

# Nichiren Shu News

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## 800th Anniversary of Nichiren Shonin's Birth

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On February 15th and 16th, 2021, the 800th anniversary celebration ceremony of Nichiren Shonin's birth was held at Tanjoji Temple in Chiba Prefecture, near the place of his birth. Legend says that, at his birth, a natural spring shot up from the ground, blue lotus flowers bloomed in the sea and a huge school of sea bream jumped up above the surface of the sea.

There is a Japanese expression, "Haru no Arashi," which means spring storm. On February 15, a spring storm with heavy rain and strong winds started off the event.

Stone lanterns and alcoves on the path leading up to the main hall of the temple were all adorned with Japanese paper flower lanterns, hand-made by women from the local area temples, which gave off a mystic blue light. Young local fishermen and followers carried a statue of the child Nichiren Shonin, enshrined in a sacred palanquin, and placed it in the main hall altar.

The 800th anniversary grand ceremony took place the following day under a clear and sunny sky and was officiated by the Honorable Rev. Nissho Kanno, Archbishop of Nichiren Shu, Chief Abbot of Ikegami Honmonji Temple. Many Shomyoshi, specialists

in Nichiren Shu ceremonies, participated in this memorable ceremony from all over Japan while young priests of the Southern Chiba district did *suigyô*, water purification, and prayed for the end of the pandemic.

The attendees were deeply moved by this ceremony.

Due to COVID-19, this was the first time a traditional Nichiren Shu ceremony was done online with 22 Kokusai Fukuyoshi attending from all around the world. Huge video screens were set up in the main hall and also outside for followers who could not enter while keeping social distance. The attendees and people who participated

online joined in unison to chant the Odaimoku and express their happiness in celebrating the 800th anniversary of the birth of Nichiren Shonin.

Archbishop Kanno declared to all those attending, "Let there be Peace of Mind for us and serenity for others. Let us call for *Rissho*, Established Peace, for the whole world."

Nichiren Shu's Chief Administrator, Rev. Hosei Nakagawa added, "The crisis that mankind is facing at present and the devastation of our minds will be saved by reciting the Odaimoku in unison with the priests and lay members. We are determined to carry out the will of Nichiren Shonin."

**BOARD MEMBER AT TANJOJI:** For hundreds of years, fishermen in Chiba Prefecture have been supporting Tanjoji Temple... Whenever we have an abundant catch, we donate money to renovate or rebuild the temples. Due to COVID-19, we have fewer local attendees for this memorable celebration. Even so, the media made a wonderful broadcast of the grand service.

**LOCAL MAN:** On February 15th, it rained so hard that the bamboo lantern display and fireworks had to be canceled. Afterwards, I picked up the *sange*, paper lotus petals... I realized that it would be another hundred years before this kind of event would take place again... I feel extremely fortunate that I am to experience this.

**FOLLOWER FROM YOKOHAMA:** I lost my father two years ago, so my mother and I decided to make a pilgrimage to Minobusan Kuonji, Ikegami Honmonji, and Tanjoji Temple. Due to the pandemic, we were not able to visit Tanjoji Temple until today. If we had missed this opportunity, we might never have been able to complete our pilgrimage... I am glad we are here today!

**LOCAL MAN:** Some think it is risky to hold an event at this time, but we who have been raised with Nichiren Shu find this 800th year anniversary very important. We were pleased to hear that the ceremony was being broadcast online and that Nichiren Shu News would cover it. This means that the ceremony is not just a local event but known to people around the world.



# THE ROAD TO 800

Nichiren Shonin’s birth anniversary is officially celebrated by Nichiren Shu once every 50 years, the last one being held in February 1971. In the minds of followers, however, this once in a hundred years celebration is truly a “once

in a lifetime” event that we are fortunate to experience. The 800th Anniversary Celebration is not a single event however, but rather a number of celebration ceremonies, events that were held in Japan and

abroad. Each of these events celebrated Nichiren Shonin in their own unique way. Some had stage spectacles and concerts, while others had traditional Mando processions and ceremonies. All of these different celebrations were

organized by local area temples and followers, yet all of them expressed the same heartfelt gratitude for the life of Nichiren Shonin and his teachings. Here is a look at the parade of anniversary events past to present.



February 1971: The last official Nichiren Shu celebration (for the 750th anniversary of Nichiren Shonin’s Birth) was held at the Minobusan Founder’s Hall in 1971. This was before the rebuilding of the current Kuonji main hall in 1985.



May 2017: The 800th Anniversary Celebration in Penang was very unique as it not only kicked leading up to February 16, 2021, it was also the first anniversary celebration to be held outside of the series of events in Japan and the U.S., and the last time then Archbishop Uchino officiated an overseas ceremony.



September 2017: The Minobusan Kuonji was the first 800th anniversary event held in Japan.





November 2017: The celebration in Nagoya.



March 2018: The celebration in Kawaguchi in Saitama Prefecture.



April 2018: The celebration in Kurashiki in Okayama Prefecture.



October 2018: The celebration at Myoken-ji Temple in Kyoto.



November 2018: The celebration in Fukuoka, Kyushu.



## TEMPLE EVENTS

### Seattle Enkyoji Temple Mamiko Cederman

#### New Year Events

This year's *Shishimai*, traditional Lion Dance, was pre-recorded on December 23 due to COVID-19 and shown on YouTube and Facebook on January 2. The event was held at Wing Luke Museum. Rev. Kanjin Cederman gave an explanation about the historical background of *Shishimai* and how it is a traditional event in Japan. The *horagai*, conch shell, and *uchiwa taiko*, fan drums, accompanied the performance. A ceremony and blessing were held after the performance.

