

Nichiren Shu News

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First Anniversary for Earthquake and Tsunami Victims Held



Hommonji altar decorated with Tohoku folkcraft

By Sandra Seki

The first memorial service for the tens of thousands of lives lost in the Great East Japan Earthquake last year was held at the main prayer hall of Ikegami Hommonji Temple on February 28, 2012. The 9.0 magnitude earthquake that hit northeastern Japan at 2:46 p.m. on March 11, 2011, took the lives of more than 15,000 people and 3,000 are still missing.

This service, promoted by Nichiren Shu Shumuin was officiated by Honor-

able Rev. Nisso Uchino, Archbishop of Nichiren Shu, accompanied by many head priests from Minobusan, and Ikegami and also priests from the disaster-stricken prefectures of Miyagi, Iwate, and Fukushima.

Prior to the service Ms. Mayumi Wakamura, a Japanese actress, read a letter and composition written by two children from the devastated area who had lost their homes and family in the giant tsunami that occurred right after the earthquake. She concluded the

program with a recitation of "Ame nimo makezu," a poem by Kenji Miyazawa (a famous Japanese poet who was an ardent follower of Nichiren Shu). This was to help encourage the grief-stricken people of northeastern Japan (Tohoku) to override this tragedy and move on.

Among the attendees, there were several people who had come a long way from Iwate, Miyagi, and Fukushima prefectures to attend this special service. The main prayer hall resounded with the voices of everyone chanting the Odaimoku in harmony. In the center of the altar, there was a wooden oihai (memorial tablet) written by Rev. Jundo Ohta, Director of the 100-Day Arago that ended on February 10. He and all the priests who had trained in the Arago this year, took turns praying for the lost lives throughout the 100-Day practice. Folded paper cranes and handcrafted lanterns, both of which are folk craft from the Tohoku area, also adorned the altar.

Many people in the disaster-stricken area are still living in prefabricated houses, and aid is still needed for them to get back to their normal lifestyle. The

monetary donations sent from Nichiren temples throughout Japan and also from overseas have been used to send clothing, food, and daily needs to the evacuees but the road ahead is still long and tough. It is estimated that the prefabricated houses will remain for another two years. Though material goods are sufficient, the scar that has been left in the hearts of those who lost their loved ones will take forever to heal.

Honorable Rev. Uchino said in his message to the attendees, "We cannot live alone. We mingle with others from within the country and overseas. We live on the sacrifice of many other living beings. They help us continue to live. We should be grateful to these beings. The hardships of the disaster-stricken ones are also our hardships. The way to overcome these hardships is to share and prosper together."

There will be several memorial services held this year throughout Japan and overseas for the earthquake victims. Nichiren Shu will continue fund-raising and help the people of northeastern Japan so that they will be able to rebuild their communities.

Penang Hokkezan Ichinenji Celebrates 10th Anniversary



Members gathered in the main hall of Ichinenji



Mrs. Kanai (far right) with Wasan group

By Alexander Ang

In conjunction with the 10th Year Anniversary of the Penang Nichiren Shu Temple, the 2012 Nichiren Shu Southeast Asia Seminar was held on February 4, 2012. For these two events, the temple members had started preparations months ahead. Everyone was very excited. Many arrangements including transportation and flower arrangements were planned. For these events, three special items were specifically made: Special Omamori, Seminar T-shirts, and Buddhist Priest Dolls. These were all designed and made by the temple members. A lot of hard work and time was contributed for the temple by all the members. A special thank you to everyone! During this occasion, we were also so honored to celebrate Rev. Shokai Kanai's 70th birthday at Penang Hokkezan Ichinenji.

The Nichiren Shu Southeast Asia Seminar was held at the Eastern & Oriental Hotel, Penang. For this seminar, we had the honor of Rev. Kanai, Rev. Shoryo Tarabini, and Rev. Chishin Hirai as our guest speakers. They each covered "Lotus Sutra and Daily Life," "Why We Chant the Odaimoku," and "Rissho Ankoku Ron" respectively. In addition, Rev. Shingyo Imai, Rev. Gen'ichi Oikawa, Rev. Woo Beop-Hyoen, Rev. Min, Rev. Matshushita, Rev. Ervinna, Rev. Kansan Mochida, Rev. Kangyo Noda, and Mrs. Kanai joined us together for the seminar. In total 165 people participated with priests and members from Japan, Korea, USA, Italy, Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia, and Malaysia (Klang, Kuala Lumpur, and Penang). All the participants felt that they had learned a lot from the topics covered.

