I returned home, I immediately went into our church and prayed to God the Parent. It was the first time in my life, that I truly felt relieved about being Tenrikyo. I assume this is the reason my mother had insisted that I attend the class.

My personal belief in Tenrikyo strengthened my senior year in high school, when I attended the Oyasato Seminar here in Jiba. Prior to the seminar, I had returned to Jiba many times for the Children's Pilgrimage to Jiba in the summer. However, this was my first opportunity to spend a considerable amount of time here in Jiba. The Oyasato Seminar back then was a month and a half long. We were taught about the teachings of Tenrikyo through doctrinal studies as well as hands on experience such as *Keidai*, missionary training, and hours and hours of *binokishin*. Although the Oyasato Seminar did indeed give me positive perspective on the teachings, it wasn't so much the seminar itself that brought me closer to Tenrikyo, as it was just the fact of being here and living in Jiba. A feeling of adoration and a sense of closeness to God the Parent and Oyasama that was almost impossible for me to experience from afar. This was confirmed when I returned home following course 3 of the seminar.

Naturally, upon returning home, I was initially eager to do *binokishin* and made it a point to go to morning and evening service every day. I tried to help out more around the house and made an effort to get more involved in mission headquarters activities. After a few months, however, I gradually began to feel obligated and eventually disinclined to doing the things that I had been doing so fervently. I ended up going back to my old ways and completely lost the determination I so strongly felt on completion of the seminar.

While attending college, I worked almost every night managing a Japanese restaurant and going out with my friends. During the day, I would go surfing or golfing whenever I didn't have any classes. Needless to say, I hardly ever went to mission headquarters, and eventually even stopped going to morning and evening service. I was still young and naïve, and at the time, I could care less about the consequences of the way I had been living my life. Once again, I received divine guidance from God the Parent in the form of numerous personal problems and a few minor automobile accidents. Upon graduating from the university, my parents again tried to steer me back onto the right path. After a long talk with them, they made me realize how unhappy I would be, if I continued to live the way I had been living. I made a resolve to change my ways, and with a bit of persuasion from my mother, decided to return to Jiba.

In August 1993, I entered the Spiritual Development Course here in Jiba. During the first week of the course, still feeling as though I had made a

huge mistake committing myself to three months of waking up for morning service and doing more *binokishin* than I had done my entire life, I suddenly became very ill. I was rushed to the Ikoi-no-Ie Hospital in the middle of the night, and was diagnosed with hepatitis. I was told by the doctor that I would probably have to be hospitalized for at least a month. The jaundice practically immobilized me and even made going to the restroom a chore. During my stay in the hospital, I had a lot of time to ponder and reflect on the way I had been living my life in the church, before coming to Japan. All those lectures given to me by my parents whenever I got sick, or was injured, now had new meaning to me. I was able to grasp the message my parents had been trying to convey to me throughout my life, and was finally enlightened to the true meaning of “a thing lent, a thing borrowed.”

In Chapter 7 of the *Doctrine of Tenrikyo* it is written:

That we are able to use the body each day without the slightest hindrance is due to the complete providence of God the Parent . . . If, on the other hand, we become ill, no matter how much we might call upon our strength and wisdom, we shall still suffer from the fever and chills of our condition. One’s sickbed will become the whole world and one will not be able to move so much as a single limb freely. If we ponder over this well, the truth that the body is a thing lent by God will settle into our hearts.

In the Ofudesaki:

So long as you remain unknowing that the body is a thing borrowed,
You can understand nothing at all.

Our bodies, which we are all privileged to use freely, are only lent to us by God. It can be taken away in an instant, at any given time. Only when we are able to realize this truth, can we be genuinely grateful for the blessings we receive from God the Parent.

While being confined to my bed in Ikoi no Ie Hospital, I could see the Main Sanctuary in the distance through the window. The view of the Main Sanctuary was serene and tranquil, allowing me to rekindle the feelings I had experienced

during the Oyasato Seminar. Desperately wanting to be able to get out of bed and move around on my own accord, I made a sincere prayer to God the Parent. I vowed to devote three years of my life, if I was allowed to continue and complete the Spiritual Development Course. My classmates came to visit me daily and kept me in high spirits. Once again my prayers were answered by God the Parent. I was discharged from the hospital in only two weeks, and was able to finish the three month spiritual development course. As promised, I dedicated the next three years of my life to doing *binokishin* here in Jiba.

I enrolled in the Oyasato Fusekomi Course at the Tenrikyo Language Institute. It was at that time that I received another timely blessing by God the Parent. I met my wife and it was the start of my own family and the beginning of my life here in Jiba. In the second and third year of my marriage, I was blessed with two daughters. Presently, they are in the 2nd and 3rd grade at Tenri Elementary School. Just as I was as a child, my children are also fortunate to be able to grow up in a Tenrikyo environment.

At home, we try to teach our children moral values by associating it with the principles of Tenrikyo. When my children get hurt, I often use the examples and explanations that were taught to me by my parents. I tell them everything that happens, good or bad, are all due to the divine guidance and parental love of God the Parent. We as parents, try to convey the teachings to our children not only verbally, but also through our actions in our daily lives as well.

In the Shinbashira's sermon at this year's Women's Association Convention:

Children at an early age learn mostly from their parents' way of thinking and behavior at home. For example, if parents become spiritually rich, their children will also become spiritually rich. Thus, if parents want to make sure that the path of Oyasama continues without a break, both parents ought to make a point of reflecting upon themselves and nurturing themselves. This done, they will succeed in nurturing their children. As the children develop and grow during their elementary school years and then junior high school years, they will gradually acquire the stance of mind that is taught in this path. Even though individual circumstances vary considerably, communication and discussion between parents, as well as their harmony and behavior, will build the basis for allowing children to grow as splendid children of the path.

As a family, we do the service every day and have a *kosha* (fellowship) service in our home once a month. We also go to pray at the Main Sanctuary on Sundays, and attend Shuto Grand Church's Monthly Service at the Shuto followers' dormitory every month. In addition to this, my children begin each school day with a morning prayer at the Main Sanctuary for the Tenrikyo educational institutions here in Tenri. In school, my children have religious study and Tenrikyo training classes. They learn to play the musical instruments, the service dance, and are taught the basic teachings of Tenrikyo.

A couple of weeks ago, I was elated and felt a tremendous sense of relief by something my daughter had told me. Out of the blue, she asked me if the father of a child was Tenrikyo, did the mother also have to be Tenrikyo. I explained to her that there were many families in which only one parent believed in Tenrikyo. She then asked me what would happen to the children in those cases. Would the children be able to choose for themselves whether or not to be Tenrikyo? Before I could respond, she said, "Well, daddy, I'm glad I'm Tenrikyo." When I asked her why she was glad to be Tenrikyo, she simply shrugged and said, "Why not?"

What enables the transmission of faith to be successfully passed on to the next generation? Is it the role models we have around us? Is it how well we are informed about the teachings? Is it the environment we live in, whether it's a church or the vicinity of the Jiba? To tell you the truth, I have no idea. What I do know, is that handing down the Tenrikyo faith from one generation to the next is imperative in sustaining the religious bond between family members. It is also a vital part of being a devout Tenrikyo follower. We as Yoboku have the duty, and as parents have the responsibility, to pass on the Tenrikyo faith to our own children. It is necessary for us, not only to teach our children, but to show them an example, as Oyasama did during her lifetime. Although it is essential for us, Yoboku, to spread the teachings of Tenrikyo through *nioigake*, we must first begin by the people close to us.

In the Shinbashira's Instruction Two:

Those who lack a dependable guide tend to become attached to self-interest or to live in idleness. The mission entrusted to us Yoboku is to show them a standard for their minds and sprinkle the fragrance of the original Parent's intention on them. First of all, however, it is essential

for us ourselves to live each day in a manner based on the teachings so that we may impart the joy of faith to those around us.

And who closer around us, than our own children.

Niogake within a Family Relating to Non-Tenrikyo Member(s) in a Family

Motomasa Murayama

(Mr. Murayama is an associate professor of Business Ethics at Tokiwa University and resides in Mito, Japan)

I live in Mito, Ibaraki Prefecture with my wife, Shoko and two small children. Motohiro, my oldest son, is three years old and goes to the Mito Catholic Kindergarten from April this year. The second one, Nanako was just born in February. She is five months old now. My wife does not work and devotes all her time to raising two small kids. I really appreciate her hard work.

Shoko and I got married in December 2000. When I first met her in January 2000, she was searching for a job in Tokyo. She had worked for many years in several companies and gained experience as an office lady in Tokyo. At that time she was not interested in having children and wanted to pursue her career. On our second date I confessed that I was a follower of Tenrikyo, but she was embarrassed to know about that. I was very much interested in her and wanted to open up myself as soon as possible. To my surprise she was a Christian in her soul. She was baptized after we got married. I would rather have my partner be religious than non-religious. Both of us believe in the Creator or One Supreme Being, although the names of the God are different; she believes in God the Father who revealed Himself through Jesus Christ, the Son of God and through the Holy Spirit. I believe in God the Parent who became revealed through Oyasama. I was interested in her as a woman with religious inclination. She was also interested in me because I could understand her religious feelings. I imagined, however, that it would be easy to convert a Christian to Tenrikyo.

I asked her to read *The Life of Oyasama*. She went to the Ushigome Grand Church to buy *Kyoso-den (The Life of Oyasama, Foundress of Tenrikyo)*, an official biography of Oyasama. It was my intention that she would be impressed by the life of Oyasama, but it did not work at all.

My parents were against my marriage with Shoko. My father was critical of the Catholic faith. My father even asked me if I would become Catholic. One of my sisters was also against my marriage, since I am a strong believer of

Tenrikyo.

The wedding ceremony was held at St. Ignatius Church in Yotsuya, Tokyo. To have a Catholic wedding, we needed to attend a wedding seminar twenty times. I love Shoko and the wedding ceremony is very important for a woman, so I had no difficulty in having a Christian wedding. They never forced me to be a Christian, and Catholicism seemed to be like a school for me. A Catholic priest and an old Catholic couple guided us and suggested what was morally good at the seminar. You go to church and learn something, but you do not have to be a Christian.

Before the marriage my life was completely controlled by my father, and I was not a happy man under his umbrella. It is Shoko who cut this bad relationship. I thank her in this point, but now she guides me strongly.

After marriage - Life in Mito

When she quit her job and started to live in Mito, a rural place outside Tokyo, she was very much discouraged. We rented a cheap shabby house at Kasahara in Mito City. She had no friends. She lost her career. She got poor all of a sudden. She and I fought every night. I was just satisfied with getting married, but she wanted more from the married life. She often mentioned that she was not just my housekeeper. I started to learn about her complex character and I am still learning it now. She always starves for my love. She has a strong character and has a terrible temper. We were always in danger of getting divorced a year after the wedding.

In the summer of 2001, Shoko got pregnant. We thanked God for giving us a new life. But Shoko and I fought over my cousins, who had served as go-betweens in our wedding. They suggested to Shoko that she should obey her husband. I said that they were right. But she said that they were liars and not truthful. She got off from the car all of a sudden while we were discussing this matter.

In the first year after the wedding, I tried to impose the teachings of Tenrikyo on her and always criticized Christian faith. She got unhappy. When I went to Tokyo to attend a monthly service, she was very upset because she was not feeling well from a bad case of morning sickness. She was not helped by my stubborn attitude of faith.

Soon after, she was bleeding and we found out that the fetus was not

growing. After the operation, Shoko was still anesthetized strongly. She was crying out and calling out the Blessed Mary's prayer unconsciously. Nurses were trying to calm her down because there were many people in the hallway. I can never forget this horrible scene. After this incident, my Tenrikyo spiritual teacher told me that both of us had not mentally become parents yet. I criticized her for her bad use of the mind, but it worked to the opposite. Then I regretted that I should not use the teachings of Tenrikyo to those who are not believers of Tenrikyo. Otherwise the teachings would kill the heart of non-believers.

