

Nichiren Shu News

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Active Discussions Held on Overseas Activities



Attendants of the World Conference of Overseas Ministers at Shumuin, May 16 to 18

A total of 24 Nichiren-shu priests stationed overseas attended the World Conference of Overseas Ministers at the Shumuin, May 16 to 18. They reported on their activities and discussed measures to deal with problems involving the converts from the so-called "new sects," such as Soka Gakkai.

The attendants from overseas were: Rev. Joyo Ogawa, Rev. Eijo Ikenaga, Rev. Shingyo Imai, Rev. Junsei Nagayosi, Rev. Tetsudo Takasaki, Rev. Chishin Hirai, Rev. Kenjo Igarashi, Rev. Ryusho Matsuda, Rev. Shokai Kanai, Rev. Zuigaku Kodachi, Rev. Join Inoue, Rev. Michael Faulconer, Rev. Shobo Mitomo, Rev. Ryuken Akahoshi, Rev. Kenno Fukushima, Rev. Myoho Ishimoto, Rev. Eisei Ikenaga, Rev. Akinori Okuda, Rev. Kanto Tsukamoto, Rev. Kangyo Noda, Rev. Kansei Ishihara, Rev. Nun Shokei Stefens, Rev. Arnold Matsuda, Rev. Eko Ishimoto, Rev. Tainen Matsunaga and Rev. Nun Cho Choren.

Some of their reports are as follows:

Nichiren Mission of Hawaii Report on the State of Affairs for 2006

by Bishop Joyo Ogawa

Activities

1. We held the Overseas Ministers' Conference five times and the Mission Work Planning Meeting three times in 2006.

2. Taking the opportunity of the centennial, a Steering Committee was organized at each temple, allowing the representatives of each temple to act independently. The operating fund of \$3,785 was raised through the cooperation of temple members, making it possible for us to publish the "First Steps to Nichiren Buddhism," a guide book for English speaking members.

3. Beau Aihara, a member of the Nichiren Shu Young Buddhist Association attended the Nichiren Shu International Leader Seminar sponsored by the Department of Propagation from July 24-28, 2006.

4. Three Study Meetings on the

"Rissho Ankoku-ron" were held in which each minister spoke about his studies of the "Rissho Ankoku-ron" in preparation for the beginning of the "Rissho Ankoku Odaimoku Kechien Campaign."

5. The First Rainbow Workshop (seminar for lay followers) was held at the Nichiren Mission of Hawaii on September 10, 2006. The curriculum was the basic one and included the practice of chanting the sutra, Odaimoku chanting, copying the sutra, and lectures on the Lotus Sutra and the life of Nichiren Shonin. Altogether 27 devotees participated.

6. Pilgrimage to Japanese Temples. Seventeen persons joined the tour of Japan from October 26–November 3, visiting Minobusan and other important places and temples in the life of Nichiren Shonin.

7. The 280th issue of "Kikyo Jiho" was published by the Nichiren Mission of Hawaii in December 2006.

8. The Monthly "Newsletter" of the Nichiren Mission of Hawaii reached 37 fascicles, 400 issues in February 2007.

Planned Activities

We had the study meetings on the "Rissho Ankoku-ron" for the ministers last year, but this year, when the Nichiren Shu Order plans to begin its general campaign, we plan to hold study meetings for lay members of each temple. We also plan to continue to work for the reactivation of the Sunday School, reorganization of the Young Buddhist Association, and encourage members to enshrine the mandala gohonzon. The Nichiren Mission of Hawaii has gained a considerable result by reactivating the Sunday School and YBA, but the same cannot be said of other temples. However, the Puunene Nichiren Mission on the island of Maui is trying to reactivate its Women's Association, which had been in hibernation recently.

Personnel Changes

1. Rev. Tetsudo Takasaki completed the Overseas Minister Training Course and was appointed as an overseas minister on March 13, 2006.

2. Rev. Bungen Kaneko, Chief Priest of

the Puunene Nichiren Mission, resigned to return to Japan on June 10, 2006. He was replaced by Rev. Tetsudo Takasaki on the same day.