The 10th Year Anniversary Celebration was held at the same hotel. During

the dinner, the temple members had a Tai Chi performance, the Temple Choir sang three songs, and a presentation was shared on the 10th Year Journey of the Temple. In addition, we were blessed with the sharing of Rev. Imai's experience. The night came to a close with a special Candle Light Ceremony.

The 10th Year Anniversary was held on the following day, February 5. We were very delighted that 27 priests and members from the International Buddhist Fellowship Association joined us for this celebration. The celebration started with the sound of firecrackers. This was followed by the Wasan Youth Group led by Mrs. Kanai. The ceremony began with Rev. Nichiyu Mochida leading the prayers. During the ceremony, Nichiji Shonin's memorial tablet was also enshrined at the temple. This was especially meaningful as Nichiji Shonin was one of the six senior disciples of



Revs. Watanabe and Mochida cutting the anniversary cake

Nichiren Daishonin. He is considered the first priest who carried out overseas propagation from the Nichiren schools. The whole morning was a very grand and beautiful ceremony joined by many priests and members from many different countries. After the ceremony, there was a cake cutting ceremony in significance of the 10th Year Anniversary, group photos were taken, and lunch was served at the temple.

Throughout these events, the believers from the different temples came closer together. All of us have learned a lot together, we have been encouraged to live by the example of the Buddha and of Nichiren Daishonin. It was truly a memorable event that we will remember for the rest of our lives. Gassho

Shobo: Nichiren Shonin's Thoughts on The Lotus Sutra (1)

“Introductory” Chapter

By Prof. Gyouko Otani (translated and edited by Rev. Sensho Komukai)

“Thereupon the gods rained mandava-flowers, maha-mandarava-flowers, manjusaka-flowers, and maha-manjusaka-flowers upon the Buddha and the great multitude. The world of the Buddha quaked in the six ways.”

(Lotus Sutra, Chapter I, Introductory)

“When Sakyamuni Buddha was about to expound the Lotus Sutra, he caused the five or six kinds of omens to occur. Among the six omens, the trembling of the earth indicates that the earth trembled in six different ways.”

(Writing on Omens)

The Buddha sat cross-legged, entering into Samadhi for the purport of the innumerable teachings. His body and mind became motionless. Then, a variety of colorful flowers rained from heaven, and the earth trembled in six ways. These omens are the sign that the Buddha will expound a great teaching. The great multitude of the congregation were all astonished, joyfully joining their hands together and looking up at him with one mind, because they realized that the Buddha

would reveal a great teaching which no one had ever heard before.

Nichiren Shonin was deeply moved to read this part of the sutra, as if he had been in the congregation to see the omen. As for the reason why the earth trembled, he states in his writing called “Zuiso Goshō” (Writing on Omens):

“All the worlds throughout the universe are the dependent reward while all living beings are the principal reward. The dependent reward is like the shadow of the principal reward.

As there is no shadow without a substance, there is no dependent reward without the principal reward.”

The principal reward means all living beings, while the dependent reward suggests a natural environment. However dominant human beings are, they cannot live without nature. It is nature which can keep humans alive, as the principal reward is created by the dependent reward. In fact, all living beings including humans are only a part of nature. The world exists with living beings and nature equally united together.

Whenever the Buddha was about to preach his teachings, the earth trembled in six different ways. However, when the Buddha expounded the Lotus Sutra, the shaking of the earth was much greater and longer than ever. When the earth trembles more greatly than usual, it is the sign that the Lotus Sutra will be revealed. As Nichiren Shonin had natural disasters in his time, such as the great earthquake and the extraordinary phenomenon in the sky, he was convinced that the practitioner of the Lotus Sutra would appear to spread the Lotus Sutra throughout the Latter Age of Degeneration. Of course, he knew it was he himself who would practice and spread the Lotus Sutra.

