

Nichiren Shu News

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Our Founder's Warning Should Be Received by Faith

Honorable Rev. Nissho Kanno, Archbishop of Nichiren Shu, Chief Abbot of Ikegami Honmonji Temple, Tokyo

In this early spring of 2020, I give my sincere compliments of the New Year season to all the ministers and devotees of Nichiren Shu, and I truly wish all of you pure and restful happiness.

February 16, 2021 will be the 800th anniversary of Nichiren Shonin's birth. The commemorative services and gatherings to honor his 800th anniversary have already been held at several places both in Japan and abroad. I was deeply moved whenever I conducted the commemorative service. After the service, I am always appealing the attendees to respond to the spirit of our Founder and to make the best use of his spirit in our daily lives. What is the spirit of our Founder? It is the spirit to establish righteousness and bring peace to the country. He wishes to have all the people in the universe live a happy and peaceful



life with the true spirit of the Lotus Sutra.

Recently a rainstorm raged in all its fury all over the world. All of us agree that such disasters can be caused by the effects of global warming. Intellectuals indicate that a rise in sea temperatures may bring about even more torrential rainfalls and typhoons in the future. Considering a remedy, however, the matter provoked heated discussion, reaching no conclusion.

700 years ago, Nichiren Shonin gave a strong warning, mentioning in his *Treatise on Spreading Peace Throughout the Country by Establishing the True Dharma*, "A traveler came to lament: In recent years, strange phenomena in the sky, natural calamities on earth, families, and epidemics have occurred and spread over all the land. If you wish to have peace for yourself, you

should first of all pray for the peace of the country."

He pointed out, "The turmoil on earth and in the universe is based on the distraction of human beings. People have acted egocentrically without thinking that we are a part of our planet. Our behavior has created these recent calamities. Live a life in accordance with the right teachings of the Lotus Sutra. The spirit of Odaimoku should be put into practice in your daily life."

Let us have a wonderful life in which we can feel that our heart and actions are illuminated by the light of the Odaimoku, Namu Myoho Renge Kyo. Taking a first step to bring peace to the world by establishing the True Dharma will lead to saving the earth from destruction and leaving the beautiful planet Earth to our descendants. A personal prayer can be linked with peace in the entire world. At the beginning of 2020, I hereby offer my New Year Greetings. I look forward to your continued good will in the coming year.

In the Pre-Final Year of the Miracle 800th Anniversary

Rev. Hosen Nakagawa, Chief Administrator of Nichiren Shu

I would like to extend my New Year Greetings. Last year, all of Japan was afflicted by awful calamities. Nichiren Shu temples suffered heavy damage from typhoons 15 and 19. I wish to pray for the souls of those who lost their lives and sincerely hope that all those who suffered will be able to return to a peaceful life quickly. The internal bureau of Nichiren Shu started to solicit donations to reduce a burden on those suffering for their revival. We have received a great amount of contributions from all parts of the country. When I was appointed as the Chief Administrator of Nichiren Shu, I declared that the Nichiren Shu should be stronger and more powerful. I feel that strength in our quick and generous support. On behalf of Nichiren Shu, I would like to express profound gratitude for your cooperation and for making donations for relief.

The last phase of the Rissho Ankoku and Odaimoku Kechien Campaign which emphasizes "Bearing Fruit" started last April. Last November, I visited Daimokuji Temple in Singapore to hold the memorial service commemorating the 15th anniversary of the establishment of their temple. We shared an unforgettable memory and the greatest delight with all the members there. Seeing the seeds of the Lotus Sutra and Odaimoku sprout, grow up, and bear fruit overseas, I became strongly convinced that the teachings of the Lotus Sutra and Odaimoku would spread throughout the world. You know that sowed seeds will not always sprout. Nevertheless, you have never given up. You continue to sow the seeds time after time, and finally they come to fruition.