3. Upon completion of the overseas minister training course, Rev. Junsei Nagayoshi was appointed an overseas minister on December 1, 2006. He was assigned to the Nichiren Mission of Hawaii in

Honolulu on the same day.

4. Rev. Chishin Hirai, Vice Chief Priest of the Nichiren Mission of Hawaii, resigned on December 31, 2006, and was named President of the NBIC on January 1, 2007.

5. Rev. Chisen Maeda resigned as an overseas minister of the Nichiren Mission of Hawaii due to the expiration of his visa on March 31, 2007. He is expected to return to Japan.

Nichiren Buddhist International Center Report on the State of Affairs for 2006

Board of Directors

1. Forty-second Meeting, April 25, 2006, at the Nichiren Shu Administration Headquarters.

2. Forty-third Meeting, September 21, 2006, at the Nichiren Shu Administration Headquarters.

Officers of the Board of Directors

Chairman: Jucho Harita, Executive Director, General Affairs Bureau

Vice Chairman: Shokai Kanai, Bishop, Nichiren Order of North America

Directors: Kancho Kajiyama, Director, Missionary Department; Joyo Ogawa, Bishop, Nichiren Mission of Hawaii; Chishin Hirai, President, NBIC; Genshi Watanabe, Chief, Religious Affairs; and Ryuken Akahoshi (elected by Overseas Ministers).

Projects for 2006

1. Public Relations

Center Organ "Bridge," No. 51 was published in September. Number printed: 2,600 in English and 500 in Japanese distributed among all Nichiren Shu temples abroad and some temples in Japan.

Starting with No. 50, copies of the "Bridge" are sent also to the Nichiren Shu Congress members as well as to the head of each Shumusho (Regional Office of the Nichiren Shu Administration Headquarters).

The publication of the "Bridge" is temporarily suspended while we are considering whether to merge with the "Nichiren Shu News."

2. Home Page Management

The total number of visits to our

home page from April, 2006 to the end of January, 2007 was 8,400, of which 143 resulted in the sale of our merchandise worth \$7,623. Most purchases have been paid on line by credit card. During this same period, the number of donations was 38, totaling \$5,737.

Publication

1. The "Dharma," an English booklet of sutras, has been revised extensively, and is now being printed by the Nichiren Shu Shimbun-sha.

2. Publication of the Goibun Gakushu Series (Study Series of the Writings of Nichiren Shonin) in English; the English version of the "Urabon Goshō ni Kiku" has been completed.

3. English pamphlets "Karma" and "Juzu" will be redesigned and 2,000 copies of each in color will be reprinted.

Training

1. Lecture on the "Life of Nichiren Shonin" by Dr. Nakao Gyobun, Honorary Professor of Rissho University on April 6 at the NBIC.

2. Lecture on the "Rissho Ankoku-ron" by Rev. Jun'ichi Nakamura on May 22 at the Nichiren Shu Administration Headquarters.

3. The "First Rainbow Workshop" sponsored by the Nichiren Mission of Hawaii was held on September 10. The Chief Instructor was Rev. Akahoshi of the NBIC.

4. Nichiren Shu Fukyokenshu-jo held the overseas training at the NBIC from September 28 to October 5. Three instructors and 6 trainees boarded at the Center to observe and study the reality of missionary activities of various religious groups in the U.S.A.

5. The 10th Seminar for shami was held at the NBIC from November 29 to

(continued on page 3)

Events

April–May

Apr. 1: "Rissho-ankoku Odaimoku Kechien" Campaign starts.

Apr. 8: "Hanamatsuri" service to commemorate the Buddha's birthday.

Apr. 15–May 19: Fifty-five shami (future Nichiren Shu priests) go through the 35-day training at the Shingyo-Dojo.

Apr. 28: Service commemorating the Proclamation of Nichiren Buddhism.

May 12: Service commemorating the Founder's exile to Izu.