How eager the multitude were to hear the Buddha expound a great teaching is shown below at the end of the “Introductory” chapter:

“All of you, know this, join your

hands together,
And wait with one mind!
The Buddha will send the rain of
the Dharma,
And satisfy those who seek
enlightenment.”

(to be continued)



The Buddha about to preach the most profound teaching and the highest truth

Rissho and Harvard Universities Sign Agreement

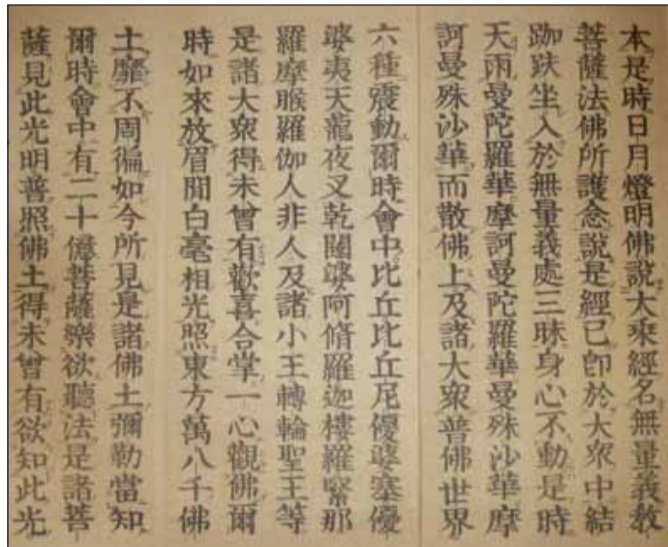
Rissho University and the Reischauer Institute of Japanese Studies at Harvard University signed a literary attainment agreement last November. According to Profs. Shinjo Hara, (Dean) and Prof. Hirohisa Toda, Faculty of Buddhist Studies, this opportunity was brought about by Mr. Keizo Takemi, vice-president of the Nichiren Shu Followers Council, and Rev. Jucho Harita, board member of Rissho University. Mr. Takemi has been involved in research work at Harvard as an honorary member on several occasions. Through this connection, Nichiren Shu and Rissho University have been sending researchers to Harvard to study the Bruno Petzold Collections at the Harvard-Yenching Library.

Two years ago, Profs. Kaigen Noritake and Hirohisa Toda deepened the relations when they conducted studies on East Asian languages, Sanskrit, theology, and

religions of the world. Last September, Profs. Hara and Takahiro Akita (Rissho University, Buddhist Studies) further strengthened the ties by giving lectures at Harvard University. Prof. Hara gave a talk on “Nichiren’s Senses of Transgression and Mission” and Prof. Akita gave a lecture on “The Restoration of Buddhist Sculptures in Practice.”

With this agreement signed, not only teachers from the faculty of Buddhist Studies but also those from other departments will have the opportunity to carry out their research at Harvard. Also Rissho University will accept post graduate students from Harvard who wish to write their theses.

This year marks the 140th anniversary of the establishment of Rissho University and as a special event, lecturers from Harvard will be invited to an International Symposium to be held in October.



A passage from Chapter 1 of the Lotus Sutra

Rev. Kanno Preaches (17)



**“To those who are confronted with sufferings,
And who hate old age, disease and death,
The Buddha expounds the teaching of Nirvana,
And causes them to eliminate these sufferings.”**
(Lotus Sutra, Chapter I, Introductory)

Joy and Sorrow

Now it is April. Spring has come. April is the month of leaving nests, of leaving home and the month of hope. I wish those leaving home success.