Shoko's mother and Shoko's complex character

When Shoko was seven years old, her life changed dramatically. Shoko's grandmother started to stay in her house. The grandmother needed to be well taken care of by Shoko's mother, since her grandmother could not move. Shoko's mother became so busy that she could not pay attention to her second child, Shoko. Shoko was asked to take a bath by herself from that moment. She was not aware of having to wash her hair until the school nurse found that she had not washed her hair for a month. What was worse, the grandmother's love to Shoko suddenly decreased on the part of Shoko. The grandmother passed away when Shoko was fifteen years old. Shoko's complex character was largely shaped through these years. Shoko was always hungry for love, but she could not express her feelings openly. She pretended to be a good girl before her mother. She learned to be patient in front of her mother. She learned the dirty part of the adult world. Many relatives visited her house to say "thank you" for her mother's hard work, but nobody actually helped her mother. Shoko searched for the truth of life and finally she found it in the words of the Bible.

Motohiro was born

During a busy time just after moving to Migawa and having two Americans staying for a week in the house, we found out that Shoko was pregnant. Shoko mentions recently that our relationship was at the best during her pregnancy. I had to pay keen attention not to make Shoko irritated. Motohiro, our first son was born on March 3rd, 2003 after a hard labor. It took her almost four days to give birth to Motohiro. The doctor decided to make an early delivery, because

the fetus was not growing normally by their scientific measurement. But her cervix was rigid and it was really hurting through artificial treatment. She was exhausted. On the fourth day I was asked to discuss whether a cesarean section should be done or not. The intravenous oxytocin was given finally to induce labor. And finally the baby was born right in front of me. It was a miracle to have a baby. I thoroughly thanked God for sending the new-born child to us. Through this experience I was very much impressed by childbirth. My way of looking at students changed drastically since that time. Each student has his or her own mother and father. If you think of that, each student looks so precious. The child brings treasure to our family. I received two awards in academic associations after he was born. As a Japanese old phrase says, "A child binds a married couple closer together." Motohiro was very active and cried harder than any other baby. Shoko complained of hardships to raise Motohiro on many occasions and suggested divorcing. But we cannot divorce easily while having a small child. A Catholic person is prohibited to get divorced. She knows this commandment of the holy community, but when she gets angry, she wants to offend me by implying a divorce.

Another miscarriage

In 2004 Shoko got pregnant again. I was longing for our second child. Motohiro needed a brother or a sister. But Shoko had a different idea. She was tired of raising one son and was not happy about having another child. To our disappointment, the fetus was not growing again. At that time I was quite angry and blamed her for her bad use of the mind. Shoko hated listening to the idea of *innen*. I could not talk on the doctrine of *innen* to her anymore. It seems that our relationship cooled down after this incident.

Nanako was born

Last year we bought a brand new house also in Migawa. Shoko got pregnant again in the new house. She had a worse time than when Motohiro was inside her womb. She complained every day, and our relationship was not good. The baby girl was delivered with ease in February 2006. The female baby is so pretty with big eyes. Now the mother feels very sorry to have had a negative idea about having another baby during pregnancy. Nanako cries much harder and longer than her brother, Motohiro. So my wife is very much frustrated and

blames me a lot. Somehow I was not so impressed with the second child. I must thank God more deeply.

Religious dialogue between husband and wife

To maintain a family life, both Shoko and I agree that keeping the family life is our first priority. Although each of our different faiths is important to each of us, sustaining the family life is more critical than anything else. As long as she is happy with a Christian community here in Mito, there is no problem. I respect her faith and never criticize the Christian faith in front of her. Every year, I attend Mass on Christmas Eve, and sing hymns and receive blessings. I understand that she finds security and peacefulness in prayer. She loves Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary. As I respect her faith, she also respects my faith. She finally understands that I would be meaningless without my Tenrikyo faith. She approves my going down to Tokyo to attend monthly services. She occasionally goes with me to see my spiritual mentor and my Tenrikyo friends. We now respect each other's faith.

My Tenrikyo spiritual teacher repeatedly suggested that I must not impose Tenrikyo teachings on her. He also suggested that if I could not make my wife happy, then my faith would not become complete.

My son and daughter are well taken care of by many good-minded people in Mito. My son goes to a Catholic kindergarten on the weekdays and attend a Sunday Mass in a Catholic Church, located in the same area. He loves to sing hymns loudly at the Mass. Recently he asked philosophical questions like the meaning of sin and the meaning of life. While singing the hymn, he created the word "*Kami no Mikoto*." From January I have been taking my son to monthly services held in Tokyo. He finds good friends among the children of Tenrikyo followers. I try to do *otsutome*, the service, by myself in my house. My son is curious about what I am doing. My wife is not against me from doing the service in the house. So far my son wants to be baptized and asks a Sister how to be baptized. My wife asks me if she can allow him to be baptized. If he wants to be baptized, it is OK to do so. He may be baptized soon in the right moment with our daughter. According to my Tenrikyo teacher, baptism is like an injection. If the teachings of Oyasama are the final and ultimate, all other faiths are incomplete and are like fertilizers. My wife and I agree that it is the children's choice to decide his or her own faith, but we can offer the

opportunity to give them religious experiences. I believe that the Christian community offers a good chance to give children the idea of thanking God. It is better than just having a secular education. What is important in the family is that I myself practice the Joyous Life showing a good Divine Model. I love my children and I need to love and take good care of my wife who is working so hard to raise two small kids.

The Future of Tenrikyo faith in my family

By reflecting on my family life and my own faith, I have to admit that my faith is still incomplete, and that I have to cleanse my soul more and more. I believe that the teachings of God the Parent are profound, complete and eternal. We borrow our bodies from God and God lends us our bodies. The teaching of “a thing lent, a thing borrowed” is a very simple truth, but it contains a very deep meaning. If we listen to the story of the Truth of Origin, God the Parent and eight instruments have worked diligently over about one billion years to create human beings and the world where we live in. We live in this world with no problems. God wants us to live the Joyous Life with our given freedom of the mind. We are blessed with the gracious providence of God the Parent. Without the gracious workings of God the Parent, we cannot even breathe. If we thoroughly understand the power of God and all the works God has done, we just thank God’s will and power. As the fourth verse of Song Five of Mikagura-uta, reads, “Though there is no one who is free from greed, Before God there is no greed.” We are all indebted to God the Parent. God the Parent became revealed for the first time through Oyasama, and began to teach the important truth. God the Parent makes it an eternal rule that God watches over all the human hearts and gives blessings accordingly. It is taught as “blessings according to one’s use of the mind.” It is our soul and mind that determines the course of our destiny. If our heart resembles Oyasama’s, we have no disease and no aging, and we can live as long as we wish. But before listening to the teachings of God the Parent, we all have used our mind in the way contrary to God’s wishes and accumulated dusts. If we do not keep cleaning our heart, our soul can be easily tainted and we cannot live the Joyous Life.

If we cannot enjoy the Joyous Life by purifying our hearts and souls, the life of Oyasama means nothing. She always expects our spiritual growth. If there is

a better teaching than Oyasama's, I will be willing to accept it. I know that the Christian community is morally good, but it is actually man-made. They do not know the Truth of Origin and how to purify each soul completely. I appreciate the Mito Catholic community that has helped and empowered my wife and children. However, I believe that there will be a day when my wife becomes aware of the gracious providence of God the Parent, and starts to change her unhappy mind. I cannot change her character. God the Parent will give her a chance to know the true God. I should not blame her character, although it is the cause of her destiny. By following and practicing the teachings of the ever-living Oyasama, I need to cleanse my soul day by day. If I truly follow Oyasama, I can give out a good fragrance to my family. This is my *noigake* ongoing within my own family.

Section Summary Report

Organizer: Shugo Yamanaka

In this section meeting, we started with three presentations representing three different cases of “family and faith.” One was a case of someone becoming Tenrikyo upon marriage, and becoming truly Tenrikyo through her married life in a Tenrikyo church. The second was a case of someone growing up in Tenrikyo, marrying a Tenrikyo woman, and now trying to bring up his own children to embrace the Tenrikyo faith. The third was an interesting case of a very devout Tenrikyo follower marrying a devout Catholic woman and trying to turn his wife and children Tenrikyo.

We then discussed what the keys are to a successful transmission of faith to children or non-Tenrikyo member(s) within a family.

Stacy Takahashi said that the biggest reason she came to truly believe in Tenrikyo was her husband’s love for accepting her and her daughter, and various wonders shown on their children throughout her married life in a church.

Scot Mikuni said that Yoboku parents have the duty and the responsibility to pass on the Tenrikyo faith to the children, and that the transmission of faith from one generation to the next is imperative in sustaining the religious bond between family members. He also mentioned that how well this transmission of faith is done or will be done eventually depends on each person, each parent, and each child.

Motomasa Murayama said that respecting his wife’s Catholic faith rather than trying to argue against it, and at the same time showing her that he really needs the Tenrikyo faith and cannot do without it, was the key to gaining his wife’s understanding about his Tenrikyo faith. He hopes his children, now growing up in environment more Catholic than Tenrikyo, will come to choose Tenrikyo. Mr. Murayama received positive feedback from Gavin Damron who has a Tenrikyo mother and a Christian father explaining why he has chosen to become Tenrikyo.

Also mentioned in the discussion was the power and importance of a Tenrikyo environment. Being in a Tenrikyo environment—living in a Tenrikyo church or living in Jiba—is a great help in bringing up children or turning a

non-Tenrikyo person Tenrikyo.

In relation to this, it was strongly suggested by Lena Okada that the administration of the Sazuke on children from very young ages, whenever they get sick or injured, really works to get the children to believe in God.

Then Jefferson Okada said that even though a Tenrikyo environment is important and helpful, it shouldn't be taken for granted. Just because someone grows up and lives in a strongly Tenrikyo environment, it does not mean that there will be an automatic transmission or acceptance of the Tenrikyo faith.

Finally, Dustin Saito's comment nicely wrapped up our discussion. He said a Tenrikyo environment may or may not be important in transmitting faith. He said the biggest reason he's decided to be Tenrikyo was because of the good examples shown by his parents.

So we concluded stressing that, regardless of our environment or circumstance, we should keep trying to be good examples to other members of our families, so that we may leave them with a positive impression of what it is to be Tenrikyo.

Strengthening the Bonds of the Church Community

Colin Saito

(Rev. Saito is the head minister of Tenrikyo Honolulu Church)

Good afternoon. Thank you for your interest in this topic of “Strengthening the Bonds of the Church Community.” I was born and raised in a church and from my position as a head minister, whose workplace is also his home, I will talk from that perspective, in hopes that it may help those who are not familiar with the church environment understand better.

The topic of “strengthening the bonds of the church community” is a very broad topic and I had difficulty with what to focus on, but basically, I feel that the bonds, which should be strengthened, are the various relationships that are formed within the church community. These relationships develop through the experience of interaction between two people or groups of people and may result in a myriad of possibilities. The experience of life is truly one of learning and I feel that we are here on this earth to give each other the opportunity to react and to actually apply the things we have learned on the stage of life. In other words, given our souls and the power to create causation, which in turn affects our own destiny, we also have the power to undo what we have created or to create new causation and thus change our destiny. To those people around us who provide the various circumstance and situations, which enable us to experience various reactions, we are greatly indebted. By observing how we react to a certain stimulus, we can learn to understand our own thought process and eventually change the way we think in order to have a different reaction given the next opportunity. We mutually give each other the chance to experience and grow spiritually and thus are indebted to each other in this way.

One of the goals of a church is to ultimately bring us closer to an intimate relationship with God the Parent and the final interaction would be between you and God. In other words, the importance of human relationships in fostering our relationship with God will play an important, if not the most important part, in the legacy of our lives here on this earth.

You might say that a successful church has a good system of nurturing its members. Yet on the other hand, no matter how good a system there may be, without members who are committed to the cause, the success of any program

will be to no avail. The result of an efficient nurturing system would be followers who are good Yoboku who follow the teachings, develop a genuine relationship with God, and go on to influence others by their own example of living the faith.