Nichiren Shonin said in his letter, *Reminiscences*: from Tatsunokuchi to

Minobu, "All those in our group, follow me in the second and third battle lines, performing great exploits to spread the Odaimoku, the gist of the Lotus Sutra and the eyes of Buddhas." Whatever difficulties may happen, it is our mission as practitioners of the Lotus Sutra to follow him in the second and third lines.

The 800th anniversary of our Founder's birth is one year from now. It is the "pre-final" this year. It is time to be ready to realize how miraculous his birth is. It is also the time to think about what we can do and the purpose of our lives. Nichiren Shonin, who by nature knew that to save people from suffering was something to live for, did not hesitate to fight against any difficulties. According to Chinese astrology, 2020 is the Year of the Rat, in which one brings good fortunes into shape. I hope you will realize the miracle of our Founder's

birth and understand the true reason why you are here in this place in his 800th anniversary. May the New Year be full of success and happiness for you.



THE YEAR OF THE RAT

2020 is the Year of the Rat, according to the Chinese zodiac. The Rat is the first of all the 12 zodiac animal signs in the cycle. It is associated with Earthly dark and the midnight hours. In terms of Yin and Yang, the Rat represents the beginning of a new day, therefore the beginning of the zodiac cycle where each animal sign comes around every 12 years.

In the Chinese culture, the Rat is seen as a sign of wealth and surplus. Because of their reproduction rate, couples pray to

them in order to be blessed with children.

Those born in the Year of the Rat are clever, quick-thinking and successful but content with living a quiet and peaceful life. Optimistic and energetic, they are liked by all. They have a kind personality, but due to weak communication skills their words may seem impolite or rude at times.



perfect for the independent and imaginative Rat. They also pay attention to fine

On the financial side, they like saving money and can be stingy. However, their instinct to hoard things sometimes causes them to waste money on unnecessary things.

Careers that involve creative work, like authors, editors, and artists, are

detail and are a good fit for technical work of engineers and architects.

Success will show itself in their workplace or in education while relationships and health will be areas of concern. Overall, the year will be a good and prosperous one for the Rat.

Rats are those who are born in the following years of the lunar calendar: 1924, 1936, 1948, 1960, 1972, 1984, 1996, 2008, and 2020.

—Compiled by Sandra Seki

Daimokuji Temple in Singapore Celebrates Its 15th Anniversary

Photos and article by Jan Louy

On November 2-3, Daimokuji Temple in Singapore celebrated its 15th anniversary. Nearly 200 followers from all over Southeast Asia, including Malaysia (Kuala Lumpur, Penang, and Klang), Sri Lanka, Indonesia, and Japan, joined Singapore's members to commemorate this special event.

Daimokuji Temple's rich history goes beyond its celebrated 15 years. Origins go back nearly 35 years. The temple was originally called the Lotus Sutra Buddhist Association. At one time, it had nearly 1,000 members. However, difficulties, conflicts, and struggles within the group emerged. Seeking to continue to keep their faith in the Lotus Sutra and the Odaimoku, Mr. Lee Soon Kian, the current Vice Chairman of Daimokuji Temple, and other board members reached out to Mr. Ang Tiang Soon, Chairman of



Ichinenji Temple in Penang, Malaysia and Rev. Myosho Obata. After two years of communications and visits, the relationship between the temple and Nichiren Shu had advanced and became solid. The temple's name was officially changed to Daimokuji Temple, and the decision was made to become part of Nichiren Shu. This began a new era of enthusiasm and celebration. On November 13, 2004, Rev. Myosho Obata officiated the inaugural ceremony at Daimokuji Temple in Singapore.

The two-day celebration for the 15th Anniversary began with a retreat featuring a lecture by Rev. Ryokei Koga, Associate Priest of Joenji, and a traditional Nichiren Shu Dharma talk by Rev. Koyu Koyama, Associate Priest of Myokyoji. They both represented the Tokyo South Nichiren Shu Youth Group.