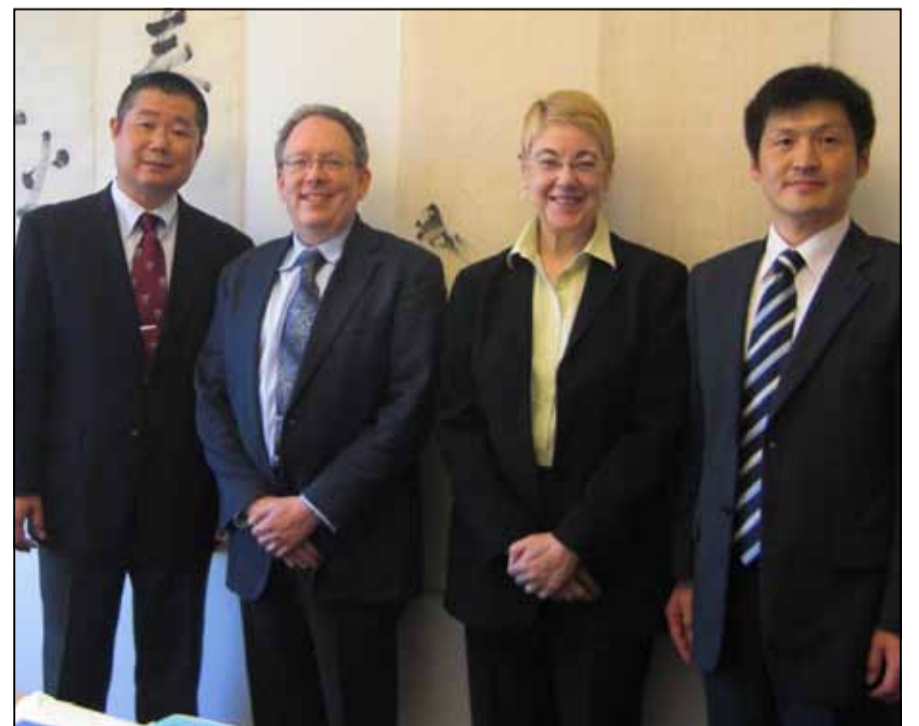
The Buddha teaches that mankind necessarily encounters sufferings when we set sail for new life. Even though we know that nobody exists who has the same thought and the same sentiment as our own.

Old age and diseases are chasing after us. The Buddha shows us Nirvana to get rid of sufferings. Dictionaries and reference books teach us that Nirvana can be achieved when we renounce worldly desires and attain the Buddha’s wisdom. When we hear this, our delusion deepens.

Nichiren Shonin teaches, “we should accept sorrow and joy as they are. Accepting both feelings, you should chant Namu-myoho-rence-kyo. This isn’t ‘the bliss of enlightenment the Buddha himself enjoys.’”
(Letter to Shijo Kingo, the 26th day, the sixth month, 1276)

Only when we have faith in the power of the Odaimoku (power of belief), Buddha’s relief (power of the Buddha) and the Lotus Sutra (power of the sutra), we will be get rid of sufferings.

(Rev. Nissho Kanno, head priest of Kaichoji Temple, Shizuoka Prefecture)



(L.-R.) Dean Hara, Mr. Andrew Gordon, Director of the Reischauer Institute, Prof. Helen Hardacre, Prof. Toda

Living the Lotus Sutra (1)

Why We Need Expedient Teachings

By Rev. Shinkyō Warner

The Lotus Sutra is a difficult book. We may not see how it could improve our lives or solve the problems of the world. It does not contain commandments for how to live. It does not have explicit answers for the problems of our time, such as pollution, war, racism, poverty, violence or despair.

Instead, what the Lotus Sutra gives us is stories and a promise. The stories are about how the Buddha teaches us his highest wisdom, the same enlightenment that he reached after he left the luxury of his father's palace. The promise is that despite all the hardships we have now, despite all the fear, chaos and confusion in the world, we are going to become Buddhas just like him. And that whether or not we are aware of his presence, the Buddha himself is always here with us, leading us to enlightenment.

For many of us, this promise is hard



Rev.
Shinkyō Warner

to believe. We want to know, why can't I be enlightened right now? Why doesn't the Buddha just change the world himself and get rid of all our problems for us?

The answers for these questions are in the Lotus Sutra.

