

# Nichiren Shu News

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1

## “WHEN THE SKY IS CLEAR, THE LAND IS BRIGHT.”

Honorable Rev. Nisso Uchino, Archbishop of Nichiren Shu, Chief Abbot of Minobusan Kuonji Temple

In this early spring of 2018, I give my sincere compliments of the New Year season to all the ministers and devotees of Nichiren Shu. I would also like to express my deepest gratitude for the constant service and contributions you are rendering to Nichiren Shu and Minobusan, the Founder's mountain.

In the celebration of the 800th anniversary of Nichiren Shonin's birth that started last year, we have shared with devotees and followers the joy of celebrating our Founder's birth.

This year commemorative gatherings will be held in Kawaguchi City for North Kanto District on March 10, in Kurashiki City for Chugoku and Shikoku Districts on April 10, in Kyoto City for Kinki District on October 28, and in Fukuoka City for Kyushu District on November 28. In each gathering, we as Nichiren Shu priests and members will work to develop friendly relations with each other and to deepen our ties.

Our society has been recently subject to remarkable change with information brimming around us. As a result, many people suffer anxiety and affliction, believing they have nowhere to go. Material things never run short, but everyone starves for spiritual fulfillment.

To take a first step toward spiritual comfort, I would like to introduce Nichiren Shonin's words:

“When the sky is clear, the land is bright.”

It is quite true that the land of clear sky is bright, but once the sky becomes cloudy, it gets dark. Similarly, to have always a cheerful mind will make our society bright, while dark clouds hanging over our mind will bring us a gloomy future.



It is important and necessary for us to leave nothing unsettled in our minds for ourselves as well as for our society. Sincerity results from doing what we believe is right. With right mind, we enhance our contacts with other people and enhance each other so that we may make our society bright and clear.

According to Chinese astrology, 2018 is the Year of *Tsuchinoe-Inu*, the Dog. It is also the thirty-fifth year

of the sexagenary circle. *Tsuchinoe* symbolizes trees and plants growing thick. The dog means to break or cut off something, implying that plants and trees will die off unless cut down. As the branches and leaves become dense, trees are damaged. Only when they are trimmed, pruned off, and well-ventilated, and when the ground around the roots of the trees is pounded, can trees live on.

This is the year when we should stop fussing about the past and look to the new vistas in the future by undergoing a transformation. For that, it is necessary to kindle a fire of faith in the Lotus Sutra not only in ourselves but also together with other people and to establish good relations with them through the *Odaimoku* so that we can trust each other. The commemorative gatherings for the 800th anniversary will be the best opportunity to feel grateful to Nichiren Shonin and repay him.

Let us appreciate keeping faith in the Lotus Sutra and *Odaimoku* where we can receive the great compassion of Shakyamuni Buddha and Nichiren Shonin. And let us value each day with a goal of spending a pleasant time laughing as long as life goes on. This will truly express feelings of gratitude to Nichiren Shonin.

At the beginning of 2018, from Minobusan, which Nichiren Shonin perceived as a sacred mountain, I wish peace throughout the world. May all of you have a happy year feeling great joy in the Lotus Sutra. And finally, I would like to ask all the ministers and devotees to give continuous and immediate support to Nichiren Shu and the Founder's temple. With Gassho.

## “ALL OF US! LET US PRAY FOR WORLD PEACE!”

Bishop Nissho Kanno, Ikegami Honmonji Temple, Tokyo

Kenji Miyazawa, an earnest believer of the Lotus Sutra and literary man, has words that appeal to us: “I sincerely wish the day will come when every one of the people in the world will be able to spend their lives in peace.”

He also said, “Happiness will never be realized for us individually until the whole world becomes happy.”

I quite agree with him in view of today's situation in the world.

A past master declared, “The world is one. Human beings are all brothers and sisters.” Now is the time when we should realize this ideal.

Seven hundred years ago, Nichiren Shonin wrote *Rissho Ankoku-ron, Establish Righteousness and Bring Peace to the Country*. In it he teaches us, “Only by the right teaching can society, the family and the individual be peaceful. Needless to say, the right teaching is the Lotus Sutra, the *Odaimoku*. When



we live embracing the spirit of the Lotus Sutra and the *Odaimoku*, strife and agony will disappear from the world and peace will be realized in this world.” So teaches Nichiren Shonin. Kenji Miyazawa's appeal is based on this teaching of our Founder.