Rev. Koga's lecture focused on Nichiren Shonin's *Rissho Ankoku-ron*, which was written as an appeal to the Japanese government to embrace the teachings of the Lotus Sutra. It was viewed as a collective expression of thoughts, opinions, and the true intentions of Nichiren Shonin up to 1260.

Rev. Koyama delivered his speech from the traditional platform in the *koza sekkyo* style. *Koza sekkyo* obtains its origins from *rakugo*, which literally means "fallen words." *Rakugo* is an ancient form of storytelling using only a paper fan and a small cloth as props. Buddhist monks, seeking to make their sermons more interesting, invented it centuries ago. Rev. Koyama focused his remarks on relationships between parents and children as associated with Shakyamuni Buddha and with all sentient beings.

The afternoon concluded with a kito blessing conducted by Revs. Homyo Kanou, Head Priest of Daikyoji, Tokuga Matoba, Head Priest of Myozenji, Koyu Koyama, Associate Priest of Myokyoji, and Shodai Ando of Mayaji.

The Anniversary Service was held on Sunday, November 3, officiated by Rev. Hosei Nakagawa, Chief Administrator of Nichiren Shu. Sub-officiants were Revs. Keiji Oshima, Head Priest of Daimokuji, and Homyo Kanou, Head Priest of Daikyoji. Assisting ministers were Revs. Ervinna Myoufu, Head Priest of Rengeji, Tokuga Matoba, Head Priest of Myozenji,

and Ryokei Koga, Associate Priest of Myokyoji. The master of ceremonies was Rev. Yuon Ito, Head Priest of Kuonji, and the service attendant was Rev. Kenin Ito, Head Priest of Ichinenji.

The ceremony began with opening remarks and flower-petal strewing, followed by Devotion to the Three Treasures and the Invocation. Rev. Nakagawa delivered a moving speech of congratulatory praise. He commended the devotion of missionaries and members in their propagation efforts and achievements throughout Southeast Asia. The ceremony concluded with Wasan, chanting the Odaimoku, a kito blessing and closing remarks.

Today, under the guidance of Head Priest Keiji Oshima and Temple Chairman Foo Yang Yit, along with the power of their faith, Daimokuji Temple continues to grow and prosper. It enjoys a strong membership of nearly 60. Mr. Lee stated that "as the membership ages, we are focusing on the young members and their roles in maintaining and growing the future of the temple."



Rev. Hosei Nakagawa, Chief Administrator of Nichiren Shu, officiating the ceremony.



Rev. Ryokei Koga lecturing on the *Rissho Ankoku-ron*.

20th Anniversary of Dragon Palace Temple in Nagpur

By Shumuin Staff

On November 10, a group from Minobusan Kuonji Temple went on a tour to India to pay homage to some of the most important and historical Buddhist sites. The main objective was to participate in the 20th anniversary celebration of the Dragon Palace Temple in Nagpur. The temple was completed in 1999. Since then, an orphanage, school, meditation center, and other facilities were built under the leadership of Ms. Noriko Ogawa and Ms. Sulekha Kumbhare. In this time, these women developed an unbreakable bond of sisterhood.



Ms. Sulekha Kumbhare chanting and drumming in memory of her friend Ms. Noriko Ogawa.



A group of about 50 people came from Japan for the 20th anniversary celebration. They were greeted by many adorable school children and orphans who chanted *Namu Myo Ho Renge Kyo* enthusiastically and precisely beat the drums. The event was well attended by locals and other followers from across India. The celebration was conducted in their Indian dialect, Japanese, and English. Some of the prayers were in unfamiliar languages but so symphonic, beautiful and peaceful to the ear. Eight kito priests, led by Rev. Denshi Tajima, blessed the ceremony and attendees. Special prayers were offered for the late Ms. Noriko Ogawa, Rev. Kaiko Kato, and Ven. Joyo Ogawa.

Sadly, Ms. Noriko Ogawa passed away at the age of 75 on September 2, 2019 following a long bout with illness. Her legacy lives on because of her efforts to help the people of Nagpur and make sure the Dragon Palace Temple was sustained through the establishment of the Ogawa Society. She was a truly charitable person who aspired to help others as she shared in the practice of *Namu Myo Ho Renge Kyo*.