Being the minister of a Tenrikyo church is different from other clergy jobs. The salary is surely not the objective; there is no overtime pay, no vacation, and no retirement plan. It is not a 9-5 job where you can relax after punching out a time card. You are on call 24/7 and you live and work at the same location. When my kids were small, they once asked me, “Dad, why don’t you work like other Dads?” Apparently because I had told them I didn’t have the money to buy them what they wanted. Of course, they now understand my position.

The point I am trying to make is that due to the unusual circumstances of a Tenrikyo minister, being in this position requires a strong conviction that is faith-based because one can easily become disoriented, lose one’s focus and stray away from being a representative of a God-like position. By God-like, I am implying that some people expect you as the *kaicho* (head minister) to be an example of perfection. One member actually told me, “Oh, I didn’t know *kaicho* got angry?” when I told them about an experience I had of losing my temper. In Japan, some members view the *kaicho*’s position as being representative of God, thus, as an example of their faith, they try to follow with every intention of giving respect to God the Parent. This may work to some extent as long as the head minister doesn’t get arrogant and make unnecessary demands and expectations. In America, I think people do respect the clergy position but not to the point of it being God-like. The head minister must be very dedicated to the cause, stay in focus, and not be swayed by the demands and expectations that may arise, otherwise, it is very easy to give in to the temptation of selfish desires.

Our goal is to nurture good Yoboku who follow the teachings and develop a genuine relationship with God, so that they may go on to influence others by their example of living the faith.

Let me give you an example, which shows one interaction between the *kaicho* and a member, and depending on the reaction of each party, how the possibility of different results can occur.

I have an older generation member who is one of the original old-school-type who fervently studied the teachings and talks to many people

about Tenrikyo. Although this person doesn't do much physical *binokishin*, substantial amounts of donations are made when necessary. The younger generation cannot do this because of the high costs of living and mortgage payments. Often, I am called upon by this member to do some odd jobs in their house, for example, to change a kitchen faucet, fix a leaking toilet, or to put up curtains. Although they might say, "No one wants to come and do such menial jobs but the *kaicho* is always there to depend on" Or they might say, "The job is too small or too cheap that no one wants to accept because they cannot make any money and have no time, but I know *kaicho* will come and do it." So I do what I can and they are so thankful. I go to the house, check the job, go and buy the parts (sometimes several trips to the store), fix what I have to fix, and give them the receipt and change. They may have given me \$20.00 to buy the parts and I give back \$4.50 in change. The member says keep it for gas and reminds me by saying, "*kaicho*, you should do *binokishin* too." So I accept the \$4.50 for gas, say thank you, and go home after spending half a day helping this member.

Many thoughts go through my mind as I am doing this *binokishin* and what I have presented is just a simplified version. I view such a situation as a God-given chance to remind myself of what *binokishin* truly is. I was reminded of the preciousness of this long-time member, especially since I am not the one who introduced her to the faith many years ago. Sometimes I had to hear complaints and endure embarrassing comments from this person, but even then, I just keep on smiling. Once, there just happened to be another person in the house who spent ten years working in a household in Japan. When this person overheard the conversation, they told my member that in Japan, just to have the plumber come to the house cost \$150.00 and then you have to pay for the parts and the time, which usually amounted to over \$500.00. That time my member gave \$100.00 *osonae* (donation) to the church for the *binokishin* I did.

This person donates thousands of dollars per year and while I was doing the *binokishin*, they inadvertently mentioned a certain large donation that was recently done and kind of implied that the *binokishin* I was doing was in exchange for that donation. Knowing that donations should never have any conditions attached, I pondered whether I should teach this to the member, but ruled it out because of previous negative reactions from doing so. I am a *kaicho* much younger and especially not the one who saved this member so it is

best to stay in a neutral position. But I also feel it is necessary to teach certain things so this person can make spiritual progress. Yet, from the standpoint of being a model, one of the best examples that I may demonstrate is to change myself first, rather than to try to change the other person.

I wanted to share this example in order to show how sensitive the reactions can be in such a situation. If I had reacted by trying to get this member to understand my feelings, instead of listening and attempting to understand their feelings, the outcome might have been totally different. Yes, it is true that we give others the chance to react but it is more important that we pay attention to our own reactions in response to the opportunities they give us. In a negative situation, if our reactions are always the same, then we can deduct that we have not changed and our re-actions are the same as always . . . the same actions over and over again. But if we change our thinking process then our subsequent response or re-action will also be different. We can learn how to react by choice. With this being accomplished, that situation is no longer needed and we are then able to move on to other experiences and reactions.

Another example I want to bring up is the various *binokishin* that is required to maintain a church and how the members can devote themselves, as an expression of their faith, by doing these *binokishin*. At my church, I have a moderate size membership (50-60) and the church property is several times larger than a normal property. If I did not have other responsibilities, I could handle the workload but with other things to do, it gets difficult to keep up. Taking care of maintenance of the church building and grounds is an enormously time-consuming responsibility, which affects the time and effort for me to commit in doing other things, such as making my rounds to pray for people, writing prayers, sermons, and doing household services to name a few.

Last year, I was asked to spend over three months at the Jiba to teach the English *Shuyoka* (Spiritual Development Course of Church Headquarters) course. In preparation of this long absence, I prepared a complete list of *binokishin* that was necessary each month for the church. I asked everyone to sign up and come when they could. I made the list so that people could come and do the *binokishin* in parts, if they did not have the time to do the whole thing. For example, dividing the *shinden* (sanctuary) into a left half and a right half so that the sweeping, mopping and wiping of chairs, could be done in sections at different times. The same was done for the yard work, cleaning of

the toilets and other tasks. I wanted to create the opportunity for anybody, no matter how much or how little time they had, to be able to come to the church and dedicate their efforts into doing *binokishin* and thus have God the Parent accept their sincere acts of devotion. The sign up sheet was to let them know what needs to be done at the church and also to offer an opportunity so that they can put into practice the teaching taught by Oyasama, “If you do as you are told, that is common sense. But if one does something before being told to do so, that is true sincerity.” By providing the opportunity to volunteer their services, we were able to not only focus on the individual effort but to also on the concerted effort of everyone as a church group.

In *The Life of Oyasama*, Chapter Two, page 15, there is a story about a young and healthy farmhand, who was hired for the autumn harvest but proved to be exceedingly lazy. The other workers disliked him because he did not do the work but expected to get paid. Miki did not forsake him but strove to guide him and always told him, “Thank you for your efforts.” At first, the man took advantage of Her kindness and remained as idle as ever. But after a while, he began to work and eventually became an unusually hard worker.

What was Miki doing when she thanked him for his efforts that he was obviously not doing? Was it compassion? Kindness? Empathy? First of all, I believe that Miki was displaying “acceptance” of a child through Her motherly love. She did not judge this man or try to change him but first of all, accepted this person as he was and then used positive encouragement to guide him towards Her vision of seeing him as a hard worker. As the Ofudesaki verse teaches, “There is no one who is essentially evil. It is but a bit of dust stuck on.” She was spiritually advanced enough to see with “eyes that were trained to see good” and thus with this image of the end result, She created the opportunity for the lazy farmhand to be able to change his own destiny. In this way, I want to try to be such a *kaicho* and lead by example and use encouraging words so that the members can grow into better and more useful Yoboku. One of my goals is to be able to train my eyes to see the good in others and to create a vision in my mind to make it a reality in the future.

Oyasama said, “Form a fraternity.” Which may be different from a church in many ways but the idea, as I understand it, is that Oyasama intended for us to form support groups that will provide the chance for mutual help and lateral support, which will enable us to gain understanding through interaction

and make spiritual progress. In those beginning days, each village had a fraternity where people gathered and learned together. If we look at the hand movements in the Mikagura-uta, we cup our hands and make a motion of a little bag tied to our waist on both sides. This symbolizes the comfort and convenience of having the support of others to rely on as we travel on our life's journey.

Today, it may seem that I have been talking about the situation of a church from a personal view and not much about on how to improve the activities, but I feel that it is these basic things that must be accomplished first of all, before the church can go on to create and execute programs to nurture the membership. I had said this earlier that 'without members who are committed to the cause, the success of any program will be to no avail.' For commitment and dedication to occur, we need to study and learn the teachings in our hearts. We need to provide many opportunities for on-going study of the teachings. We need learning programs and materials in the English language to learn from. I say, 'we' because when I am in a teaching position, it is often embarrassing and frustrating for me because I lack access to valuable materials such as the Osashizu and the Truth of Origin to name two for example. By studying the teachings, we gain understanding and our level of faith increases, which then encourages us to commit and dedicate ourselves to spiritual development.

There is always something new to learn and the following is an example of gaining new insight of the teachings through observation and a willingness to learn. Only a few weeks ago, concerning *Kunitokotachi-no-Mikoto* and *Omotari-no-Mikoto*, I finally came to an understanding of the "One Headed Dragon with one tail and the Great Serpent with 12 heads and three tails with knives on each end" as found in one verbal account of the Truth of Origin. I was always perplexed with the idea and wondered why Oyasama taught such a story that even I thought was obviously fictional. *Kunitokotachi-no-Mikoto* and *Omotari-no-Mikoto*, represented by the Moon and the Sun or Tsukihi, are considered to be the two most important aspects of the Complete Providence. I also wondered why the eyes were included with the blessing of *Kunitokotachi-no-Mikoto*, which is, "in the human body, the providence of the eyes and fluids; in the world, the providence of water." I won't go into the details today, but this understanding all began to come together when I visited my optometrist.

During the exam, the doctor puts medicine in the eyes to dilate the pupils so

that he can take a picture of the back of the eyeball. By examining the eyes, he can tell the presence of many diseases such as high blood pressure, glaucoma, cataracts, diabetes, thyroid problems, high cholesterol and even brain tumors! Surprised, I asked the doctor, “How can you tell brain tumors from examining the eyes?” The doctor replied that the optic nerve is connected directly to the brain and if the shape is abnormal, it may be a telltale sign of brain cancer. That was it! The eyes are directly connected to the brain!

Oyasama said:

“What you see is causation, what you hear is causation.”

Now days, research has proven that more than 95 percent of our learning comes through our eyes and all that information goes directly into our brain! By seeing through both eyes, we are able to differentiate depth and distance. Also, we are able to detect the various colors reflected by the sunlight. Oyasama said:

“What you see and hear is causation,” putting emphasis upon the blessing of the eyes and its connection to the brain.

Oyasama spoke of a One Headed Dragon with one tail. We now know that the brain is divided into twelve cranial sections that control different parts of the body. It is like having twelve heads, so to speak. The mythical dragon, prevalent in many folklore throughout the world’s cultures, is believed to fly high in the sky from where it can see far and wide, thus gathering much knowledge to stay in control. Our brain is located up high in our head and its twelve cranial sections, respectively, control various parts of our body. After all these years, 52 years to be exact, I was finally able to understand and my respect for the teachings of Oyasama increased tremendously! Now, about the Great Serpent with 12 heads and three tails with knives on the end of each, I was so excited to finally learn about this one too, but it is going to have to wait because we are off the subject.

In conclusion, I would like to remind us of the Shinbashira’s words in Instruction One, urging us to learn the teachings and in Instruction Two, he is urging us towards spiritual growth and specifically states that, “spiritual

growth refers to the process of nearing the intention of the Parent.” He goes on to say, “The intention of the Parent originated as the intent in the creation of humankind and the world—which was undertaken out of a desire for the Joyous Life—and led to the Teaching’s day of origin when God the Parent became openly revealed in order to save all people throughout the world.” The goal is to live the Joyous Life but we must work towards this goal by learning the teachings and applying it into our lives so that we may experience, little by little, the feeling of joy when we reach out to help another person. By paying attention to how we react and then changing our minds accordingly, the situations around us will automatically change. Quality faith-based relationships will encourage the creation of activities to deepen our faith. Thus, we will achieve spiritual growth and come closer to the Intention of God, our Beloved Parent.