One idea we find in it is that everything the Buddha taught prior to this Sutra was an expedient. The Lotus Sutra was the first teaching that contained the Buddha's true wisdom. The reason he used expedient teachings earlier was that he needed to prepare people for his true wisdom so that they would be ready for it. What then does Buddha mean by expedient teachings? What keeps us from being able to hear his true wisdom?

At first, the stories in the Lotus Sutra

can seem like more expedient teachings. What is different is that the stories in the Sutra explain expedient teachings. They show what expedient teachings are, why the Buddha used them, what their limitations are, and why it is necessary to set them aside.

The Buddha uses stories, rather than explanations, because we all have different capabilities and different experiences. The same explanation would not work for all of us. However, when we hear a story, we each interpret that story differently, based on what we bring to it.

The Buddha also says that for someone to hear his true wisdom, they must be a Bodhisattva: a being who vows to help others become enlightened and improve this world. This does not mean that the Buddha only teaches Bodhisattvas. It means that because the Buddha teaches us, we are Bodhisattvas. His teaching awakens us to our being Bodhisattvas.

When we see the problems of the

world as mere humans, those problems can seem fearsome and overwhelming. When we see the problems of the world as Bodhisattvas, confident that eventually we will all become Buddhas, those problems then look like tools for us to lead all beings to enlightenment. To some, this may sound like a crazy idea. To others, it is the heart of the Buddha's wisdom.

The Lotus Sutra is rightly called "The Dharma for Bodhisattvas." The stories in it are there to teach us, and for us to use as we help others. As we continue to read and hold in our minds this wonderful teaching, we continue to learn how the Buddha is guiding us in our practice.

When we nourish the seeds of the Buddha's wisdom, we see more clearly with the eyes of the Buddha, that "in reality this world is peaceful." By putting the Lotus Sutra into practice, as Nichiren said "reading it with our bodies," we change the world.

(to be continued)

Study Tour in Cambodia

By Rev. Keiryō Inoue

Missionary Department, Shumuin



Double-checking the site for excavation

The eighth Nichiren Shu Study Tour was held from February 13 through 21 at Siem Reap, Cambodia, famous for the Angkor ruins. Fourteen people, between the ages of 18 and 31, participated under the leadership of Rev. Kairyū Shimizu, Toeiji Temple, Chiba and Rev. Junji Fujii, Honzuiji Temple, Kyoto (TM Ryoyaku Center). This study tour is part of an international cooperative activity promoted by Nichiren Shu to find and educate young people eager to help propagation overseas. In past years, the study program has been held in Laos, India and Sri Lanka.

Mr. Chea Sarin of the Spitzer School Foundation, who coordinated this year's project, was introduced to the group. He then introduced Mr. Bun Naritto of APSARA (Authority for Protection and Management of Angkor and the Region of Siem Reap) who was working under the Archaeological Survey Department of India. The workers of this department explained the procedures and how to help restore sections of the ruins. In this way, people from different countries got together to help excavate the ruins at Siem Reap.

The Siem Reap area has become popular since the Angkor ruins became a World Heritage Site. Many tourists visit this site annually. It is different from the image that people have of Cambodia. But if you travel a few miles into the suburbs, the huge Angkor ruins spread out endlessly.

The group first listened to a lecture by Prof. Satoru Miwa, head of the Sophia University Angkor International Mission Field Director on Angkor Vat. He talked about the restoration, excavation and history of Cambodia. Prof. Miwa also explained how it was important to help educate the Cambodian people who were working at the site.

Then the group moved to Ta Prohm where the restoration and excavation work was to take place. The branches and roots of the gajamaru trees looked as if they were monsters trying to devour the ruins. Many of the participants said that the site looked like a scene from Miyazaki Hayao's animation, "Castle in the Sky." King Jayavarman VII who constructed these structures was a Mahayana Buddhist. Many Buddhist statues were excavated from the site which made us feel that there was a strong bond between us.

The project was carried out with the Indian Archaeological Survey Restoration Team. Our main work was cleaning the excavated objects with a brush, and then drawing them on paper with precise measurements. With the temperature soaring above 30°C, it was very tough on the workers who were also earnestly trying to communicate in English, the common language at the site.