The group also visited the Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Museum. Dr. Ambedkar (1891-1956) was a jurist, economist, politician, social reformer, and Buddhist from the Dalit, or untouchable, caste. He fought against social discrimination and supported women's rights and labor.

He was the first independent law and justice minister of India, the architect of the Constitution of India, and a founding father of the Republic of India. He greatly influenced Ms. Kumbhare's father and, ultimately, Ms. Kumbhare herself. Dr. Ambedkar was the leader of the movement to promote Dalit Buddhism and to change the caste system. In turn, he was a catalyst for more than a million people converting to Buddhism.

After two decades, the anniversary at Nagpur drew a huge crowd both from Japan and within India. There is, and will continue to be, a strong religious bond between these two countries.



Bishop Nichiyu Mochida, Chief Administrator of Minobusan Kuonji Temple, leading the ceremony.

Eye-Opening Ceremony for Dragon Gate at DG717 in San Francisco



Directors of Digital Garage welcoming attendees.

By Yoshiko Ogawa Smallman

DG717 is the San Francisco-based branch of CEO Kaoru Hayashi’s Digital Garage Group, headquartered in Tokyo, Japan. It is a content company leading the Internet revolution in Japan for over 25 years. The company’s main goals are to assist new developments in idea incubation, finance, marketing, and long-term incubation to create services and products for the future in the global network. It has been a hub of innovation and development in Japan since its founding in 2013. Digital Garage has expanded its horizon to the United States with its incubation hub in San Francisco, California. Their main technologies include blockchain, virtual reality/augmented reality, artificial

intelligence, security, and biotechnology. Their goals incorporate being a bridge tying East to West.

Bishop Nichiyu Mochida, Chief Administrator of Minobusan Kuonji Temple, along with seven priests from Japan and the United States, held an eye-opening ceremony at DG717 on November 6.

The ceremony was to bless the future success of DG717 and perform eye-opening for Matazo Kayama’s Dragon Gate artwork that was installed on DG717’s coworking space’s ceiling. The painting is meant to inspire new startup creators to be first, to work hard and persevere against many obstacles, and to find success. It is a reproduction of the Dragon Gate painting on the ceiling of the main prayer hall at Minobusan Kuonji Temple.

In Chinese lore, the carp swims up the river against harsh adversities, and only those that make it past the dragon gate successfully transform from carp into dragons.



Bishop Nichiyu Mochida, who helped arrange for the installation, delivering a congratulatory speech.



Enter the Dragon: Priests performing the Eye-Opening Kito Blessing to officially ‘install’ the artwork from a religious perspective.

At Minobusan Kuonji Temple, the dragon is a protective deity, which is said to bring rain and nourish life whenever it appears. When Director of General Affairs, Bishop Nichiyu Mochida first heard about Digital Garage’s request, he thought that Buddhist providence bound the temple to assist in having Matazo Kayama’s artwork inspire, protect and nourish the talents of future generations and encourage their endeavors around the world with the blessing of Nichiren and the Buddha.

Matazo Kayama (1927-2004) was an internationally acclaimed artist and Professor of Japanese painting at Tama Art University and Tokyo University of the Arts. He was recipient of the Japanese Order of Culture and a Buddhist. He held exhibitions all around Japan, the United

States, China, England, the former Soviet Union, and France. In 1984, he completed the ceiling painting of the Dragon’s Gate at Minobusan Kuonji Temple.

The connection came about when Mr. Utsumi, a Digital Garage founding member, curated the digital exhibition of Matazo Kayama’s works that connected him to the Dragon’s Gate artwork at Nichiren Shu’s Minobusan Kuonji Temple.