May 14: 750th memorial service for the Hon. Myonichi, Founder's mother, at the Tanjoji Temple, Kominato, Chiba.

May 16–18: World Conference of Nichiren Shu Overseas Ministers at the Shumuin (Administration Headquarters).

May 22–24: Conference of the heads of the Regional Offices of Nichiren Shu at the Shumuin.

May 27: Extraordinary 35-day training at the Shingo Dojo for unshaven nuns starts.

May 31: Prof. Yosei Ikegami of the Minobusan College delivers a lecture on the Lotus Sutra in Phnom-Penh, Cambodia.

by Rev. Tsuoh Yokoi

People I'll Always Remember (9)

By Rev. Ryusho Matsuda



A Letter to Three Children Who Lost Their Mother Recently

Dear Eric, Kelli, and Steffanie,

Three weeks have passed since you lost your most beloved mother (the late Linda Uno-Sum). It is so sad to lose the spiritual center of your family. I can understand what a great loss this must be to you. As the days go by, I am sure that you will reflect on her life, her passing and feel lonely at times.

I have known your mother for more than 10 years, since you started coming to the Tachibana Japanese Language School. She loved her family so much, Eric, Kelli, and Steffanie. You were the great treasures of your mother. She always encouraged you and enjoyed your growth and activities. I often saw her praying to the Buddha of our temple for your good health and happiness.

Just as you were her treasures, she was the greatest treasure of the Sum family.

The life of a good mother is one of the greatest treasures that humankind can possess. In the universe, there are countless mothers. Not only human beings, but also all beings have their own mothers. However, each of us only has one mother. And she can not be replaced by any other mother. She is of such value that when that mother has passed away from our midst, there is an empty and vacant place in our lives.

The word Mother is a beautiful word! What a sweet word it is! For all people in the world, a mother is one of the most important beings in a person's life. At the risk of her own life, your mother gave life to you. During the helpless days of infancy, her arms carried you day and night. She provided food, clothing and shelter during all the days of dependent childhood. No labor was too hard, no privations too great when it came to making you

comfortable. How many sleepless nights did she spend at your bedside when you were sick, or injured! She heard every sigh of pain and every groan of suffering. A mother is both the physical preserver of life and the moral provider of truth. The job she did for you was great and the love and affection she gave you was something even greater. I hope that you show much appreciation to her, because you have a lot of indebtedness to your mother.

And let us find the value and meaning of motherhood.

On March 9, I was informed that she was facing her departure to the Buddha's land. Hearing that, I visited her and talked for a few minutes. She was calm in her bed, but she clearly said that she had a nice husband and children. Especially, she was pleased to know that Eric would be graduating high school soon and he would be going to a college; and although still young, her daughters have grown big and strong enough to solve their life problems by themselves. Holding the prayer bead which I had presented to her, she said, "I am ready to go to the Buddha's land."

But please remember. Her love towards you does not stop at her departure.

To explain this, I would like to share a story of the "Real Nature of Motherhood."

A long time ago, there was a custom in a district of Japan. That was to abandon parents on a mountain when they reached the age of 60. No doubt, there was no food nor shelter so that they could survive only one or two days. In today's society, this is really a strange and unbelievable story, but it is a true story. Why the age 60? And why did they have this awful custom? Different from our scientific age, they had

poor medical knowledge. Most of them died at the age of 50 or 55. So, 60-year-old men and women were considered to be very old and actually too weak to work. Above all, the district was very poor and they could not get enough food. Therefore a member of the family had to be sacrificed. Naturally, it was made a custom that old men and women were sacrificed. Without their sacrifice, all of the family would starve. Surprisingly, some parents wished to be abandoned, because they wanted their descendants to live without starvation and loved their children and grandchildren so much.