Now the world is in turmoil. “Selfish

desire” as described by the teachings of Buddhism is entirely the reason. “So long as I am happy, so long as my country is faring well.” This way of thinking is the cause for the conflicts. I sincerely hope world leaders, specifically politicians, will be awakened in this regard.

Let us, the devotees of the Lotus Sutra and *Odaimoku*, return to the spirit of “*Rissho Ankoku-ron*,” advocated by Nichiren Shonin, as we greet the New Year of Heisei 30, call for “World Peace” to the peoples of the entire world, and pray for it.

—Translations by Rev. Sensho Komukai

### THE YEAR OF THE DOG

According to the Chinese zodiac, the Dog, or *Inu*, is the eleventh of its twelve horary signs. There are five elements associated with each zodiac sign; Gold, Wood, Water, Fire and Earth. It is thought that a person's characteristics are decided by their birth year's zodiac animal sign and element. This year is the Year of the Earth Dog whose characteristics include being communicative, serious and responsible in work.

People born in the Year of the Dog are loyal, honest, amiable, kind, cautious, and prudent. Because of this strong sense of loyalty, Dogs will do everything for the

person who they think is most important. They are good-natured and just need a quiet life with a nice family and to forget about the ugliness and evils of society. They are ready to help others and don't care about their own interests, but if they are betrayed they are greatly shocked and hurt.

Overall, Dogs enjoy good health for they tend to be happy most

of the time. However, if they work long hours and socialize too much, they should get plenty of rest plus proper exercise which will help to benefit both their physical and mental health.

Inuhariko, a traditional Japanese dog mascot, is often used as a symbol for the Year of the Dog and also for the blessing of a newborn child. This is because dogs are healthy and

grow up to be strong, and parents want the same things for their children.

Because of their loyal personality, Dogs tend to choose careers based on serving others. They will do well as police officers, scientists, counselors, interior designers, professors, politicians, priests, nurses, clerks or judges.

Dogs are those born in the following years; 1922, 1934, 1946, 1958, 1970, 1982, 1994, 2006, and 2018.

May the Year of the Dog bring you happiness and good health!

—Compiled by Sandra Seki



## Study Tour in Minobu 2017

By Rev. Kanjo Bassett

### THE OPENING CEREMONY POWER BALL

On the third day of the Study Tour in Minobu, the group hiked up Shichimensan from pleasant fall sun into the winter clouds where it began to flurry snow. At the end of the trail, the group huddled in the main hall of Okunoin Temple where head priest Rev. Teigyo Kunugi performed an Altar Opening Ceremony, greeted the group and asked for a volunteer.

“Please stand here, raise your arm, and point at the clock on the wall.” Rev. Kunugi looked around for another volunteer, “Now you come up and stand here.” The second member stood slightly behind the first.

“Is his arm pointing at the clock?” He asked the second member who shook his head.

That’s right, he only thinks he is. Now point his arm to the right spot.”



The second member moved the fellow member’s arm to the right, and Rev. Kunugi explained.

“The Buddha is like your true self standing right behind you. You think you are seeing the truth with your eyes, but only the Buddha, your true self, sees what is true. Are you ready to trust your Buddha self to guide you?”

The next day, the Study Tour group was treated to a second Altar Opening ceremony performed by Rev. Taiga Ichikawa in the recently refurbished, and splendidly opulent, Edo-era Main Hall of Keishin-in Temple. Rev. Ichikawa was a missionary priest for the Seattle Nichiren Buddhist Church back in the mid-1990s and greeted the group with an English explanation of the very old and famous statue of Shichimen Daimyojin enshrined on the altar.

“She is holding a key in her right hand and three power balls in her left. Her key opens your heart, where she puts power balls inside, so that you have power to overcome any difficulty in life.”

Power balls are not the first thing that comes to mind when looking at a statue of Shichimen Daimyojin, but



Praying in Keishin-in Temple’s Main Hall, where a statue of Shichimen Daimyojin is enshrined.



Amazing view from the top of Shichimensan.