Church: A Place To be Closer to God

Haruo Nakagoshi

Rev. Nakagoshi is the head minister of Tenrikyo Futanajima Grand Church in Kagawa, Japan)

Today, I am very honored to be a part of this historical Forum. I am also thankful to God the Parent for providing me the opportunity to look closely upon the important topic of “Ties Within the Church Community.” As a head minister of a church, good relationship among the members is very, very important, as we are taught in the Osashizu, the Timely Talk, “If you unite your hearts in unison, I will give you any blessing” (January 19, 1898).

Well, when I found my name on the list of speakers under this section, the faces of two Yoboku popped up in my mind: one Yoboku who went through terrible experiences after he had left his church; and the other one who was repeatedly shown marvelous blessings after he began to come to our church everyday.

The first one is a head minister of one of our subordinate churches. However, not long after he was sanctioned head minister, he left his church. His aunt, along with his wife and mother, lived together in the church. His aunt was there since she was born, and that made her the longest one to live there. She was sort of the “boss” of the house. This might be very Japanese, but things like this happen. The aunt mistreated the head minister’s wife every day, from what I heard, and it got to the point where she couldn’t take it any more, and one day, when the head minister came home, his wife was waiting outside, and asked him to leave at once with her. So they left the church.

We didn’t know their whereabouts for about ten years. The next thing I heard was that he was back in town, not at his church, though, for he had fallen ill and was hospitalized. At that time, he only had a few months to live. Eventually, he passed away at the age of 46. And sadly enough, two months later, his aunt suddenly passed away, too.

On the contrary, five years ago, a Yoboku came to our church for help. His wife had been to our church once in a while, but I hardly had seen him until then. He was an alcoholic and his condition got worse. Soon enough, however, he began to experience hallucinations. He was able to receive God’s

blessing, thanks to the truth of Jiba, and he and his wife began to attend our church's morning service every single day.

After that, they have been repeatedly shown guidance from God in the form of illnesses, and for each time, they have been shown wondrous blessings. About one year later, one morning when he went to the restroom, his urine was all red. He was bleeding somewhere internally. So I administered Sazuke right after the morning service. Then he turned to me with a big smile and said that he felt something and he was sure that he would be saved so he went to work that very day, without going to the hospital.

Not long after that event, his wife fell ill. She was diagnosed with stomach cancer and had to go through an operation to remove the afflicted area, which turned out to be half of her stomach. About three days after surgery, I paid a visit to the hospital. But she was not in her room. So I thought she was going through an examination or something for I thought it was impossible for her to walk around only three days after the surgery. But at that moment, she came into the room on her own feet with a vase of flowers in her hands, and brightly said, "Hi, *kaicho-san*." I was so stunned, and asked her if it was all right for her to walk around. She told me how thankful she was for God's blessings because people who went through similar operations even before her were still bedridden and suffering from pain, but she recovered so quickly that she was able to take a shower the day I made the visit. A couple of days later, she came to the morning service in her pajamas. She said that her doctor was so amazed at her recovery that it was almost a miracle. She told the doctor that she had faith in Tenrikyo, and he said that it may be the reason, and he granted her a permission to go to our church any time she wanted.

Moreover, last month, it was the husband again. It turned out that he had cancer and they had to take out one of his kidneys. I said to him that things would have been a lot easier if he had consulted a doctor the day he had blood in his urine. But what he said was that it surely was a blessing, and that God had waited for his wife to recover fully, so that they can take care of each other.

Now, the point I would like to make through these examples is that a church is a place to be closer to God the Parent. I strongly believe that by coming to a church on a regular basis to pay visits to God to express gratitude for the daily providences received and to lean upon God for help, we construct an intimate relationship with God.

The former Shinbashira has instructed as follows:

I think that the sincerity you put into going to your church to offer thanks to God is bound to reach heaven. You might reason that you can offer thanks at home without going to your church. But I am sure you know that when you go to your church, you need to be willing to do so. I feel that this willingness to go to your church will reach God the Parent as an expression of your sincerity. Also, when we come to understand the deep parental heart of God, we could accept God's blessings as blessings, never to take things for granted, and see things in a different perspective in a way that God intends us to do, and eventually receive further blessings.

Growing Spiritually, Day by Day, p. 130

If a person has received a miraculous blessing, it is likely for that person to pay visits to a church repeatedly with gratitude. Unfortunately, however, it is not the case for many people. It is, therefore, one of the essential tasks of a church to have as many people as possible to be willing to come to the church, and give them the feeling that they want to come back again.

That is why the strong ties among followers are very important. We should strive to construct our ties in which we talk with one another, discuss things with one another, enlighten one another, help one another, convey the truth to one another, and settle our minds with one another. Further, we must always be open-minded, and this will enable us to listen to and understand others which are quite important.

Again the former Shinbashira teaches us:

The ideal we have of our churches has nothing to do with whether they are big or small or whether they are new or old. Rather, it has to do with the joyous mood emanating from the church – the mood that helps people dispel their depressed feelings and become joyous when they visit the church. I should like you to imagine a church with such an atmosphere as the goal or ideal of your churches. It does not matter if your churches are extremely small. If your churches are such that visitors always feel warmth emanating from the minds of people there

the instant they open the door, an atmosphere of joyousness that is in accord with God the Parent's intention, then God the Parent will be happy to extend blessings to your churches, acknowledging them as ideal churches.

Growing Spiritually, Day by Day, pp. 122-123

We must create an atmosphere in which we can interact with one another like a family. Further, we must not forget that in constructing ideal ties, the teachings must not be left out. Hosting entertainment activities to attract people to gather is very nice, but we should not stop there.

Recently, at our church, a group of young mothers has been holding study sessions. In former times, their activities consisted of things such as flower arrangement or dressing and folding kimono clothing. Then, they decided that they wanted inquire about the essence of the teachings and so I suggested going through *The Doctrine of Tenrikyo*. They then asked me to lead the study session. At first, they didn't look so happy about studying, but as time went on, the study sessions were geared toward applying teachings in actual life. Members of the group have some common factors of being a mother, a wife of a church head or a successor, and considerably young (late 30s-early 40s). They had similar concerns and problems, so it was not too difficult to apply the teachings to suit their needs. Now they want these sessions to be held more often. This particular activity seems to be working well, but it only contains a limited number of people. I am now in the process of trying to come up with a creative activity that includes more and more people.

Carrying out such an activity is one way I can contribute to enrich the ties among members of church, and another way to do so is to construct a friendlier relationship between myself and each member of our church. As head minister, people tend to put a distance between us. It may be very Japanese, but they do so as a way to show respect. It is true that sometimes it works better that way, especially when I try to convey a certain truth or guide them out of troubles, but other times this isn't the case. I am now trying to be as friendly as possible, so that I can, even roughly, grasp what each person needs. This works better with the younger generation. The Young Men's Association members of my church have organized a soccer team. Well, soccer is gaining more and more popularity in Japan. Of course, we once had a baseball team,

but it is fading away. Anyway, some members come to our church for the practice and for games, but not for our monthly services. Instead of a head minister ordering them to come for the service and as a result, having them not to come to church at all, the importance of following the path would be better accepted by them if I build up nice and friendly ties first and then blend the essence of teachings into our daily conversations. It may take time, but it seems more certain to work out this way.

Our goal of the Joyous World seems so distant, but there are many ways to make our steps each and everyday.

It's All about Relationships: Human Connections at the Heart of Relating to God and the Church Community

Koji Uesugi

(Mr. Uesugi is a member of Tenrikyo Pacific Valley Church and resides in Chino Hills, USA.)

Greetings to all of you and how wonderful it is to see you here in Tenri for this very important event! I feel particularly honored this morning to be serving on the panel for this very important topic - "Ties Within the Church Community" - along with my esteemed panelists Reverend Saito and Reverend Nakagoshi, who certainly have a great deal to offer due to their role as head ministers of their respective churches. While I am not a church head minister, God the Parent has afforded me opportunities for spiritual growth both in my personal and professional life that I hope will add an important perspective to consider for this particular topic.

The Value of Human Relationships

When I was first approached about speaking about this topic, I thought "Wow, this topic really touches on something that is really important to us to explore in the global mission for our Teaching but what am I really going to talk about?" As I thought more about this and broadened it beyond the Tenrikyo church context, it became clearer to me that this topic begs us to look at something that is basic to us as human beings. Since humans are by nature social creatures, the idea that our experiences and perceptions in life are essentially shaped by the relationships we develop with one another over the course of our lifetime seems like an obvious one. If we stop to think about the positive and negative experiences we have all had over the years, whether in school, at work, on a sports team, at church, etc., how much of our experiences were impacted by the kinds of relationships we had with others? A well known figure among organizational leadership theories, Margaret Wheatley, asserts that "We don't know who we are, what we think or how we'll respond until we meet up with another person, event, or idea . . . we can't know who we are without our relationships." Wheatley's statement essentially speaks to how the relationships between humans provide the basis of understanding for

who we are and how we relate to the world around us. She's basically saying that we really don't know who we are and what our purpose is in life without the interconnections with others. Again, while this seems very basic, she's saying something very profound because I would argue that on the whole, we as humans seem to be more and more disconnected with one another than ever even with the technology that we now have. Wheatley's theory is important for those of us who follow the teachings to consider because one of its core elements is for all of us to value our relationships since we are all children of God the Parent and that we need to treat each other as such. We are also taught how important it is for us to learn from one another by seeing the reflections of ourselves in others and using the experiences from our relationships to develop a stronger understanding and appreciation for all of God's wondrous blessings.

So, if our relationship with one another is so critical to enhancing our relationship with God, it behooves us to look at this in the context of our church communities because they play such a vital role in fostering our relationship with God. For the purposes of this topic today, I would go as far to say that in many cases, our relationship with God starts with the kind of relationship we experience with one another at church. As human beings, our need to touch, feel, taste, see, and hear is almost inherent in us, and before we can begin to understand God, which can seem so ambiguous a times, we almost need to experience something tangible through our relationship with others before we can actually feel God. Therefore if our experiences with others, including those within our church community are good, it could lead to a stronger willingness to explore strengthening our relationship with God.

Personal Experience

In order to make this point, I'd like to talk briefly about my wife Ruby's initial experience within the context of two church settings and how they impacted how she related to God. I have known Ruby for nearly seven years now and we will be celebrating our fourth wedding anniversary this October. I first introduced her to Tenrikyo fairly early in our relationship because I felt Ruby had the capacity to appreciate the teachings. Although she had reservations about religions in general due to negative experiences with them in the past, I felt she would find aspects of Tenrikyo that she could connect to

if she gave it a chance. However, before imposing my beliefs upon her, it was important for us to develop our relationship first.

As we spent more time with one another, it was as if God provided us opportunities to incorporate the teachings into our relationship. Through the administration of the Sazuke when Ruby became ill or simply talking about the teachings in relation to her job as a teacher working with students with special needs, Tenrikyo became a part of our conversations. When Ruby began attending our church, she quickly gained an appreciation of the philosophical aspects of the teachings that came out of my father's sermons. She also was relatively comfortable at my father's church due to the small size and ability to get to know the members well in a short time. Beyond the more intimate feeling of the church, what was particularly important for Ruby was my parents' interaction with her. Again, it was about relationships. Because Ruby is Chinese American, she can only communicate with my parents in English so there are aspects of their conversation that get lost in translation, but they are able to communicate for the most part.

Making the transition to monthly service at Mission Headquarters in America was a much different experience however. I sensed she wasn't as comfortable there and this became more and more obvious the more she attended. While I tried to put the focus of going to church as the opportunity to connect with God through the service and prayer, her overall experience there was not pleasant. Ruby told me she didn't feel like she belonged there, and because there wasn't anything really in place to help people new to the faith and church, she relied on me being by her side our entire time together at mission headquarters. This is when I began realizing the importance of churches, especially those that function to meet the needs of so many people like a mission headquarters, to be intentional in how they cultivate relationships among its members. Ruby often felt lost and didn't feel welcome because she felt she was so different from everyone else. I have heard this from others and have become more sensitive to the role that churches play in focusing on relationship building as a core element of their functions. Nevertheless, Ruby continued attending mission headquarters because she knew how important it was to me. However, I knew that attending church for me would not allow her the opportunity to strengthen her relationship to God. Although Ruby willingly participated in *Shuyokai* (Spiritual Development Course at overseas

mission headquarters) and came to Jiba with me a couple of years later, it was still hard for her to fully engage with the teachings, partly due to her own past experiences and partly due to not having the opportunity to develop strong relationships with the larger congregation.