One mother waited for the day when she became 60 years old. On her 60th birthday, she said, "Now, my son, take me to the mountain according to the custom." The son said, "Oh, No! Mom. You are still young. You can still wait for several years." Even after a long talk, the mother would not change her mind. Finally her son reluctantly put his mother on his back and walked towards the mountain. When they reached the forest where they had never walked before, the mother started to pluck leaves from both sides of the path, and dropped them on the way. The son wondered what she was doing, and made his own judgment, thinking: "Mom is making some trail marks for herself. She could be planning to come home by following the trail marks." So, he asked, "Shall we go home now? It will be very cold tonight." "No, No, don't worry about me, my son," she said, "I have not changed my mind." "Then, why are you plucking leaves?" asked the son. The mother said, "I know you have never ventured into such a deep forest. I just worried that you might lose your way home. Now, from here the top of the mountain is not too far. I can climb to the peak by myself. Put me down,

and you, my son, go home by following the trail marks I made."

When he heard this, he burst into tears. His mother was worrying about him until the last moment. At that moment, he found Mother, his Real Mother. Of course, she had been his mother since he was born, and he knew she did a lot of things for him and he called her "Mom." But at that moment, he found the Real Nature of Motherhood. Suddenly, he turned around and carrying his mother, he rushed down the mountain towards his home. On his back, his mother was crying, "You are going the wrong way. Let me go to the top of the mountain."

Now, your mom took her final breath, and closed her eyes forever on April 15. It is so sad, because we are no longer able to see her gentle smile, no longer able to shake her warm hand, and no longer able to listen to her good advice. However, from the story above, please find the real nature of motherhood and compassion. I believe that her love towards you will last forever. In your long life from now on, I believe you will have many moments and occasions that you will find your mother's love. And you would say, "My mom is watching me over from the Buddha's land."

By expressing thanks to your mother, and saying in Japanese "Arigato Gozaimashita," please send your sincere prayer for her to be embraced with the infinite love and compassion of Sakyamuni Buddha.



Making Mochi as a family: Mother and father help daughter Kelli with the first Mochi of the year

'One Hundred Days Traveling Through the Six Realms of Illusion'

By Rev. Sensho Komukai

"Wake up!" It took a few moments to realize what was going on at two-thirty in the morning. "Get up! It's time for the water splashing ritual! Hurry up!" Suddenly, I remembered where I was: in Aragyō for the 100 days of ascetic practice. Was it the second or third day? I don't remember, even though it is only six months ago that I was there. I had probably been asleep for two and a half hours, but it felt like only five minutes. Though I was dead tired, I mustered up enough energy to get up and fold my bedclothes and get in line to perform the water splashing ritual. The darkness was complete and I do not think I was fully awake until the pail of water was splashed over me. Although it was just the beginning of November, the water was cold enough to shock me awake. This was just the beginning of a very long day.

The 100-day Aragyō practice starts on November 1 and lasts until February 10. During this time, every priest par-



Rev. Sensho Komukai

icipating performs the water splashing ritual beginning at 3 a.m. through 11 p.m. The water splashing ritual is called Suigyo in Japanese. It takes an hour for all the participating priests to complete the ritual. Between the water splashing rituals, one chants the Lotus Sutra as loudly as possible. Before long, one becomes hoarse. During the chanting of the sutra, the priests sit with their legs folded under themselves (seiza) for over an hour. One soon has terrible pain in one's legs. For meals, the priests are served rice porridge and miso soup twice a day. Everything begins to seem edible, because one is constantly hungry. An empty belly together with the lack of sleep makes one feel heavy

hearted all day.

What did I get from the Aragyō practice? I would say that I went through the six realms of illusion, from hell to heaven. There was no freedom, no time to pursue my usual pastimes, no relaxation, which means I was suffering in hell. When I was hungry, the two meals a day never satisfied my appetite. I sought something more to eat with burning eyes, all the time, everywhere. I was in the realm of hungry spirits. I was in the realm of animals when I instinctively did selfish acts: I did not try to be kind to the other priests and I did not feel I could afford to encourage them. When I was angry or irritated due to the stress and strain of the practice, I was in the realm of asura demons, almost ready to fight over trifles.