The annual *shinnenkai*, New Year Party, was held on January 2. It started with a dip in the cold water to purify the attendees at Puget Sound. Then a New Year Service was held at the temple followed by a traditional *shojin*, vegetarian brunch served on *ozen*, individual Japanese lacquered tables, accompanied with sake.



### Nichiren Mission of Hawaii Rev. Shokai Kanai

#### 800th Anniversary of the Birth of Nichiren Shonin

If the COVID-19 pandemic is contained and traveling across the Pacific Ocean is declared safe, the Archbishop of Nichiren Shu will come to Hawaii to officiate our ceremony for the 800th anniversary of Nichiren Shonin's birth. This big event is tentatively scheduled for January 23, 2022.

Although we cannot foresee how the pandemic will affect us, I wish to hold a *Tokudo* ceremony for several candidates to take precepts on January 22, 2022.

Preparing for this important event, the time is right because of the "stay at home" order. I have been holding three types of Zoom meetings:

(1) Reading the entire Lotus Sutra in English every evening at 5:00 p.m. to bring World Peace, to overcome COVID-19, and for the deceased to attain Buddhahood.

(2) Practice chanting *Yohon*, selected chapters of the Lotus Sutra, in Japanese every Monday evening.

(3) Study Classes on the Lotus Sutra on Thursday evenings.

Sometimes, we have 10 or more participants. Among them, I hope someone will say "I want to be a Nichiren Shu priest," or "I wish to be an assistant."

Shami Shougou Kini took his oath to become a Nichiren Shu priest in February 2020. He came to the temple to chant *Yohon* in Japanese every weekend and worked as an apprentice priest every day at the temple. He especially took care of the lotus pond and its surroundings.



Now, Mikio Tomioka also wishes to become a Nichiren Shu priest. He has been training together with Shougou since 2019. I hope that more people will follow their footsteps.

This August, I am planning to hold a seminar for those who would like to learn more about practicing Nichiren Shu rituals and teachings. Through this seminar and Zoom meetings, I hope some candidates will come to me, wishing to become a priest, an assistant priest or a Lay leader.

### Nichiren Sangha of U.K. Shami Kanse Capon

#### Activities at the Sangha

Since last March, our regular temple activities such as the Sunday Services, monthly Odaimoku chanting and Temple Book Club have all been done online due to the pandemic. We have started "Online Afternoon Tea" to give the Sangha a chance to relax and spend time together. Being online has meant those who live far from the temple have been able to participate weekly, and I have been happy to watch our community growing stronger and deepen

their faith and support each other throughout the year.

In April and May, during the first lockdown in the U.K., we collaborated with Nichiren Shu Hokekyoji, Brazil in delivering a series of talks on the Paramitas both in English and Portuguese. These turned out to be very popular, and we started making the videos available on our YouTube

channel. I am very grateful to Rev. Yodo Okuda for the opportunity and Shami Yotatsu Guilherme Chiamulera for his help and friendship in the Dharma.

In October and November, we delivered "Module 1" of our "Introduction to Buddhism" course to help participants understand the foundational Buddhist teachings and the Buddhist way of life. Building upon this success, "Module 2" started at the end of February.

I would like to thank all our members for their continued support and express my gratitude to my master, Rev. Kanto Tsukamoto, for his precious guidance, teaching and encouragement.



## 'Goshuin' Dragon Stamp and Virtual Worship at Honolulu Myohoji Temple

### International Department

Pilgrimages, visits and daily worship are mainstays of temple life that have been seriously disrupted during the COVID-19 crisis with travel restrictions and lockdowns. How can Nichiren Shu temples and followers cope in isolation? With the Honolulu Myohoji temple gate

shut under State of Hawaii lockdown orders, Rev. Josho Yamamura and the members of Honolulu Myohoji came up with an innovative outreach for Japanese Nichiren Shu followers: a limited edition virtual online visit with a 'Goshuin' Dragon Stamp.

Goshuin stamp books are a popular staple when visiting Japanese temples



and shrines. Followers pay a small fee for a special stamp and hand inscription in their stamp book. The temple gets a donation, and followers get a memento of their visit. For the limited-edition virtual visit and Dragon Stamp, Japanese followers signed up using the Nichiren Shu Japanese site and the Line social network platform. For about \$10, followers were able to 'visit' Honolulu Myohoji online. Rev. Yamamura then created a Goshuin Dragon Stamp for each visitor on rice paper and mails it.

This experiment ran from January 1 to February 28, and it appears to have been a great success. We hope that other Nichiren Shu temples around the world will be inspired by this and try similar online approaches that can be useful in bringing followers and temples together in new ways.

### Calendar for April – May 2021

<b>APR 8</b>	Hanamatsuri (Buddha's Birthday)
<b>APR 15-18</b>	Nakayama Hokekyoji Senbu-e (1,000 Recitations of the Lotus Sutra)
<b>APR 27-29</b>	Ikegami Honmonji Senbu-e (1,000 Recitations of the Lotus Sutra)
<b>APR 28</b>	769 Rikkyo Kaishu-e (769th Anniversary of the Founding of the Order)

<b>MAY 12</b>	761 Izu Honan-e (Ceremony commemorating the 761st Anniversary of the Izu Persecution)
<b>MAY 26</b>	Wesak Day in Southeast Asia (Buddha's Birthday, Enlightenment, and Nirvana Observed)