Over the last several years, Ruby found different ways to get involved at mission headquarters, including serving as co-leader of the Sunday school Shohi group with me. This gave Ruby something to contribute to, and as a special education teacher, she had a lot of great ideas to help students learn, so this was something she was able to relate to. She also began connecting personally with others her age that staffed Sunday school. Since then, she has made more friends and feels with her new role as a mother, she has other ways of relating with other mothers. She feels much more comfortable at mission headquarters now, and that in turn has been important in our efforts as husband and wife, and now parents, to grow spiritually on a daily basis.

Serving Diverse Populations

Just like any formal organizational structure, our churches need to be better aware of the need for people to have opportunities to connect at a tangible level, at least at the initial stages to help them feel God. In light of those who were a part of the faith but no longer connected, we must also recognize that it's not just about how to help newer members along, but those who have grown up in the faith and, despite that, have disconnected themselves from the faith, partly due to the lack of or even negative relationships they experienced with others at church.

This is increasingly important for us to consider as Yoboku in a richly diverse nation such as the United States. No matter how wonderful our teaching is, the message cannot be communicated as it should if we do not think about the importance of cultivating relationships among people first. One could argue that perhaps we need to focus on people first connecting to God, and then everything else will fall into place. While this can be true of some people, I believe these people represent the minority. I believe that for most people, their relationship with God begins with developing authentic relationships with people. My current work at the university with former foster youth who are attending college has afforded me the opportunity to appreciate and value our need for positive relationships. For young people who at some

point were ripped out of their homes and separated from their parents and other family, having opportunities to build loving and trusting relationships are important for them to have productive lives. Therefore, we have a philosophy in my department to ensure that the first thing we do with the students is to validate the importance of developing and maintaining trusting relationships before going forward with anything else. In my conversations with them, they told me that this is more important to them at this point before they can establish any meaningful relationship with God.

Recommendations and Concluding Remarks

For those of us who live in a diverse, multicultural society such as the United States and Canada, it is particularly important to recognize the many kinds of people who are attending our churches. While the church is not the only place where meaningful relationships between people can be cultivated, it certainly is an obvious place for this to occur. As wonderful as the truth of the teachings is, my experience thus far has demonstrated how important it is for people to feel connected among others before or as they develop their relationship with God. There are many ways this can be done.

Section Summary Report

Organizers: Motokiyo Fukaya and Saburo Morishita

The first speaker, Colin Saito, stressed the importance of the role of the head minister in strengthening the bonds of the members of the church community. That is, what the head minister says or does often times affects the bonds a follower will have with and at the church. The second speaker, Haruo Nakagoshi, speaking from the perspective of head minister working in Japan, emphasized the importance of an intimate relationship with God, however sour a relationship one may have with others. Blessings are received, even miraculous ones, because of an authentic relationship with God. He also stressed the importance of the church's atmosphere as that which might attract one to the church. The third speaker, Koji Uesugi, underscored how a close-knit family atmosphere might help first-timers get into a comfort zone for relationships to develop; yet he also mentioned how a sense of feeling "not at home" at the church may foster negative interrelationships. We had a break after the presentations were done.

The discussion had two main ramifications: 1) questions directed to the speakers regarding their presentations and 2) different perspectives regarding fostering individual ties within the church community as well as those things that hinder it from being developed from the audience. What came out of the discussion is the general sense that, yes, indeed, strong ties within the church will more often than not help to build the positive and necessary connections with God. But what steps can we take to mold and reinforce those ties? The discussion further went on to say that there cannot be a kind of "one-size fits all" pattern that serves as the key for building strong relationships since each relationship – head minister and follower, follower and other follower, follower and non-follower, etc. – is different. What we did, therefore, was to ask ourselves what features might promote strong relationships and share some concrete examples. In closing, though our group had again only a handful of participants, I think we had the most variety of countries being represented: Nepal, Australia, England, USA (Mainland and Hawaii), Taiwan, and Japan. Regarding the contents of the discussion, allow me to jot down some of the themes, comments, and suggestions that were openly talked about.

There was a question regarding “head minister training.” That is, in Tenrikyo, head ministers are not properly trained so as to lead a church congregation. This is not only a problem overseas, but a problem here in Japan as well. There are the three months of *Shuyōka* (Spiritual Development Course of Church Headquarters), and the head minister qualification courses, and then, “boom,” you find yourself acting as if you know everything in front of your followers. Tenrikyo should and could offer more programs for the “how to . . .” aspect of church leadership. There is a strong orientation of “Well, you learn from your experiences.” In any case, the Forum is something that serves to give head ministers some confidence in what they engage in daily.

Another question was in regard to mission headquarters’ structure which isn’t the best structure to have to support and maintain strong ties among followers, especially for newcomers. We have this tendency to “blame the bishop,” which has served somewhat as a myth to forever return to, but the time has come to say out loud that “we are responsible for belonging to, and maintaining, that structure we hate so much.” In other words, there is a sense that we are so enclosed within our own “comfort zone” that we dare not make any “radical changes.” However, some changes have been made in the way we initiate newcomers with distribution of pamphlets (Mission Headquarters in America) about the service and commentaries, done by younger members, that explain each verse of the Mikagura-uta. As for the eternal myth – blaming the bishop – there is so little truth to that since many “senior” members will not move an inch unless the bishop says that it has to be done; at the same time, however, it should be noticed that we, too, are responsible for how best to make all people, both old and new, welcome at mission headquarters. That is, as a congregation, we all should become more “aware” of the problems (e.g., feeling of “alienation” by newcomers) we deal with in holding a monthly service on the one hand and preaching “spreading the fragrance of the teachings” (and therefore bringing new people to mission headquarters) to as many people possible on the other hand.

There is this “ideal” when we speak about creating a good atmosphere at churches. Yet, as in the case with mission headquarters, there is a big cultural difference between what type of atmosphere is welcoming for a Japanese on the one hand and for an American on the other. We all know that there is a Japanese community and then there is an American community. If someone

conveys something in English to a member belonging to the Japanese community, things don't really thrive well for him or her, and vice versa. This is something we ought to keep in mind when thinking about "church atmosphere" and is indeed a very delicate point.

Speaking about this aspect at other mission headquarters, we asked for a Taiwanese perspective. It was interesting to find that 90 percent of the head ministers in Taiwan are Taiwanese with strong cultural and ethnic ties to that region. At the same time, it should be noted that the connection between the local churches and Taiwan Mission Headquarters is not as strong as you may find in North America or Hawaii. One reason is because of "donation." You cannot have your followers donate precious monetary funds at two places. The local church is the best place where that sincerity should be expected.

Returning to creating ties within the church, "follow-up" is necessary. We phone or e-mail people to see how they are doing or what thoughts they have about an activity that was held at mission headquarters. In fact, when Moses and Fred went to Hawaii, they began calling all kinds of people to ask for their perspectives and suggestions regarding the Forum – and indeed, we had a great Hawaii Forum. We have many activities, and as a way to gather people, we try to contact them personally by phone or in person, both newcomers and old ones, to the next gathering. In this way, we sort of build our ties around those activities that originate at mission headquarters.

In Nepal, there is a follower who is also a principal of a school. Tuition for many (one-third) of the students is free of charge; in this way, the principal (though he is not a head minister of a church) is able to serve his community, and by serving his community, he is actually giving to his community. This giving is indeed a basis for which creates many, many ties with people. Through these ties, he is able to say something about the teachings – and the truth that lies in it. From there, activities are also carried out by many people just by sensing this aspect of how much he is willing to give to the community.

A head minister's wife of a grand church always makes it a point to go to the airport to pick a Yoboku returning to the Jiba from the United Kingdom. This really is something – actually, quite touching. This effort, though it may not be all that big for some, or perhaps quite difficult for others depending on how you see it, is an act which shows a lot of sincerity. This act in itself is something like her "reaching out" and "being there" when you need it most

(after a very long flight). Though they have difficulty communicating (in terms of the English language), there is a strong bond between him and the other members of that church community because of this. You don't feel alienated at all; in fact, you feel as if you are most welcome (of all people) at all times. This is something for head ministers, and their wives, to think about, too.

Question was directed to head ministers: What do you head ministers want most from followers? Answer stemmed around the idea of working together, being united with one another, as well as wanting them to come regularly to the church to help others. An example was made, reiterating the presentation above, of how the head minister made "a list of things to do" while away, and followers took it upon themselves to write down their names and be responsible for that part. Another question was directed to head minister: How do we implement the things we learn here at the regional level? One suggestion was to have more English literature on certain aspects of the teachings, i.e., "Truth of Origin," so that the local people who have no knowledge of Japanese can acquire more information. The other suggestion is that "we need to get out of our comfort zone" so as to implement what we really got. Many of us here are living quite comfortably and hold respectable places within our local "Tenrikyo communities." However, if there is no stepping out of that "comfort zone" by moving toward "unknown territory," how are we able to make any change? There should be a sense of awareness, to say the least, that all of us should feel more responsible for implementing things we learn here. Finally, the administration of the Sazuke could be implemented more and more at any place and any time. Followers could feel the power of the Sazuke, which is a non-cultural and a non-biased form of interacting with others to create relationships. One of the "list of things to do" can even have "administering the Sazuke" on it (as an example of implementation). This will help serve to give an individual a sense of direction and purpose. Also, and this is the last comment, people who are responsible (that is everyone who belongs to the congregation) should be less judgmental of others. Judging others based on one thing (in the past) or another (future prospects) can really destroy relationships. In this sense, if we can simply wipe out "judgment," as if we have the power to judge others, we might be able to create a more harmonious church, ultimately enabling more and more people to come enjoy the Joyous Life.

My Experience of Spreading the Fragrance of the Teachings

Keiichi Ogawa, Ph.D.

(Mr. Ogawa is an associate professor in the Graduate School of International Cooperation Studies at Kobe University, Japan)

Immediately after I graduated from Tenri High School, I served as *keidai-gakari* (Precincts Section staff) at Tenrikyo Church Headquarters. It was the year of Oyasama's 100th Anniversary. A year of *keidai-gakari* experience enhanced my interest in overseas missionary work, which prompted me to enroll in Tenri University's Special Language Program (currently Tenrikyo Language Institute) where I studied English. After completing the language program, I worked part-time to accumulate the financial resources that would allow me to pursue further studies in Hawaii. I would like to share with you my experience in Hawaii where I had the opportunity to send five people to *Shuyoka* (Spiritual Development Course of Church Headquarters) while I was a university student.

The sole purpose of my visit to Hawaii was not to conduct missionary work but to pursue my university degree. When I was a freshman, I shared Tenrikyo teachings to my friend from Hong Kong, Mr. Lai, who was a journalist pursuing studies sponsored by his company. He became very much interested in Tenrikyo teaching and decided to enter *Shuyoka* in Jiba. When I brought him to Japan and mentioned to the head of the followers dormitory about Mr. Lai's decision to commit to *Shuyouka*, the head was very concerned that my friend was not able to speak Japanese, and none of the dormitory staff was able to speak English or Chinese. Therefore, I had no choice but to accompany him to *Shuyoka*. It was my second experience of *Shuyoka*, but I was able to learn more than when I took it by myself prior to leaving for the U.S. Unfortunately, toward the end of second month of *Shuyoka*, his father in Hong Kong became very ill and Mr. Lai decided to return to Hong Kong without completing *Shuyoka*.

After returning to Hawaii, I had an opportunity to share Tenrikyo teachings to a person with a mental illness. She was the wife of the medical doctor who I worked under part-time while I was pursuing my degree. When I brought Mrs.