How did I arrive back into the realm of human beings? It happened as the final day approached. Reflecting back on the 100 days, I very gradually began to appreciate being hungry, because it helped me realize the value

of food. Chronic drowsiness made me appreciate how enjoyable it is to lie down to rest and sleep. Although my left foot was sore, the biggest reason I was able to endure the severity of the 100-day practice was because I had not been troubled by a severe illness. I am very thankful to have remained healthy.

On the final day, I felt I had arrived in heaven. At six o'clock in the morning on February 10, I was about to pass through the open gate. I heard the loud voices and the drums. I heard the voices of the people who had assembled from all over the country, waiting outside the gate all chanting Namu Myōhō Renge Kyo. I was excited, delighted, and crying with joy! How fresh the air is! How beautiful the sight of the outside world! And how wonderful it is to see this huge crowd of believers. Looking over my shoulder to see the gate, I wondered if I would ever come back here again. Well, it depends.

(Rev. Komukai went through the 100-day practice from Nov. 1, 2006 to Feb. 10, 2007—Editor)

Church Events

By Sandra Seki

SRI LANKA

Propagation in Sri Lanka

Rev. Kansei Ishihara was appointed an overseas minister to the Sri Lanka Minobusan Betsuin last fall. He arrived there on October 16, 2006, with Rev. Otsubo, the former chief priest of Minobusan Betsuin in Sri Lanka. There he was taught how to manage the temple, the religion, culture and customs of Sri Lanka. He also surveyed the construction for the housing for the Tsunami victims. This is how his busy missionary work started in Sri Lanka.

The Betsuin runs a kindergarten with a main prayer hall, which provides Odaimoku education to the young local children. Today there are about 150 children in the kindergarten and they chant the Odaimoku everyday during the morning prayer service. They also sing songs to praise Nichiren Shonin and Rev. Ishihara teaches them about Nichiren Shonin and the merits of the Odaimoku.

Every weekend, Rev. Ishihara teaches the members and staff of the Betsuin the Shodaigyo. He always remembers to talk about the meaning and merit of the Shodaigyo, so that the Sri Lankan members can seek the way for practice by themselves. Although he talks to them in English at the moment, Rev. Ishihara is studying so that someday in the near future, he can teach them in Sinhalese.

The Dayaka (members) cook Dana (meals) twice a day for the monks. The main dish is chicken curry, fish, vegetables, and rice. Although the shape

of the rice is round, it is rather dry. Monks in Sri Lanka are vegetarians, but they can eat meat and fish if the members donate them. Sri Lankan curry is very hot and at first Rev. Ishihara had a stomachache. However, now he knows that the spicy curry gives energy to survive the hot weather. He has his meals with the staff, using his right hand to scoop the curry and mix it with the rice just like the local people.

Twelve years have passed since the Minobusan Sri Lanka Betsuin was established. Rev. Ishihara said, "In Nichiren Shonin's Kangyo Hachiman Sho, it is said that the moon rises from the west and moves to the east. It is an omen that Indian Buddhism goes to the east. The sun rises from the east and sets in the west. It is a good omen that Japanese Buddhism has returned from the east to the west. If we educate the children in Sri Lanka through the Odaimoku, they will blossom like flowers of the Bodhi heart beyond

country borders." "Once the seeds of the Odaimoku are planted anywhere, they will develop into blossoms and ripen to become Buddhas just like

blossoms turning into fruit. I will do my best for propagation in Sri Lanka to fulfill the wishes of Nichiren Shonin," said Rev. Ishihara.



Children of the Minobusan Nursery School, Sri Lanka, are seen parading in front of the school on the occasion of the graduation ceremony, December 9, 2006. The nursery school is located at Kirimatiyana, some one and half hours by car from Colombo. Ninety-four of the total 120 children graduated in that year. The nursery school accommodates three- and four-year-olds



Children clean up the garden of the school every morning



Teaching staff and Rev. Ishihara (holding his hands together)

(continued from page 1)

December 3. Three shami (future Nichiren priests) received the training from the instructors including Rev. Kojun Shimomiya and Chiryō Moriwaki of the Nichiren Shu Shomyoshi Rengo-kai.