Rev. Ichikawa’s vivid imagery connects with today’s audience. In a way, the entire Study Tour group had their hearts opened and power balls inserted by the magic and beauty of spending five days in Minobusan. Shichimen was one highlight of many.

This year’s Study Tour marked a complete overhaul of the program and a new phase. From its start in 2003, the program focused on inviting students from Rissho University to spend several days in countries in Southeast Asia, such as Laos, Thailand, Cambodia and Nepal, doing volunteer activities such as fixing school buildings, helping archeological excavations and clearing earthquake damaged building debris.

The hope was that by giving future Nichiren Shu priests international exchange experience, they would be interested in becoming *Kokusai Fukyoshi*, overseas ministers. Unfortunately, very few *Kokusai Fukyoshi* candidates resulted from the program, and stricter travel insurance policies began to limit the places and volunteer activities in which study tour participants could engage.

At the same time, the number of overseas *Shami* grew. *Shami* are novices beginning the process of becoming Nichiren Shu priests. It was clear that a new approach was needed. After much discussion, it was decided to restructure this year’s program to bring both *Shami* and potential *Shami* from abroad to experience Nichiren Shu practice along with the students in the Minobusan University Gyogaku Dormitory.



Ikuhiro Takaya, from the Gyogaku Dormitory, leads the group to the Buddhist statue workshop.



In the Buddhist statue workshop, Rev. Giko Suzuki invites the group to help carve a statue of Kannon.



On the last day of the Study Tour, the group marched to our Founder’s grave beating drums and chanting Odaimoku with Minobusan University Gyogaku Dormitory students

The Gyogaku Dormitory is not a regular university dorm. It’s specifically for students who will enter Shingyo Dojo and become Nichiren Shu priests upon graduation. The students experience four years of Shingyo Dojo-like communal living on a strict daily regimen of services, chanting, cleaning, and practice, all in addition to their university studies.

Rev. Kobun Sasaki, manager of Nichiren Shu’s Missionary Department International Section, explained one aim of this year’s program, “Nichiren Shu is working to establish an English-language, priest-training curriculum. The participants this year are providing invaluable experience for the evolution of our Order’s education system.

“On a personal level, I was struck by the eagerness of the participants to learn and endure hardships, such as sitting in the difficult seiza posture for long stretches, just like the Minobusan University dormitory students.”

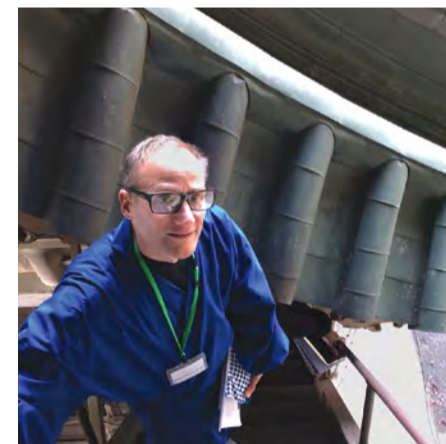
**THE PROGRAM** The Minobu Study Tour 2017 had eight participants from countries around the world: Indonesia,



The participants took this hands-on learning experience very seriously



The finished statue will be enshrined in Fukushima prefecture in memory of the tsunami victims.



After the workshop, the group visited the hall above the Sanmon Gate (not open to the public).



Chanting to the lake of Shichimen Daimyojin at Keishin-in Temple.



Shami Ong from Indonesia takes a break to ring the bell at the top of Shichimensan.

Korea, the U.S., Brazil, Argentina, and the U.K. A staff of four was led by Rev. Sasaki, along with Rev. Keiryō Inoue and Rev. Kanjo Bassett of the Missionary Dept., and rounded out by Rev. Yodo Okuda, former Missionary in Brazil, now at Myokeiji Temple in Aichi, and Rev. Eisho Yamazawa of Myouonji Temple in Shizuoka. Revs. Okuda and Yamazawa provided essential interpretation assistance for English, Spanish and Portuguese.

Rev. Inoue was responsible for developing the four-day Study Tour curriculum which included: a Minobusan University lecture, visits to the University Buddhist Sculpture Workshop and the closed-to-the-public Sanmon Gate Upper Hall, and a hike to the top of Shichimensan with an overnight stay. All this in addition to early morning and evening services, drum practice, cleaning, and optional 6 a.m. Suigyo practice in the dead silent cold Minobu daybreak.