Inuo to my followers' dormitory in Jiba, I was informed that someone should accompany her due to her mental condition. This time, I asked her daughter, who just completed high school, to enter *Shuyoka* to take care of her mother. Two people entered *Shuyoka* and they were able to complete three months course work this time. Thanks to God the Parent and Oyasama, she was able to recover from her illness. When they were in *Shuyoka*, I was sprinkling the fragrance of the teachings to her husband and younger daughter.

After two of them completed *Shuyoka* and returned to Hawaii, they spread their *Shuyoka* experience to other people, and the younger daughter entered *Shuyoka* immediately upon graduation from her high school. After she completed *Shuyoka* and returned to Hawaii, her friend's mother was surprised to see that she had become much more mature. Her friend's mother sent her daughter to *Shuyoka*, and she was also able to successfully complete her three month training.

In my experience mentioned above, I mainly sprinkled the fragrance of the teachings to my friends and their family. I am very pleased that they had the opportunity to stay in Jiba to learn about the 'Joyous Life' through their *Shuyoka*. After I departed Hawaii, I lived in San Francisco, New York City, Washington DC, before returning to Japan where I am currently teaching in Kobe. Despite the long distance, I still keep in touch with all of these friends of mine who had the experience of a lifetime. Whenever we meet, we would talk about the Tenrikyo teachings.

Questions & Answers

Question 1: Please share with us some of the content of the talk with your friends. What I am interested in is how you present Tenrikyo teachings to non-followers, or to those who just entered this faith, in English.

Ogawa: Tenrikyo is not a religion. It is truth. I talk about "Truth of Origin" by saying that science has improved significantly in the past decades. However, it cannot fully explain the "Truth of Origin." I also talk about "Joyous Life." Scientists recently found that Joyous Life (*warai*) is good for our health, e.g., by decreasing blood pressure and lowering cholesterol.

Question 2: I noticed that all panelists do not force their faith on friends or co-workers. So, I would like to ask, what constitutes "good fragrance?" (The kind

of fragrance which is fine and appealing, not overwhelming and repulsive.)

Ogawa: I am not in a position to answer this question. However, I believe when I talk about our teaching, I feel that Oyasama has created such situations (opportunity) that I can share Tenrikyo teaching to my friends and co-workers. And if I see a need in someone to share the teachings, I tell them, “You need to go back to the Jibal!”

Question 3: As a Yoboku working full-time, please share with us some of the things you do at work in being (or becoming) an exemplary model? (*naruhodo-no-hito*)

Ogawa: I do not do anything particular to become an exemplary model. Many of my students who come to my graduate school want to become like me. I do not do anything particular, but I treat each of my students with respect.

Question 4: Oyasama taught us “Work (*bataraku*) makes those close to you comfortable; for that, it is called *bataraku*. In your opinion, what kind of attitude is necessary to become a worker that makes people around him/her comfortable?”

Ogawa: One should be considerate and respect others because each person is different in his or her background and culturally.

Question 5: What does “professionalism” mean to you? (To get the job done in the highest quality? Being a person who is never complacent at the current level of skills and always looking for ways to improve skills and actually doing the necessary work to improve skills?)

Ogawa: Set the goal at the highest level, and deliver outputs on time. “Think big and get the job done!”

Question 6: Being a full-time worker, you must have struggled with balancing work and home. How do you try to maintain this balance?

Ogawa: This is a very tough question to me. My wife is still in Washington, DC and I am in Kobe. It is not very easy to maintain the balance between work and home. My wife thinks I am a workaholic.

The Challenges in Spreading the Teachings in Mexico

Sadayori Ohno

(Mr. Ohno works at Lehman Brothers, Japan and resides in Tokyo)

Good Morning. My name is Ignacio Ohno, and I am originally from Mexico, but I am currently residing in Japan.

I'm happy to share some of my experiences in spreading the teachings of Tenrikyo. I believe that overall, spreading the teachings is complex and it is a very challenging task. Many of you can probably relate to this. From my experience, this complexity comes in two ways. First, Tenrikyo is not a very well known religion outside Japan. There are significant cultural differences between Japan and Mexico, and Mexico is predominantly Catholic. The second complexity is a more general one. To talk about religion has always been a very sensitive topic, especially in the workplace. With the rules of conduct within corporations and in general, the firms' culture do not allow their employees to speak freely about religion.

Taking into account these factors, my approach (as well as many other fellow followers) to spread the teachings has always been to initially provide some fairly light exposure to Tenrikyo in indirect ways. Personally, these indirect ways have been to utilize the current infrastructure of Tenrikyo. In Mexico, this infrastructure is based on the many activities that are offered for the general public such as a children's marching band (*koteki-tai*), Japanese classes, amateur softball teams, voluntary work, community services and many other activities. The followers promote these activities to their friends, neighbors and colleagues. Little by little, these new participants get more and more exposure to Tenrikyo by performing the services, speaking with the reverend/staff and doing *binokishin*. Later on, many of these participants have come to Tenri. Then, they can visually and spiritually experience the essence of Tenrikyo, which is one of the most effective ways to absorb the true fragrance of the teachings.

I want to share a very personal and very special experience which may relate to this. It was exactly 20 years ago. At the time, I was a high school student. I was very fortunate that four very close friends joined me to come to Tenri to participate and represent the Mexico *Koteki* band during the children's

pilgrimage on Oyasama's 100th Anniversary. The grandmother of one of my friends also joined us. She was Mrs. Lidia, a very charming woman in her late 60's, and widow of a diplomat (unfortunately, Mrs. Lidia passed away a few years ago). Again, I must say that I was very fortunate that they came to Tenri because they all came from very strong Catholic backgrounds, and traveling to Japan from Mexico was a very expensive trip.

While in Tenri, Mrs. Lidia suffered a severe stroke. She was in critical condition and had completely lost consciousness. Mrs. Lidia was immediately hospitalized at Tenri Ikoi-no-Ie Hospital, and her daughter and husband immediately flew to Japan to see her. Given the uncertainty about Mrs. Lidia's health and time needed for medical care, Mrs. Lidia's daughter had arranged for two of her trusted friends, Ms. Sanchez and Ms. Sofia, who were Catholic nuns, to accompany Mrs. Lidia during her hospitalization. They were very knowledgeable, experienced and dedicated about religion, having spent a significant time doing missionary work overseas under the Catholic Church. At Tenri Hospital, Mrs. Lidia was frequently administered the Sazuke. During this time, Ms. Sanchez and Ms. Sofia performed the service and attended the monthly services. With the combined effort and power of the faith and medicine, Mrs. Lidia was able to slowly recover consciousness, and in a period of four months, she had fully recovered.

During her stay in Tenri, Ms. Sofia and Ms. Sanchez had a deep and meaningful spiritual experience, and were able to absorb the true fragrance of the teachings. They both really cherished their time in Tenri and were fascinated with the sincerity and commitment of the followers to the salvation. While Ms. Sofia continues committed to the Catholic Church as a nun in the Los Angeles area, she also attended some of the monthly services in while living in Mexico. Ms. Sanchez quit the Catholic Church and became Tenrikyo follower. She had already taken the Besseki lectures.

From my experience, the spreading of the teachings has always been very challenging and complex. People are complex human beings that will see and judge the actions not only from the person that introduce them to the religion, but from the overall institution. Just as Mrs. Lidia and Ms. Sanchez did, they absorb the true fragrance of the teachings through the collective effort, sincerity and dedication of the followers towards salvation.

Mutual Help and Respect as a Means to Spread the Fragrance of the Teachings

Roberto Watanabe

(Mr. Watanabe served as a staff member for the Boys and Girls Association and the Overseas Department and now resides in São Paulo, Brazil)

Good morning everyone! My name is Roberto Watanabe and I'm the successor to the Nippaku Church in Brazil. First of all, I'd like to ask for your understanding, since my English is not so good and you may have some difficulties in understanding what I say. I just arrived from Brazil yesterday and I didn't participate in the first day of this Forum.

My church is one of the oldest Tenrikyo churches in Brazil. It was the ninth church established in Brazil and has almost a seventy-year history. It was founded by another family, and after the Second World War, there was stayed a period of time without a head minister since the sons of the first head minister didn't succeed him. My parents went to Brazil in 1962 in order to take care of this church and my father has been the head minister since then.

I was born in and grew up in a church. Since my parents are pure Japanese (*Issei*), communication inside the church was always done in Japanese and all the followers of the church were Japanese people, people that went to Brazil for *dekasegi* (emigrate), and were somehow connected to our mother church, Meijo Grand Church, in Osaka.

Although there were some difficulties due to the language, our relationship with the neighborhood was always good, in part because the church was located in an area with many Japanese people. I think in the beginning, people were amazed with the sounds of the *hyoshigi* (wooden clappers) and other instruments played in the morning and evening services, but as time passed, those sounds became part of the local culture, the local way of life.

I know that we should follow the time of the sunrise and the sunset and change the time of the service accordingly, as it is done here in Jiba, but as we are in a strictly residential area, the time of the service is fixed at 7:00 a.m. in the morning and 6:30 p.m. in the evening. I think if we made the service at 5:00 p.m. in the summer, for example, we would receive too many complaints. How do you deal with this subject in your countries?

I think the sounds of the instruments were a way to approach the neighbors that still didn't know of Tenrikyo. Their curiosity allowed us to make the first approach and explain about the service and the teachings to them.

My parents used to distribute the Tenrikyo monthly newspaper to the people around the church, talk with the neighbors and worry about people with some kind of illness in the neighborhood. With these kinds of small actions, they became trusted by the community and every time someone has some difficulty, they used to come to the church to ask and receive the administration of the Sazuke and talk. Even though my parents did not speak the language perfectly, my parents, through their actions and the sincerity of their hearts, they gained the confidence of the people and were able to spread the teachings.

I think only this fact explains the growth of Tenrikyo outside Japan in the beginning of overseas expansion. Almost all the pioneers of the path were Japanese people that were able to spread the teachings, though unable to speak the local language. Due to their sincerity, dedication, and single-hearted salvation, we have nowadays the Path in Brazil, United States, Mexico, Korea, and many other countries all over the world.

As I said before, I grew up in the church, so the teachings of Oyasama were always present in my life through the education received from my parents. My parents didn't used to preach the teachings all the time, but always taught us the importance of the service.

Like every child, I used to play all day long with my friends, but by the time of service I had to be back at home. Sometimes, my friends used to come to the church and watch the service, even though they did not understand very well what it represented since it was in Japanese. As time passed, some of them started showing some interest and started participating in some events, like the "*Kodomo no Tsudoi*," an annual gathering of children in Brazil Mission Headquarters. Next year we'll have the 50th Tsudoi, and every year, hundreds of children use to come from all over the country for three days of fun and learning. It's a kind of Children's Pilgrimage to Jiba, but locally in Brazil. This year we had around 400 children, but there were times when we had more than 800 children. It's a very good chance for children to invite their friends to learn a little bit about Oyasama's teachings. My brothers and I used to invite some close friends to participate in it. In the beginning, the participants were all sons and daughters of Tenrikyo followers, but nowadays, there are many,

many children that come invited by their friends and have first contact with our teachings. I think one important issue after the participation of those children in the *Tsudoi* is how to have them continue following the path. In this sense, inviting them to participate in the church's activities, like the monthly service, doctrine seminars, *koteki* bands, and *otomarikai* are ways to keep them connected. Those kinds of activities, that gather children to the church to have contact with God's teachings, are very important to their moral and religious growth.

For bit older people, who have graduated the Boys and Girls Association, another activity that we use to introduce people to the teachings is the "One-Day Seminar." This seminar consists of three short speeches that give a brief introduction regarding the doctrine, the life of Oyasama, and faith. This "One-Day Seminar" is done in several places all through the year and we use it to invite neighbors and friends to have a first contact with Tenrikyo. For the ones that want to know more, then we have the "Five-Day Seminar" and the "Twenty-eight-Day Seminar." These seminars must be held at the Brazil Mission Headquarters on fixed dates.