6. The first shami seminar in Europe was held at the Renkoji Temple in Milan, Italy, from January 24–28, 2007. Four shami attended the training. Revs. Kojun Hasumi and Shunko Kawasaki of the Nichiren Shu Shomyoshi Rengo-kai were special instructors.

7. The "Dharma Conference" sponsored by NONA was held at the NBIC from February 17–18, 2007.

Other Event

Rev. Ryuken Akahoshi retired from the post of the President of the NBIC as of December 31, 2006; Rev. Chishin Hirai was named the new President as of January 1, 2007.

Nichiren Shu Order of North America Report on the State of Affairs for 2006

by Bishop Shokai Kanai

Personnel Changes

1. Rev. Ryuken Akahoshi

Resignation: NBIC President as of December 31, 2006

Appointment: Chief Priest of Portland Nichiren Buddhist Temple as of January 1, 2007

2. Rev. Ryuoh Faulconer

Resignation: Chief Priest of Portland Nichiren Buddhist Temple, December 31, 2006

Appointment: Chief Priest of Boston Myogyoji Temple, January 1, 2007

3. Rev. Chishin Hirai

Resignation: Vice Chief Priest of Nichiren Mission of Hawaii, December 31, 2006

Appointment: President of NBIC, January 1, 2007

4. Rev. Kanto Tsukamoto

Resignation: Chief Priest of Toronto Nichiren Buddhist Temple, March 31, 2007

Appointment: Chief Priest of London Jogyoji Temple, April 1, 2007

5. Rev. Kenno Fukushima

Appointment: Chief Priest of Toronto Nichiren Buddhist Temple, March 31, 2007

Activities

May 22–25: World Overseas Ministers' Conference at the Nichiren Shu Administration Headquarters.

July 7: Distribution of Teaching Materials (World Peace through Dialogue with Various Religious Groups) "Judaism vs. Christianity vs. Islam" and "Three Major Religions in Japan."

August 17–20: Conference of Overseas Ministers at Portland Nichiren Buddhist Temple.

August 20: Seventy-fifth Anniversary Commemoration Service of PNBT, presided over by Rev. Ryushi Ito (Executive Director of Missionary Bureau) representing the Chief Administrator of Nichiren Shu Order.

September 12–13: NBIC Directors' Meeting at the NBIC, attended by Rev. Jusho Harita (chairman) and Rev. Gonshi Watanabe, the Chief of Religious Affairs.

October 2–14: Trip to Japan, visiting important temples in the life of Nichiren Shonin (Chiba, Kamakura, Fuji, Minobu, and Ikegami).

October 28: Ninetieth Anniversary Commemoration Service of Seattle NBT, presided by Rev. Kancho Kajiyama (Director of Missionary Department) representing the Chief Administrator. Also attended by Rev. Kyogen Komano, Director of Financial Affairs.

November 10: Change of Chief Priest Service at Portland NBT.

February 17–18: Dharma Conference (for priests and lay members) at the NBIC. Special instructor was Professor Ken'yo Mitomo of Rishso University.

February 28: Publication–Distribution of "Kaikyo Saizensen."

March 25: Change of Chief Priest Service at Toronto NBT; visit to the Boston Myogyoji Temple.

Rishso Ankoku Odaimoku Kechien Campaign

NONA ministers and the representatives of lay members gathered at Portland NBT on August 19, 2006, to hold the NONA Conference (once in two years). The Nichiren Shu Order seriously begins the "Rishso Ankoku Odaimoku Kechien Campaign" in 2007 aiming at the successful commemoration of the 800th birthday of our Founder in 2022.