The group arrives at our Founder's grave. Two of the study tour participants helped lead the chanting service in honor of Nichiren Shonin.



The dormitory students held a farewell dinner. They had only been with the study tour group for a short time, but they kept talking until curfew.



The Gyogaku Dormitory students and the Study Tour participants really seemed to enjoy the time they spent together.

There was something for the Minobusan University students as well: the Study Tour group treated them to an English-language service of Shodaigyo so they could experience the "overseas" version firsthand.

The days of living and practicing

together must have struck a chord between the dorm students and study tour participants. Rev. Inoue explained, "After the farewell party at the dormitory on the last night, both students and study tour members stayed in the dining hall for a few hours until

the 10:30 curfew discussing things using smartphone dictionaries and other means to overcome communication barriers.

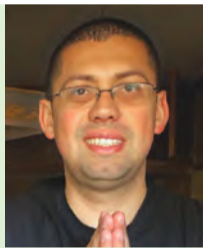
"This was actually my favorite part of the program. The whole point was to encourage mutual interest, communication and cultural exchange between people of various backgrounds. The events that night proved to me that the program was a success. I think each participant took back a special experience as a souvenir."

**FUTURE STUDY TOURS** Nichiren Shu plans three kinds of Study Tours starting from 2018: Study Tours to Southeast Asian countries for Rissho and Minobusan University students, Study Tours at Minobu for potential *Shami* outside of Japan, and cultural exchange Study Tours held abroad for Nichiren Shu groups from Japan. Each year, these will rotate to reach the widest possible pool of candidates both in Japan and overseas. We hope to carry on the success of this year's program in many ways.



The Suigyo practice and the Shichimensan climb were both new experiences for me and so inspiring. I think that if we have a strong spirit, then any difficulty can be overcome.

-Sidin Ong (Indonesia)



Visiting Shichimensan was amazing. I was touched by the energy and power of the mountain and also Shichimen Daimyojin. My dream is to enter Shingyo Dojo.

-Guilherme Chiamuloera (Brazil)



Climbing the mountain was really hard, but I felt I was energized by Shichimen Daimyojin. I hope that I can build on this experience and enter the university's Gyogaku Dormitory program!

-Jung Yong Hyun (Korea)



I learned so much from the daily services with the students from the Gyogaku Dormitory program. This has been a great experience and has made a big impact on my practice.

-Kanjo Chad Grohman (United States)



I really enjoyed the practice time with the Gyogaku Dormitory students. That was my favorite part! Shichimensan was incredible. I look forward to visiting this sacred mountain again.

-Philip Kane Rosman (United States)



It was an amazing opportunity to get insight into the way the Gyogaku students live and also meet the other *Shami*. I particularly enjoyed climbing Mt. Shichimen.

-Kanse Capon (United Kingdom)



A highpoint was during our march from Kuonji's main Hondo to Nichiren Shonin's grave. I cannot really explain the feeling other than an adrenaline rush or a high, I guess.

-Johnny Valdez (United States)



I am so thankful for the chance to take part in the Study Tour. We have no mountains where I live, so I had never climbed one. It was difficult, and I actually cried when we got to the top.

-Mauro Andres Petriw (Argentina)

## Dragon Palace Temple Celebrates 18th Anniversary

By Rev. Taitoku Miura, Missionary Department

The Dragon Palace Temple in Nagpur India held a memorial service celebrating its 18th anniversary on November 4, 2017, the day of a full moon. A group of 47 followers from Japan and other Asian countries, consisting of both temple members and priests, participated in the memorial service along with about 1,000 local people and children who beat drums while chanting the Lotus Sutra and Odaimoku.

The Dragon Palace Temple, together with the Dr. Ambedkar Culture Research Centre which was constructed four years ago, has gradually gained recognition as an area for tourists as well as a place of pilgrimage. The number of visitors has steadily increased, including Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims. Thanks to an Indian government grant-in-aid, a meditation center with a guest house where priests and other important guests can stay and take a rest was built next to the temple. It also provides space for visitors and tourists to use for meditation.