With the collaboration of Digital Garage and Nichiren Shu and the great artist Matazo Kayama, the hope is to encourage and inspire

the carp to overcome all obstacles to successfully become the great dragons of the future, bringing moisture to nourish the ideas of future generations and bring peace and happiness to the world. The *in* (stepping out) and *en* (relationships as a result of *in*) of those involved will bring about lots of *on* (positive results to be grateful for) for future generations around the world.



15th Anniversary Memorial Service for Tsunami Victims in the Indian Ocean

Nichiren Shu Shimibun

In December 2004, a large earthquake struck off the coast of Indonesia’s Sumatra Island. About 220,000 people lost their lives from the tsunamis caused by the earthquake. The 15th anniversary memorial service was held at Kamala Beach in Phuket, Thailand, on November 5, the day designated as “World Tsunami Awareness Day,” to console

the souls of the victims of the earthquake and tsunamis. The ceremony was sponsored by the nonprofit organization PLAJA. It was conducted by Rev. Hosei Nakagawa, Chief Administrator of Nichiren Shu, at a memorial monument on Kamala Beach.

More than 100 people, including bereaved families, attended the service. The head county official of Kathu District in Phuket, and the Secretary General

of the World Fellowship of Buddhists (WFB) also came for the service. Nichiren Shu has held the memorial service every year, but it was decided to make this the final service, due to the rising age of the bereaved families.

Mr. Phallop Thaiarry, Secretary General of WFB, stated in a memorial address, “We saw the horrible disaster with our own eyes, and a countless number of precious lives were lost from the terrible tsunamis. In such crisis, however, people held out a helping hand to us regardless of nationality, race or culture. As Buddhists, we know that everything is impermanent, but we do feel the need to learn how to confront birth and death through insight and tranquility.”

A man from one of the bereaved families who lost his brother’s family of five said, “Our father passed away two years ago, but I think he would have been delighted to find the memorial service held this year. I am sad to hear that this year’s ceremony will be the last, but I really appreciate everything Nichiren Shu has done for us over many years.” Some families decided to have



the memorial service on their own so as not to forget the tragedy.

After the silent prayer, Mr. Hiromichi Kanke, President of PLAJA, gave an address, “I would like to express my deepest appreciation for Nichiren Shu, which has held these memorial services for the victims for years. This may be the last ceremony this year, but it is important that we continue to share our sorrows with each other.”





Honolulu Myohoji Temple
Rev. Josho Yamamura
Year End Cleanup

The annual year end cleanup was held on December 15.

Cleaning the temple is one of the most important practices for Buddhists. It is a form of worship to the Buddha, gaining



good Karma, and receiving merits. Members of the temple, along with people from various groups that use the Myohoji Temple Social Hall, helped with the cleaning. The final service of the year was held on December 22.

Members attended the service to offer prayers of gratitude for their protection throughout 2019. May this feeling of gratitude guide you to happiness in 2020!

Nichiren Buddhist Sangha
of Greater New England
Shami Roen Drewello
Reflections on Moving
into Our New Temple Space

Our sangha has had an interesting past few years. Back in 2015, we thought that we would be moving into our own building and hastily put our temple items in storage and moved into the minister's residence. At the time, we had no idea it would take four

years to get back into a space of our own!

We are grateful that we were able to rent space from the local Unitarian Universalist Church during this time, but there were still many challenges “living” in someone else’s church — scheduling, accessibility, lost mail, and people not being able to find our door. There was even a time when we were using a piano bench as the *kyo zukue* for the *doshi*, the prayer table for the head priest! One thing that we perfected during this time was setting up and breaking down the portable altar. I kept reminding myself that it wasn’t our physical space that mattered, it was the spirit and intention of those practicing there, just like the child’s stupa built from mud.

Last January, we moved into our own small room at the church, but we determined last summer that we needed more space. We are now in an 800-square-foot storefront in an old factory building in downtown Haverhill, Massachusetts along the Merrimack River. This gives our temple more exposure in the community. We have already had people from the building drop in during our Oeshiki Service. We can now offer more services and classes. We are adding Tuesday Evening services (to our Saturday Morning services), Wednesday Shodaigyo and Friday Dharma Recovery meetings, and we have improved online streaming. We’re also planning a Japanese/English Language Exchange Meetup. We are all excited about the opportunities to share the Dharma and practice in our new location!