After a hard day's work, all the members gathered for a meeting to discuss their thoughts and experiences. They discussed such topics as the difference in values among the Cambodian people and the Japanese, children selling things on the streets, and many other topics of interest. It was important to verbally express his or her thoughts.

On the weekend, the group visited the elementary school supported by TM Ryoyaku Center. There the participants played jump rope, hide and seek, and showed the children some original Japanese games. Before they left, they sang "Ue O Muuite Aruko" (the Sukiyaki Song) as a present to the children.

On the last day of work, the group

sang "Ue O Muuite Aruko" for the other workers at the site. This song has become popular again as the song for encouraging the people of the earthquake-stricken areas in Japan. I am sure all the participants will remember the hard work they put into this project when they hear the song.

Through this study tour, I realized the warmth of the people and the importance of connections between people. This is being lost in Japan today. The sparkle in the eyes of the Cambodian children and people made the participants realize their narrow perspective and loneliness in their hearts.

The Cambodian people taught us the heart's capacity for benevolence is boundless. This was a worthwhile experience and one that cannot be replaced by anything else. (Tr.S.S.)



Children playing sumo



Group listening to instructions



Volunteer participants from different countries

Temple Events

Los Angeles Beikoku Betsuin

By Rev. Join Inoue



Rev. Inoue officiating the Global Harmony event

A Prayer for Global Harmony

The Los Angeles Beikoku Betsuin took part in this event on August 13, 2011. Rev. Join Inoue officiated the service and explained the purpose of this event:

In the Nichiren Shu Sutra called "Lotus Sutra," it is taught that a single person's thought can reach out to the world. There is also the teaching of "cause and effect," in which one single seed of "cause" can have an "effect" on the actual phenomenon. In short, the prayers will materialize into reality.

Not everyone can do the same thing and not all things can be done by everyone, but there is one thing everyone can do and that is to pray.

If you are aware of the moment of happiness right now, you must share it since nothing lasts forever. When misery falls upon others, don't be relieved because it doesn't concern you. It may fall upon you, too at any time in the future.

I believe Los Angeles, our city of great ethnic and cultural mixtures, is the perfect place to dispatch the prayer for harmony and happiness of the whole world and we should come hand in hand to build the happiest world.

Your prayers, our prayers can reach out beyond the borders of race, religion, faith, opinion, and status. I strongly hope that we can hold this event annually from now on. I will continue this movement of enlightening by prayers, until the day when people all over the globe can hold happiness and harmony in their hands.

Las Vegas

By Rev. Shoda Kanai



Kannon Temple of Nevada

It has been five years since we started the Kannon Temple in Las Vegas. Many people come to us to seek answers to problems in life and visit us from information they receive on the internet. We leave our gates open and accept everyone who wants to learn about the Odaimoku.

In order to help and support these people, I have to build up my mental strength and so I decided to go to Japan to study and train for this. I would also like to enter the 100-day Aragyō practice in November 2012. My goal is to spread the teachings of Nichiren Shonin and the Odaimoku to as many people as possible. I would also like to introduce the teaching to those who have never heard of Nichiren Shu.

It took close to six months to get a visa to stay in Japan for a year and a half and everything was finalized in the beginning of December 2011. I am training

at Nose Myokenzan Shinnyoji under Rev. Kanju Ueda. I am very grateful to his family for taking me in. I will do my best and put my effort into this training so I can return to Nevada to build a stronger temple and group. (Newsletter)

New England Sangha

By Rev. Ryuei Faulconer

The Greater New England Nichiren Sangha has added a new Dharma School for children. There are many obstacles that stand in the way in order to propagate. However, the Sangha has been growing in recent years.

Besides the Sunday service and annual events, I have been doing activities outside the temple as well. At the graduation ceremony of the local Haverhill High School, I gave the benediction. This was the first time a Buddhist priest conducted the ceremony. We also helped in taking care of the flowerbed in the town as part of the "Adopt a Park" program.

I have participated in many multi-religious activities. The biggest of which was "End Genocide in The Modern World." Rev. Shogen Kumakura came from New York to participate in this service to pray for the victims of worldwide genocide. For example, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Armenia, Africa, Cambodia, Native American Indians, and the Holocaust.