## Training Seminar for Devotees in Hodoji Temple, Korea

Nichiren Shu Shimbun

On October 7-9, a training seminar for devotees was held in Hodoji Temple in Korea. About 40 people from various parts of Korea came to attend the seminar. This was the first seminar held by Hodoji Temple. The theme was, "I Bow to the Buddha in You - I respect and praise all of you deeply with palms together." The participants in the seminar had an opportunity to practice saying a Nichiren Shu grace at every meal, translated into Korean. They also learned the teachings of Nichiren Shu Buddhism, Buddhist manners, and the Nichiren Shu standard of ceremonies. These included protocols and *shomyo*, short chants sung like hymns. They experienced *shodaigyo*, Odaimoku chanting, sutra copying and water purification practices.

In the *shodaigyo*, all the attendants shed tears by the magical power of Odaimoku, because they were sure they met and felt the Buddha.

In sutra copying practice, some were confused with how to handle a writing brush but tried carefully to copy each word of *jigage*, verses of chapter 16 of the Lotus Sutra. They also made *juzu* for a bracelet and an amulet, and learned about Chapter 26, "Dharanis" of the Lotus Sutra.

Then they presented themselves at the Offering for the Hungry Ghosts Ceremony. This was officiated by Rev. Hokken Woo, introducing such *shomyo* hymns as *Dojo-ge*, Verse on the Place of Practice, *Shusan*, Incantation, and *Buso*, Seeing-off Verses.

The end of the session included an eye-opening ceremony for the hand-made amulets and *juzu*. Participants were then given these precious items together with a training completion certificate.

Rev. Woo delivered an address of thanks, "My wife and I had made a plan for many hours. We were glad to have this seminar without any trouble, thanks to you who had been helping us for the preparations. We wish all of you to respect each other and to share with Nichiren Shonin the spirit of spreading Odaimoku throughout the world."



## TEMPLE EVENTS



Fujinkai members at the Temple Emanu-El Fair.

### Nichiren Mission of Hawaii Carol Nagano, Treasurer

#### Fujinkai (Ladies Association) Activities

The Fujinkai had a profitable craft fair season. We worked hard during the months of October and November to make craft items to sell at the annual Mayor's Fair and also for the first time this year, at the Temple Emanu-El Craft Fair. We made a total of \$1,294. The Fujinkai's mission is to support the temple. We accomplish this by preparing food for various significant services at the Mission and purchasing items needed for the temple from the sales of our handmade crafts.

Being invited to the Temple Emanu-El Craft Fair was a highlight of this year's craft season. It was a heartwarming and enlightening experience for us. Meeting friendly members of the Jewish community and sharing experiences and food, especially the potato latkes, helped us appreciate the beauty and warmth of people and cultures outside our temple.

### Las Vegas Kannon Temple Rev. Shokai Kanai

#### 2018 Pilgrimage to Nichiren Shonin's Memorial Sites

Commemorating the 800th Anniversary of Nichiren Shonin's birth, Kannon Temple will have a pilgrimage to our founder's memorial sites from October 8-16, 2018. We would like to invite any interested people from North America or anywhere in the world. Therefore, participants will gather at a hotel in Tokyo.

The memorial sites on the pilgrimage will include Tanjoji Temple near his birthplace and where he grew up; Seichoji Temple where he studied, was ordained, and first chanted Odaimoku; Myohoji Temple, Ankoku Ronji Temple, Kosokuji Temple, and Hachiman Shrine

in Kamakura where he expounded the Lotus Sutra; Butsugenji Temple and Renkeiji Temple in Izu where he spent his first exile; Nakayama Hokekyoji Temple where he held the 100 days preaching, including the Treasure House where his writings are kept; Minobusan where he educated his followers for nine years, including Minobusan Kuonji Temple, Shishinkaku, and his Mausoleum; and Ikegami Honmonji Temple where he entered into Nirvana on October 13, 1282 and where we will attend the *Oeshiki* Service on October 13, 2018.

This pilgrimage is intended for those who have never visited Japan, so the participants will experience many modes of transportation, such as chartered buses, Japan Railroad trains, the Bullet Train, cable cars, highway long-distance coaches and subways.