Nichiren Buddhist Kannon Temple,
Las Vegas, Nevada
Rev. Shoda Kanai
Shichi-Go-San Service

On November 16, the Shichi-Go-San (7-5-3) blessing was held at the Kannon Temple in Las Vegas. This is a traditional Japanese celebration for girls ages three or seven and for boys ages three and five to pray for their good health and happiness.

One of the girls who took part in this service was beautifully dressed in a kimono along with her mother and said that she had learned about feeding one’s heart to grow up well that day!

Rev. Kanai would like to continue this tradition in the U.S.

Renkoji Temple, Cereseto, Italy
Rev. Shoryo Tarabini
Publication of Liturgy Books
in Six European Languages

It gives me great pleasure to announce that our temple has published the Nichiren Shu Liturgy Book for observing our daily faith and practice in five European languages: Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, German, and British English. Furthermore, we are in the final editing stages of our French language liturgy book. All books are bilingual and pocket-sized for easy carrying. The Sutra,



prayers, Nichiren Shonin’s words, and Shomyo portions may be chanted in its original Sino-Japanese or Japanese form or may also be recited in the respective European translation for better comprehension.

All of these liturgy books were created through collaboration with our European members. We needed to translate these books into various European languages. Even though a good majority of northern Europeans understand English well and can use the current Nichiren Shu publications, many other Europeans cannot. Some people believe that all Europeans speak English, but the vast majority has limited ability in the language. The need to be able to say prayers in one’s native language is essential. For many people, it is only through one’s mother tongue they can truly begin to understand and appreciate the traditions and faith of Nichiren Shu.

For this reason, to commemorate 800 years since Nichiren Shonin was born, we began to translate the liturgy book into these six languages with the dedicated help of the native speakers and members of Renkoji Temple. Our dream is to someday be able to translate all Nichiren Shu publications into each of our respective languages so that we may deepen our understanding and faith in Buddhism while also helping many others throughout Europe and Africa and beyond to embrace this faith and practice. It is also our sincere and humble prayer that this project may contribute to our Founder’s great dream of attaining *Itten Shikai*.

NICHIREN SHU SENSHI MEMORIAL

By Kanjo Bassett, Missionary Dept.

The first time I was assigned to help man the reception desk for the Nichiren Shu Senshi Memorial, a co-worker said “wear long johns, it will be cold.” I did, and



he was right. It was very cold. For some reason, the Senshi Memorial magically coincides with the first wave of cold Siberian air flowing over Tokyo. The skies are always clear winter blue, the distant snow-capped view of Mt. Fuji



can still be seen from the top of the stone steps at Ikegami Honmonji, not quite blocked out by the ever increasing number of tall apartment buildings crowding out the view to the west.

The Nichiren Shu Senshi Memorial Ceremony is a special annual event held in the main hall at Ikegami Honmonji for the families of all Nichiren Shu priests who passed away in the previous year, running from October 1 to September 30. This year’s ceremony was held on November 20. The Honorable Rev. Nissho Kanno, Archbishop of Nichiren Shu and the Chief Abbot of Ikegami Honmonji Temple, officiated the ceremony. Rev. Hosei Nakagawa, Chief Administrator



of Nichiren Shu, gave a short address honoring those who passed away and their families. Nearly 200 priest family members from all over Japan attended.

The morning weather outside was cold and clear. The view of Mt. Fuji from Ikegami Honmonji was fine and somehow welcoming.

Calendar for February–March 2020

FEB 3	Setsubun (first day of spring in the traditional Chinese calendar)	FEB 16	Commemoration Day of the Birth of Nichiren Shonin
FEB 10	Commemoration Ceremony observing the completion of the 100-day Aragyō Ascetic Training	MAR 17-23	Spring Higan
FEB 15	Nirvana Day		