Accordingly we, NONA representatives, seriously discussed how we could revitalize our activities based on the Nichiren Shu Order's Campaign slogan: how to spread the Odaimoku

chanting among more people in order to realize peace in the world through the spirit of "Rishso Ankoku (Securing Peace throughout the World by Establishing the True Dharma)." We all agreed that each temple and each member of NONA should full-heartedly join the campaign of planting the seed of Odaimoku in order for us to successfully carry out the various events commemorating the centennial of Nichiren Buddhism on Continental North America (in 2014) and the 800th birthday of our Founder in (2022) and share the happiness and joy with as many people as possible.

Seventh Year Memorial Service for the Victims of Terrorism

We plan to hold this event at the Ground Zero point of New York City or nearby Battery Park on August 26, 2007 (Sunday). We also plan to hold a training seminar for ministers and overseas ministers by inviting instructors from Japan on August 24 (Friday), and the Dharma Conference (Faith and Practice Meeting) on August 25 (Saturday). We are also preparing to open a new temple at Las Vegas in August 2008.

Obituary

Rev. Kanshu Ikuta, a Nichiren Shu Oversea Minister, passed away on April 19, 2007.

Posthumous Buddhist name: Shinzen-in Nichigen Shonin

Achievements: Seventh Chief Priest of Seattle NBT (March 16, 1952–December 15, 1958; founded the Gardena Hompoji Betsuin Temple in 1978.



Church Events

By Sandra Seki

SOUTH CAROLINA

First Nichiren Shu Meeting in South Carolina

On Saturday, May 19, 2007, the first ever Nichiren Shu meeting was held in a member's home in a small town south of Spartanburg, South Carolina. The meeting began with a brief service followed by a lengthy discussion of the philosophy and practice of Nichiren Shu.

Michael, who is from the area, hosted the meeting and

invited several of his friends who were interested in Buddhism. Supporting the efforts of Michael were Shami Ryusho Jeffus and Rita from Charlotte, North Carolina. Shami Jeffus used to live in Portland and studied under Rev. Faulconer, however, after Rev. Faulconer left for Boston this year, he decided to return to Charlotte, North Carolina, where he had lived previously. He has been meeting with people in North and South Carolina to establish a temple in the Carolinas.



Members gather at Michael's home for a service led by Shami Jeffus

ATLANTA

Nichiren Shu Intensive Retreat

From May 10 through 13, an intensive Nichiren Shu retreat was held at the Nipponzan Myohoji Temple in Atlanta, Georgia. The first of its kind for the Southeast, U.S., the retreat was organized by Marc Barlow. Leading the participants was Rev. Ryuei Michael McCormick who had traveled from San Francisco to guide the group in their chanting, meditation, and services. Many participants were local residents, while others arrived from Nashville, Tampa, and Seattle to attend this unique event. Over the course of four days, 15 people attended the retreat and 10 stayed in residence for at least one evening.

The Nipponzan Myohoji Temple was spacious and gra-

acious enough to accommodate overnight residents through the duration of the retreat. All meals for the attendees were carefully prepared by Atlanta resident Terri Sutton, a trained Zen cook.

From Thursday through Sunday, Rev. McCormick provided morning and afternoon Dharma talks. These talks centered on the theme of the Three Treasures: the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. On Sunday the closing topic was on the importance of Jukai and upholding the Lotus Sutra in our daily life. Rev. McCormick spoke of the early history of the Three Treasures, and framed them in the context of Nichiren Buddhism and the Lotus Sutra. After the lectures, he spent time answering questions from the participants on Nichiren Buddhist teachings, doctrine, and practices.



Participants led by Rev. McCormick, walk through the neighborhood chanting the Odaimoku

During the retreat, the attendees recited in English and Shindoku portions of Chapters 2, 16, and 21 to reflect on the importance of the Three Treasures to Nichiren Buddhist practice. The participants also chanted the Odaimoku together in a variety of situations: Shodai-gyo meditation, chanting with drums, and morning and evening services. These periods of chanting allowed the attendees ample time to practice together over the course of the retreat.