I have worked in the Brazilian branch of a Japanese car audio maker, Alpine, for eleven years. Talking about religion in the workplace is not so easy, mainly when you work at a multi-national company, full of rules to be followed. However, people that work with me know that I'm a Tenrikyo follower, and that someday I'll stop working to succeed my father in the church. Every time I have a chance, I mention that I'm a Tenrikyo follower and usually I can talk about the basic guidelines of the teachings, but never could go so deep. During one opportunity, when we received a visit by Alpine's Japan chairman, I was telling him that I was Tenrikyo follower and he said that he had some relatives that followed Tenrikyo in Japan. Another time, talking with one of the vice-presidents of Alpine of America, he mentioned that his cousin was a Tenrikyo head minister in the United States.

There are some examples of people in Brazil doing *nioigake* in the workplace, mainly people that have their own business (small stores) or are salesmen. In my church there is a man that has a small business at a free market and used to do *nioigake* and administer the Sazuke to his customers. He used to distribute the Tenrikyo newspaper to them too. Also, there is a friend of mine that used to travel around selling candies and sweetmeats. Every time he has a chance,

he talks to his clients about the teachings, administers the Sazuke and invites them to come to the monthly service at his church.

In my case, to my closest co-workers, I have invited them to the monthly service in my church or to participate in the “One-Day Seminar.” Some came to the monthly service, showed some interest but not enough to participate in the seminars. Although I thought I should, I wasn’t able to push them more, afraid that this could harm my relationships at work. I think this is still one of my weak points. I’m not able to strongly push people to do something. I can talk, invite, but just can’t push in order to convince.

On the other hand, following the teachings of Oyasama, even in the workplace – being honest, obedient (*sunao*), sincere, diligent and always ready to do anything without complaining, has allowed me to gain the trust and be relied upon at the company. Also, when the company needed some new person to work, they always asked me if I knew of some Tenrikyo person to recommend. This is a very gratifying fact, since they are looking at my actions and recognizing that if they hire a Tenrikyo follower, he or she will probably be a good worker.

From now on, the point that I need to improve in my life is engaging in real *niwigake*, spreading the teachings door to door, working around my home and the church to promote salvation. Today I don’t do this, saying that I’m too busy working and dedicated to mission headquarters’ activities, but in reality, there is a mix of lack of courage and determination. I think maybe the time for leaving my job to start dedicating myself towards single-hearted salvation is very close. But I know I shouldn’t wait until this day comes to spread the teachings more effectively. This is one of my challenges from now on.

Community-based, Family-based, and Faith-based Mindset

Makoto Tanno

(Mr. Tanno is a curriculum director for the Congress Institute of Osaka)

First of all, I would like to thank the Overseas Department and the steering committee for providing me with such a great opportunity to meet and join in the discussions with many other fervent members engaged in spreading the teachings around the world.

Today, in this section meeting, we are discussing the way we sprinkle the fragrance of the teachings to friends, neighbors and co-workers. When it comes to “sprinkling the fragrance,” however, several questions always enter my mind: Why do we say “sprinkle the fragrance?” What does it actually mean to “sprinkle” the fragrance? What precisely does the “fragrance” mean? There may be slightly different definitions for each person; but for this particular presentation, I would like to base my definition on these three points.

First is the “faith-based mindset:” this is the mindset on which I, as a follower of the path, place much more emphasis on than any specific actions, because I strongly believe no actions can be self-apparent without this mindset in terms of spreading the teachings. Any daily actions we conduct should be consistent with this mindset so that we can sow the seeds of the “fragrance” whenever interacting with people close to us.

Second is the “family-based atmosphere:” I believe the atmosphere naturally created through interactions among mutually trusting people, tied with the same mindset, is the “fragrance” we ought to sprinkle. In addition, this mutually-trusting atmosphere, I believe, should be originated first between husband-wife and then parent-child interaction, since the family is the fundamental unit of our daily life.

Thirdly, “community-based approach:” when thinking of the word “sprinkle,” I imagine spreading something new and fresh gradually and constantly over people around us. In order to reach out to those people including friends, neighbors and of course co-workers, it goes without saying, that we should be deeply entrenched in our respective communities regardless of whether it’s a local or business community.

To put it shortly, to sprinkle the fragrance, for me, means to spread the

“family-based atmosphere” pervaded with the “faith-based mindset” over people around us through a “community-based approach.”

Faith-based mindset

Let me now take a few moments to talk about the faith-based mindset, as I think even though it is an indispensable element in terms of sprinkling the fragrance, it is one which we are increasingly apt to miss in our hectic lives in this contemporary society.

In our daily lives, we have tons of things to do. Such a busy situation, as we all have experienced, makes us tied up with the things at hand leaving behind the original purpose of what we’re doing. This is also true of the Tenrikyo community in a sense. As we carry out an increasing number of activities, we sometimes may overlook the original mission entrusted to us Yoboku. Whatever we’re doing, whether it be business at the workplace or organizing and managing church activities, the first standard set for our minds behind our behavior should not be focused on how smoothly we can handle a series of tasks in order to get things done as scheduled. Skillful and resourceful handling of tasks might be necessary at a certain point, but it should not come first. Rather, the first objective should always be focused on how many people around us we can make happy and how much we can inspire those people with joy. This joy, shared in doing something hand in hand with each other and interacting with each other toward a common goal, is the very “commodity” we ought to deal with as a professional joy provider, or ‘Yoboku,’ even in a business situation.

More importantly, I believe, this mindset based on “the sharing of joy” and “the joy of sharing” will make all people involved spirited and eventually generate the best way to handle hectic situations smoothly and resourcefully as a whole.

In other words, any action can be most fruitful and effective in terms of “sprinkling the fragrance of the teachings” as long as we carry it out with this mindset always in our mind.

Family-based atmosphere — generated through husband-wife interaction

To illustrate my point, let me now turn to some specific things I am doing at the workplace.

The first thing I try to carry out at the workplace is proactive communication with the co-workers in a friendly and polite manner regarding what each of us is working on so that I can show them my willingness to always share joy and excitement or any worries and concerns with them as a reliable team member. In the course of interacting with them in this way, I have come to notice that this action is cultivating not only my interactive skills but also my personal magnetism without my realization. They come to me whenever they need advice because they know that I know about their work best and never show reluctance to communicate with them. Sometimes they invite me for a drink or vice versa. On every occasion, however, I always take my wife with me or invite them to my house for a meal with my wife. In so doing, I, together with my wife, try to emanate a joyful atmosphere through our mutually trusting and joyful interactions. Through exposing them to this atmosphere, we hope they will naturally grasp some idea of the origin of my conduct at work, e.g., the faith-based mindset, and will be eventually convinced of the joy of trusting each other and sharing the faith in a joyful atmosphere. Interestingly enough, on almost every occasion, they ask me why my wife and I have such a positive outlook on life with no complaints about anything. Then, I explain to them about an idea based on “joyous acceptance:” “never take anything for granted. Instead, feel grateful for what you are given now. Then try to utilize the present situation to its full potential for your further growth instead of worrying about the future just because things are not going as you expected. While worrying about something, you can learn nothing at all. Instead, try to proactively absorb and learn as much as you can from the present circumstances. Such a state of mind will eventually lead you to a better end result beyond your expectation. In short, enjoy the present to its fullest extent!” Then, I recommend them to come to the Jiba with me for relaxation in a serene atmosphere.

My wife and I also conduct ourselves in the same way in the neighborhood. Through proactively participating in activities hosted by our neighborhood community association such as mowing grass, sports festivals and various gatherings, we as a couple try to communicate with the neighbors in a friendly and polite manner through which we can naturally sprinkle the “mutually trusting atmosphere” emanating from our joyful interactions.

This is the basic approach that we conduct daily.

Community-based approach

One thing I realize, however, is that the most I ever do is to take them to the Jiba for the Tenrikyo basics course or invite them to such events as the Sechi Festival and the Children's Pilgrimage. So I always feel that there is a strong need for an activity in which people can come and interact on a daily basis to consistently cultivate the faith-based mindset, by being exposed constantly in a mutually trusting family-based atmosphere pervaded with this joy-centered mindset.

Another thing I've noticed ever since I started my current job in Osaka is that there has been an increasing number of people who have difficulties in interpersonal communication. I think this may be partly due to the current information-driven and materialistic society in which we can get almost any information we want in a few seconds via e-mail and web interface without face-to-face communication or emotional interaction. But I also believe that the real cause is that those people with communication difficulties have just never experienced the real joy found and shared in joyful interpersonal communication and interactions.

Based on these notions, together with my wife, I am currently planning to set up a community-based communication capacity-building program using language education as a medium, as we feel language has an important role and strong impact in communicating with people and, needless to say, conveying the teachings.

Thankfully enough, my parents have already established a strong trusting relationship with local residents through daily door-to-door visiting and various community-based activities such as an annual Joyous Life Lecture and Local Road Cleanup activity.

This being the case, we now strongly believe we are entrusted with the task to expand and strengthen this trusting relationship with our neighbors, friends and co-workers in order to spread the "family-based atmosphere" pervaded with the "faith-based mindset" through a "community-based approach." What is important, however, is how much we ourselves feel joy in this task.

Section Summary Report

Organizer: Shinichiro Tsuji

First of all, I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to the four speakers of this section meeting, Dr. Keiichi Ogawa, Mr. Ignacio Sadayori Ohno, Mr. Roberto Watanabe, and Mr. Makoto Tanno. They have always been very professional in their preparation for their presentation at the section meeting 2-1-5, "Friends, Neighbors, and Co-workers." None of them showed even a hint of hesitation when I asked them to submit their curriculum vitae, speech manuscript, and answers to prepared questions for the section meeting. They were forthcoming in their response to my requests, and they always expressed their excitement in taking active part in this historical event.

The section meeting started with four short presentations by Dr. Ogawa, Mr. Ohno, Mr. Watanabe, and Mr. Tanno. They spoke of their faith in this path and experiences of sharing the teachings with friends, neighbors, and in particular, co-workers.

Dr. Ogawa, now an associate professor at a university in Japan and previously an economist/consultant at the World Bank, shared his experiences in sprinkling the fragrance of the teachings in Hawaii and at his workplace. He spoke of commitment to excellence in his work and how his actions are often perceived as reflections of his faith by colleagues. His enthusiasm and professionalism were evident from the beginning, and he shared many stories of bringing his co-workers to Jiba, and a few of them attended the Spiritual Development Course. He continues to help people around him and does not shy away from sharing the teachings to those who may benefit from his assistance.

Mr. Ohno's experiences were, in a sense, opposites of Dr. Ogawa's stories. The codes of conduct at his workplace (a multinational bank located in Tokyo) specifically prohibit him from disseminating information about personal religious belief, which makes it impossible for him to talk about Tenrikyo teachings with his colleagues. However, that does not dampen his spirit of being a pioneer of the path. Through taking friends to social activities and cultural events, they get light exposure to Tenrikyo. Although this approach is an indirect way to introduce the teachings, he believes that starting with light

exposure to Tenrikyo faith is the most effective method for people who have little or no knowledge of Tenrikyo.

The third speaker, Mr. Watanabe, shared his experiences at a multinational company as well as his insights on the state of Tenrikyo mission in Brazil. He shared his views on sprinkling good fragrance at work: arriving early at office, always willing to help co-workers, and taking good care of company's assets. He spoke of conflicting feelings about restraining himself from talking about Tenrikyo with co-workers because he fears that doing so may compromise his working relationships with them. He noticed that non-followers often experience difficulties to maintain interests in learning more about the teachings despite feeling attraction to Oyasama's footsteps and Her teachings. He partially attributed this loss of motivation to language barrier and cultural gap.

Mr. Tanno spoke of three principles in sprinkling the fragrance of the teachings: faith-based mindset, family-based atmosphere, and community-based approach. Seeing many young people exhibit difficulties in establishing and maintaining meaningful relationships with others in Japan, he shared his future plan of creating a community-based communication capacity-building program with his wife, using language education as a chief medium. He believes that language has "an important role and strong impact in communicating with people and, needless to say, conveying the teachings." It was apparent that his motivations to start up an inter-personal skill building program and to convey the truth of the teachings taught by Oyasama were very high in the presentation, and this in turn motivated listeners to pursue further on their interests in sprinkling the fragrance of the teachings.