At Minobusan, we will attend the 6 a.m. morning service, and then our group will offer a memorial service for our Founder, Nichiren Daishonin, conducted by Nichiren Shu Archbishop Nisso Uchino. At Ikegami Honmonji, we will stay overnight, participate in *Shodai-Angya* in the *Mando* Parade, watch the beautiful lighted *Mando* lanterns along the parade route and participate in *Shodaigyō* by beating hand drums throughout the night of October 12. The next morning we will attend the 7 a.m. *Oeshiki* Memorial Service to commemorate Nichiren's passing at 8 a.m.

More details will be announced later, but those who are interested in joining the pilgrimage, please contact Kannon Temple of Nevada for more information.

### Honolulu Myohoji Temple Rev. Josho Yamamura

#### Social Media Improvements

Honolulu Myohoji Temple has a webpage <http://honolulumyohoji.org> that contains abundant information on our practice of Buddhism. You can read and print out our recently published booklets like the *Path to True Happiness*, *The Reality of Myohoji* and *The Lotus Sutra through the Seven Parables*.

We also built the Honolulu Myohoji YouTube page. A high school student from New York shot our temple's surroundings to make a beautiful movie. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3IRTtcN5Fpw>

Additionally, we have a Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/HonoluluMyohojiMission>

It shows many pictures of our events and people's comments from all over the world. We also started an Instagram page at #myohoji. You will find some photos from the temple activities. We hope to share the events that are happening at our temple with everyone!

### San Jose Myokakuji Betsuin Rev. Shinko Matsuda

#### Demonstrate Your Faith through Action

Happiness depends on harmony both with the environment in which we live and within ourselves. A man who faces his job each day, longing for a different job is miserable. A student who would rather be at the beach than in class is unsuccessful. Harmony is being where you want to be and wanting to be where you are. A happy person can fit into any situation and utilize the opportunities that present themselves.

There are not many people today who have this knack. Most people live in anticipation of happiness, thinking that things are always better elsewhere. People often say, "If I had a different job... If I had a different family... If I lived somewhere more exciting..." These 'ifs' have resulted in a society with the highest turnover in employment, the highest divorce rate and the greatest mobility in history. Only when one lives with the correct outlook in life and the world, individual happiness, world peace and social prosperity will be achieved. How do we obtain the correct view? In a very broad sense, there have been two very influential and contrary views of life; spiritualism and materialism.

Spiritualism insists that the essence of life is something imaginary, a form of soul transcending matter. Materialism views all phenomena from a physical or operational standpoint. Matter is the reality of life for them.

Based on our desires, wisdom and experience, we decide what we want in life, set goals and dreams, and make efforts to

accomplish them. Along the way, we face obstacles both within ourselves and in the world we live in. We accomplish some things, change our minds about others and never reach the rest. The important thing is to go after something that matters to us. Unfortunately, not many people do so. They have been led astray by foolish ideas. The true nature of life is that spirit and matter, or mind and body, are one entity.

This complete view of life operates on a higher plane than either spiritualism or materialism. By applying and living this philosophy in the practice of Buddhism, a person finds harmony with the universe and himself. This is the perfect way of life that will create a harmonious society without contradiction.

Demonstrate your faith through action. We need not wait for perfect faith. Every degree of faith must be proven by action so that each gives others an incentive to improve themselves. That is the way we climb the stairs to the revelation of eternal peace and happiness

### Nichiren Mission of Hawaii Rev. Chishin Hirai

#### Hawaii Buddhist Council Bodhi Day Service

A Bodhi Day service was held on Sunday, December 3 at the Soto Mission of Hawaii. Bodhi Day is the celebration commemorating the attainment of Enlightenment by the Buddha 2,500 years ago. Bishops and representatives of all denominations of the Hawaii Buddhist Council (HBC) talked about the "Significance of Bodhi Day." It was a great opportunity to get to know fellow Buddhists from other denominations.



Alexa Sasaki (left) and Meadow Sasaki, offered flowers and incense as representatives of the Nichiren Mission of Hawaii at the Bodhi Day Service at the Soto Mission of Hawaii.

## Calendar for February 2018 – March 2018

**FEB 3** Setsubun (first day of spring in the traditional Chinese calendar)

**FEB. 10** Commemoration Ceremony observing the completion of the 100 day Aragyō Ascetic Training

**FEB. 15** Nirvana Day

**FEB. 16** Commemoration Day of the Birth of Nichiren Shonin

**MAR18-24** Spring Higan

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