In a few years, I believe I will be able to find a place where I can construct a temple. I will continue to spread the Odaimoku in the New England area. (Newsletter)

Nichiren Mission of Hawaii

By Rev. Eisei Ikenaga

HBC Buddha Day 2012

Buddha Day, also called Hanamatsuri, refers to the celebration of Sakyamuni Buddha's birthday. Without the existence of the Buddha, we would have no teachings on

which to base our lives.

The Hawaii Buddhist Council sponsors Buddha Day Celebrations every year. This year, Nichiren Shu is responsible for the production of the ceremonies. We invite everyone to participate in this celebration, which will be held at our temple on Sunday, April 8, at 9:00 a.m. A prayer service will be led by Rev. Ikenaga followed by his sermon. After the service, we are scheduled to have performances by Matsuri Taiko. Refreshments will be served. Please join us for this important occasion for all Buddhists.

Bishop Imai's

Leave of Absence

Bishop Shingyo Imai will be absent from the temple for a period of two to three months. He has applied for permanent residency and needs to return to Japan until the application process is completed. In the interim, Rev. Ikenaga will be available. (Newsletter)

Carolina Sangha

By Rev. Ryusho Jeffus

Fifth Anniversary of Myoshoji Temple Charlotte

This year, a most auspicious year, has started out very strong for our temple. We began with a New Year service for almost 600 members of the growing community of refugees from Bhutan and Nepal. It was a great honor to offer special blessings and amulets to this large community of Buddhist families. Continuing building strong relations between this temple and the families from Bhutan and Nepal, we have begun a twice a month special Sunday school for the young children of the Bhutanese community. This is a good chance for the passing along from one generation to the next the wonderful teachings of Buddhism.

This has been a mild winter here, yet we continue to hold activities which will teach new members about the benefits of practicing the Buddha Dharma

and Nichiren Shu. This is all in preparation for the coming celebration of the fifth anniversary of Myosho-ji.

August will mark the fifth year since we moved into this building and had our first service. I am hoping that we can celebrate during the last part of this year and make a determination for a strong next five years towards a decade of Nichiren Shu in North Carolina.

Nichiren Buddhist Sangha of Texas

By Rev. Myokei Caine-Barrett

I have been continuing my visits to the Texas Department of Criminal Justice's correctional facility and last year four of the inmates who are followers were released. They have been coming to the practices we hold at the temple. In October 2011, the Sangha hosted the "Fourth Training for Followers" at the facility and a total of 35 inmates joined the session.

I also participated in the American Buddhist Minister's Conference last year. There we had a discussion on the "Future of American Buddhism." I was able to give a talk on Nichiren Shu Buddhism. The next conference is to be held in 2015. I am working on it so that the conference can be held in Houston, where our Sangha is located.

I was featured on a Buddhist magazine called "Tricycle" last fall and I have been getting a lot of feedback from not only people in America but also from all over the world. This has really activated my propagation.

Presently, I am working on a review titled, "Record of the Hidden Lamp: 100 Koans and Stories from 24 Centuries of Awakened Women."

The Nichiren Buddhist Sangha in Texas, is where the Hokkekyo and Nichiren Shonin's teachings are being propagated and I will continue to spread the teachings of the Lotus Sutra.

Calendar April – May 2012

April 8:
Hanamatsuri (Buddha's Birthday)

April 15~20:
Nakayama Hokekyoji Senbu-e (1000 Recitations of the Lotus Sutra)

April 27~29:
Ikegami Hommonji Senbu-e (1000 Recitations of the Lotus Sutra)

April 28:
The 760th Rikkyo Kaishu-e (760th Anniversary of the Founding of the Order)

May 12:
The 752nd Izu Honan-e (Ceremony honoring the 752nd Anniversary of the Izu Persecution)

By Rev. Tsuoh Yokoi

Nichiren Shu News

c/o Nichiren Shu Shumuin 1-32-15, Ikegami, Ota-ku, Tokyo 146-8544, Japan

Tel. 03-3751-7181~3

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