In the question-and-answer session, we were able to have some lively discussions. Panelists were forthcoming on sharing their wealth of experiences and views, and some participants offered their perspectives as well. Many participants showed their eagerness as well as struggles in sharing faith with friends and co-workers, and in some instances, students they teach. I had an impression that everyone in the room was able to broaden their horizon on doing *nioigake*. What fascinated me was the fact that in some instances, panelists provided conflicting answers to the same question. This proved how complicated it can be to talk about one's spirituality with friends and co-workers.

Overall, the section meeting was successful in exploring different ways to sprinkle the fragrance of the teachings. With dauntless courage and unwavering conviction of faith in this path, I believe that the participants of Tenri Forum 2006 will take on more active roles in sharing Oyasama's teachings with their friends and co-workers.

Questions & Answers Session

Question 1: First, what constitutes good fragrance?

Watanabe: I believe the good fragrance is always being ready to help each other, to support someone who has some difficulty or problem. Also, distributing newsletter or leaflets with good messages of the path is a good example of good fragrances.

Tanno: As I referred to in the beginning of my presentation, I believe that the "good fragrance" that we are entrusted to sprinkle should be the joyful atmosphere emanating from our faith-based joyful interactions in which everyone will feel ease in one another's existence, being convinced of the joy of trusting and helping one another. Of course, we can conduct many actions individually, but ultimately I think nothing is more convincing than exemplifying an actual atmosphere of mutual trust and help among like-minded people in terms of encouraging other people to smoothly join in.

Ohno: We live in a complex society, so forcing the faith on friends or co-workers may be counterproductive. Some people may even view it as harassment. Also, forcing their faith is not good fragrance. To properly articulate the teachings of Tenrikyo, not only comes from words. Words can be meaningless unless the teachings are actually applied. If people see that the actions of the Tenrikyo followers are consistent with the teachings, people will react and believe in it.

Question 2: When you work with individuals with poor interpersonal skills, how do you help them? Some are too shy, some are too aggressive, some makes too many sarcastic comments (or put-downs) of co-workers, etc. Please share your answer in a way of helping them in your new communication capacity building program.

Tanno: As I mentioned, I think those people with poor interpersonal skills have just never experienced the real joy found and shared in joyful

trusting interpersonal communication and interactions. In this sense, the first necessary step should be to make them feel the real joy of interpersonal interactions in some way. When thinking about when we feel the joy most, I ended up with a thought that any of us can feel the joy when other people feel happy by something we've done for them. So first I express my joy, trust, and appreciation for something they've done for me—even a tiny thing—so that they can feel fulfilled and sense the joy of doing something for others, and then encourage them to do the same thing with me for other people to share the joy of cooperating each other. Ideally, having them interact with children would be best because younger children are most honest and easily to feel happy and anybody can feel ease and become honest in front of younger children.

So I'm planning to include some elements of day-care center into the future project.

Question 3: You spoke about inviting friends to activities. When you invite your friends, neighbors, and colleagues to these activities, what do you do so that they will participate in these activities repeatedly (increasing the chance of your friends deciding to join you again)?

Ohno: It is crucial that the people that are invited to these activities enjoyed participating and get an overall first impression of Tenrikyo. This will increase the chance of building a relationship with that person. To achieve this, the responsibility not only falls in the person making the introduction, but on the collective effort of the people involved in those activities, reverend, staff, etc. People will judge the organization, and how these activities will benefit them.

Question 4: What are some of the contents of conversation with friends when you share your faith?

Ogawa: It depends on how I approach it with my friends.

I currently teach at a university in Japan, but before that, I worked at the World Bank, giving advice to government staff. I worked in the education sector, with ministers, with government secretaries. Once, I worked on a project in Yemen. When I provided advice to the government, I always did so based on evidence and facts, about topics such as giving education to girls and human rights issues. I told them to spend money on education sectors so that kids can get an education, but I need to tell them that with solid evidence.

I told them how spending money on education brings high economic returns and how this would soon alleviate poverty. It is the same with Tenrikyo. I talk with evidence. When I talk about Joyous Life, I share research results of Dr. Murakami at Tsukuba University. When people laugh after watching comedy, this would lower blood pressure level and cholesterol level. I also share with them the Truth of Origin, which is the fundamentals of our teachings. I tell them that we are slowly getting scientific evidence to prove this truth!

Question 5: What made your boss want to hire Tenrikyo followers?

Watanabe: Honesty is the first thing. Promptness in any work. I do not refuse any kind of work, even beyond my scope or my knowledge or capacity, I always try to do it. If I can't, then I ask for help to get it done. Arrive early at work each morning and take good care of company's assets and maintain good relationship with colleagues.

Question 6: There is a language center in Hawaii. It is not a church, but you can spread the teachings there. We have a building, but I would like to ask what kind of activities do you suggest?

Watanabe: In Brazil, *Seinen-kai* (The Young Men's Association) people teach Japanese. We also teach *koteki* at mission headquarters. There is a cultural center in São Paulo, which is like the NY Center, and we have a Japanese library there. Japanese books are available for Brazilians to borrow.

Also, *Seinen-kai* has a missionary house. Association members go to the house and do missionary work on a regular basis to sprinkle the fragrance of the teachings.

Ohno: New York Center has Japanese classes, and their exhibitions attract a lot of people. I have been away from Mexico for a while, but there, we hold speech contests. Students are motivated to give good speeches. Some of them become followers.

Tanno: At my tiny church in Osaka, my parents conduct many annual activities. We hold Joyous Life Lectures at a local community center because our church cannot accommodate that many people. But this is a good way to get people exposed to the teachings. Also, we do local streets clean-up *hinokishin*. Neighbors like seeing Tenrikyo making contribution to the society.

Question 7: Have you had any encounter with a person who was actually discouraged by the fact that Tenrikyo has many Japanese cultural aspects to it? How did you handle that, or approach that person?

Ohno: Good question, and I can relate to you. I was born and raised in Mexico. Mexico is predominantly Catholic. And Tenrikyo originated in Japan. There are many characteristics of Tenrikyo that are very, very Japanese. I personally see that as a hurdle. People want to see something more universal. And seeing the followers in Mexico, I think that most of the people who become Tenrikyo like Japanese culture from the beginning. So, in that sense, the Japanese aspects can become an advantage. But I personally have never met a person saying, "Tenrikyo is too Japanese."

Watanabe: In Brazil, we have this problem, too. Brazilians do not know much Japanese. Currently, I am working on translations for many books on the teachings. For Brazilians, it is very, very difficult to understand the teachings because the teachings contain many Japanese terms such as *hinokishin*. Even the service is in Japanese. In seminars, you hear many, many terms in Japanese. They hear many Japanese terms. So their first contact is negative. But if you show them the teachings in action, explain to them the teachings, then you can overcome these difficulties. This path did not go far in Brazil or America because of the language barrier. Our pioneers did not speak the language. They actually spoke in Japanese to Brazilians, and they still could pass their sincerity to them. If you can explain and show them how the teachings are, then I think the language is a secondary issue.

Question 8: What part of the teachings do you share with others first?

Watanabe: I start with the Joyous Life. This is the basic teachings we have to spread to others first.

Tanno: I basically introduce the teachings of joyous acceptance. Worrying about something or complaining about something does not help. Instead of worrying or complaining, you can do something else. You can be of service to others, you can grow, and you can take a step forward. That is my approach.

Ohno: In my case, I make some comparisons between Tenrikyo teachings and the Catholic Church, explain some activities that we do, community services that we do to help our community. Try to bring facts.

Question 9: As a Yoboku working full-time, please share with us some of the things you do at work in being (or becoming) an exemplary model (*narubodo-no-hito*)?

Watanabe: Always work honestly, act diligently, and rise early, which is a little bit hard for us. I try to arrive to work as early as possible, to greet everyone, to help every co-worker in difficulty. Also, take good care of company's assets. These things, we learned through Boys and Girls Association activities, and they guide us in being exemplary models. I try to practice these guidelines to show to my colleagues, to my children. *Shonen-kai* (Boys and Girls Association) is not just to play.

Tanno: Proactive communication and ask them how they are doing. I work in collaborative manner; I show my willingness to help my co-workers. Never complain about others and keep smiling. Hopefully, I am showing an exemplary model or human being. Hopefully, this serves to be an exemplary model.

Ohno: Similar to what my fellow panelists have to say. Protect the firm, and be a good team player.

Ogawa: If the question is about being an exemplary model from the view of God the Parent, then I am not doing anything. Well, I treat my colleagues with respect. That is what I do.

Question 10: Have you ever visited your friends' church after you introduced your faith to friends?

Ohno: Yes, you have to be open to that. I personally would like to visit the Vatican. I think you have to be open, I think that is important. You cannot close yourself from other religions.

Also, you have to question your faith. One way to do this is to compare your faith with other religions. Now, I work for a multinational company with co-workers from 40-50 different countries. I go to wedding ceremonies, take parts in other ceremonies; you have to be open to that.

Yes, I have gone to their churches. It is actually a good way to learn about other religion. I like Tenrikyo, I have a very strong base, but I am open to hear what others have to say.

Watanabe: Brazil is a Catholic country. When I was in elementary school, I received a religious education. I respect other religions, and try to learn

what other religions do. My conviction in Tenrikyo is very strong, so there are people who visit our church, they come to introduce or talk about their teachings (Jehovah's witness). I hear what they have to say, but I used to refuse to go to their church. I didn't want to go to another church. I hear what they say, receive their materials, but I didn't go to their churches. I see TV programs of some Protestant ministers perform salvation on TV; I used to watch those programs. But realistically speaking, I don't think their salvation is real.

Question 11: I want to ask, how do you bring people back to Jiba? I live in Tenri and I can go to the Main Sanctuary whenever I want. Are there any moments when you know that this is the time to ask them to return to Jiba?

Ogawa: Whenever I bring someone to Jiba, I feel that my spirit is very high. So I like to invite my colleagues to Jiba. Do I know that this is the right person to take to Jiba? No. I don't feel that at all.

Watanabe: For a Brazilian, it is difficult to return to Jiba because of economical difficulties. It is not so easy for us to tell someone, "You must go to Jiba, it is the "Home of the Parent." We know that many people are not in the condition to do so. Of course we want to take them, but this is a very confusing feeling for us to invite these people to Jiba. They should go to Jiba someday, but we don't know when.

Ohno: In situations when people need help, we help them. But to bring them to Jiba, unfortunately, I don't have that experience.

Tanno: That is a difficult question. I took one of my co-workers to Jiba. But it took me about two years. During those two years, I always felt that I should do something to help this person. I hesitated whether I should invite him to Jiba or not. One day, he said to me that he needed something to move forward in his life. When I said why don't you come to Jiba with me, he asked me, "What is that?" I explained to him that Jiba is where the Headquarters of my religion is located, and he agreed to go. I know that he saw something positive in my relationship with my wife, how we have a positive outlook of life because of joyous acceptance. Anyway, it took two years, and I don't think it is about timing.

Question 12: Speaking of *narubodo no bito*, the second Shinbashira said, when people ask, "What is Tenrikyo?" you should reply, "Look at me." Even in

twenty, thirty years from now, I am not sure if I can say that.

Tanno: I am not confident to say, “look at me, I am Tenrikyo.” But all of my co-workers know that I am a Tenrikyo follower. I negotiated with my company to take a day off for my church’s service. So everything I do, they would see as what Tenrikyo followers do.

Question 13: When your worker’s morale is low, they complain too much, what do you do?

Ohno: We do team building exercises to build trust among colleagues. We hold seminars to teach them skills.

Tanno: Well, I try to guide them to think more constructively. I help that person to try learning something positive from a problem. Instead of just complaining about the situation, about people, I practice joyous acceptance and show them. Also, joyous interaction with co-workers can make them become spirited. But when morale is low, I know that it is very difficult, and it takes long time to correct the situation.