Following a full day of practice and discussion, the participants walked, while chanting to the beat of the drums, around the neighborhood bringing the Odaimoku to the surrounding community. The atmosphere of the retreat allowed Nichiren Shu members not only to connect in practice, but to create new friendships and strengthen the bond of the growing Sangha. (Reported by Erin Templeton of St. Petersburg, Florida)

CHICAGO

Buddha's Birthday

Buddha's birthday was celebrated on April 8. Rev. Ryuei McCormick from San Francisco joined this special service.

Memorial Day Service was officiated on Monday, May 28 at the Montrose Cemetery from 11 a.m.

Building Fund

The temple has been going through various renovations recently. Ever since this building was purchased over 30 years ago, not many repairs have been done. Some areas such as the roof, back porches, and sidings have been repaired successfully, but there are still more sections that need attention. We would like to ask your assistance in helping defray the costs of renovation so that the temple building will last for a few more decades.

New Address: Rev. Hosho Higuchi

35 Waban Court, Schaumburg, IL. 60193

Tel: 847-285-1481

ITALY

Theatrical Presentation of the Lotus Sutra

For the first time in history, a theatrical presentation on the Lotus Sutra was performed in Italian, at the Teatro del Parco



Italian performers sit and recite the Lotus Sutra in Sino-Japanese

Tiburtino, in northeastern Rome from March 15 to the 25. The performance included the recitation of the first chapter, Johon (Introduction) of the Lotus Sutra in Sino-Japanese, chanting the Odaimoku, song, dance, traditional Buddhist culture, and a vast array of visual (slides) presentations of images of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas. It was warmly received by the Roman public and lasted for 11 days.

This presentation was the creation and dream of a Nichiren Shu novice, Shami Shoko Milesi of Rome, whose desire was solely to promote Buddhism, the Lotus Sutra and teachings of Nichiren Shu to the public throughout Italy.

Shami Milesi received the precepts of a novice only this past January 24, 2007 at the Renkoji Temple in Milan. Immediately after the Tokudo ceremony, Shami Milesi participated in the first Nichiren Shu Seminar held in Europe with three other novices at the Renkoji Temple, January 24-28, 2007. During this seminar he was able to study the Shomyo and other traditions of Nichiren Shu and it was at this time that his dream of showing the Italian public the beauty of the Shomyo and the Lotus Sutra began. The Shomyo masters at the seminar encouraged him to dedicate himself to achieve his dream.

Besides being a Nichiren Shu novice, Shami Milesi is a theatrical writer, actor, and director of an international theatrical school in Rome. The presentation was not a strict re-enactment of the complete first chapter of the Lotus Sutra as it appears in the text of the Sutra. Instead it was designed to show the Italian public, something about the Lotus Sutra and Buddhism which they had never seen or heard of before. The performance included dance and art taken from ancient India and China where Buddhism was born and developed and it was further combined with colorful, modern Asian and Italian style

dance.

Rev. Shoryo Tarabini, of the Renkoji Temple said that he and Shami Milesi with other Italian Buddhists wished to develop Buddhism in Italy and propagate it throughout the nation and among all the Italian people. It is Shami Milesi's dream to create and direct additional productions for each of the 28 chapters of the Lotus Sutra.

Over the centuries in Japan, the Lotus Sutra culture has created many great works of art and other cultural attributes like the Shomyo, the songs of the Wasan and the theatrical presentations of the life of Nichiren Shonin. The priests in Italy would like to also develop and spread the culture of the Lotus Sutra throughout Italy.

HOUSTON

Shami Myokei Enters Training



Shami Myokei

Shami Myokei will enter the Shingyo Dojo on Minobusan from May 27-June 30. After this 35-day training, Shami Myokei will be a fully ordained Nichiren Shu minister, the first American woman and the first person of African-American and Japanese descent to acquire this position. The installation ceremony will be held on July 8 officiated by Bishop Shokai Kanai.

As you read this, Shami Myokei will be in the midst of hard training to attain the priesthood. Please send her words and letters of encouragement to: Myokei Caine-Barrett, c/o Nichiren Shu Shingyo Dojo, Minobu-machi, Yamanashi-ken, Japan, 409-2500.

Nichiren Shu News

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