

Nichiren Shu News

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'750th Projects' Discussed at 96th Congress

The 96th Nichiren Shu Congress, the first after the "Rissho Ankoku-Odaimoku Kechien Campaign" was formally started, was held from March 4 to 7, 2008.

Forty-five members of the Congress elected by the Nichiren Shu priests gathered at the Nichiren Shu Shumuin (Administration Headquarters) in Ikegami, Tokyo, to discuss how to carry out the campaign in order to accomplish its goal.

At the beginning of the regular session, Chief Administrator Joshin Komatsu delivered his policy speech, in which he reported that the slogan of the "Rissho Ankoku-Odaimoku

Kechien Campaign" was decided to be "holding one's palms together in prayer of life." He then itemized the six items of importance to be pressed forward: (1) practice of bowing to people as the Never-Despising Bodhisattva had done, (2) activities to show the preciousness of life, (3) visiting Minobusan by all Nichiren Shu members, (4) pressing forward the projects in memory of the 750th year since the presentation of the "Rissho Ankoku-ron," (5) education for the youth, and (6) international activities.

Regarding item (4), the Chief Administrator revealed the Administration's plan to hold the commemora-

tive services, odaimoku walks, and life symposiums in June next year in Kanagawa Prefecture, Tokyo, and Chiba Prefecture.

They also plan to hold an exhibition on Nichiren Shonin in the autumn of the same year under the joint sponsorship of Nichiren Monka Rengo-kai, Kyoto National Museum, and Nihon Keizai Shimbun-sha.

The Chief Administrator also declared that his administration is discussing ways to revitalize temples in depopulated areas and to create new propagation bases in overcrowded areas. He also said that they will continue to encourage Nichiren Shu tem-

ples to join the alternative service at the Founder's grave; and they will encourage people to attend the memorial services at the Chidorigafuchi Cemetery for the War Dead in Tokyo.

Regarding item (5), the Chief Administrator stated that they plan to organize the 13th tour group to China to hold a memorial service at Kuccha, the birthplace of Kumarajiva, for the purpose of throwing light on his great virtue.

They are also planning to hold a kickoff assembly or two overseas in order to establish closer ties between the overseas parishes and the administration office in Tokyo.

First Lay Leaders' Workshop at NBIC 'Shodaigyo Is Perceived as Signature Meditation Practice'

By Rev. Myokei Caine-Barrett
Houston

A small but very excited group gathered at the NBIC for the first lay leaders' workshop on February 21 and 22, 2008, with four participants from each corner of the United States.

The participants included Cody Kroll from New York; Erin Lauer from Florida; Pamela Reaville from Washington; Sunnie Stanton from California; Rev. Ryuoh Faulconer, Boston; Rev. Myokei Caine-Barrett, Houston; Rev. Ryuei McCormick, San Francisco; and Rev. Chishin Hirai, NBIC. It was an interesting combination of per-

sonalities that proved to be very conducive to a friendly yet intensive period of study.

There are individual members scattered broadly across America and the current ministers available cannot handle all the small sanghas which are developing.

As a result, the lay leader becomes a crucial element in spreading the dharma and ensuring that Nichiren Shu doctrines and procedures are properly represented.

This requirement means that each lay member desiring to act as a leader must be properly trained and experienced in service in a manner which supports the development of the Nichiren Order of North America.

For these reasons, the format of the workshop was designed to accommodate these needs and adequately introduce people to how to be a good lay leader.

After the opening ceremony, officiated by Rev. Chishin Hirai, the workshop opened with a presentation and discussion of exactly what defined a lay leader. Rev. Hirai provided an excellent overview of the necessity for lay leaders in developing the American order.

The discussion covered the history of lay leaders and the example set by Toki Jonin, a renowned lay member who acted as a lay leader. The participants also learned the differences between a minister and a lay leader as well as what a lay leader should and should not do. Further discussion covered the lay leaders of the future. The primary focus of the discussion centered on developing a humble spirit of service to the communities served.

Rev. Ryuoh Faulconer provided instruction on officiating Sunday service and shodaigyo, both of which are critical elements of the development of Nichiren Shu in America. Each participant also learned how to do two

shomyo "samborai" and "sanki," both of which are being taught in American-based sanghas.

"Samborai" was taught in shindoku while "sanki" was taught in English. During the initial training, there was a great deal of laughter in learning the intricacies of doing shomyo, which is considerably different from regular singing.

Each participant was able to work one on one with a minister in order to master the techniques and by the end of the workshop, it was apparent that their comfort and ease in doing the two shomyo had grown.

Since many Americans seek information on meditation practice, shodaigyo is perceived as a signature practice which can open the door to learning about Nichiren Shu practice and the Lotus Sutra. Some American sanghas showcase shodaigyo as the Nichiren Shu signature meditation technique since it is unique and quite different from what most Americans know about meditation.

Also important to the training of lay leaders is the development of a standard service in English which can be shared across the United States so that any member can do service anywhere in America and feel at home. Part of this was accomplished at the workshop as trainees worked with the English standard that is currently under development.

Following this training, Rev. Ryuei McCormick provided a lecture on an important propagation topic: shoku versus shakubuku. Using the Lotus Sutra and Nichiren Shonin's writings, Rev. McCormick provided an in-depth analysis of the two techniques and explained that their fundamental purpose was "geshu" or planting the seed: the idea that one can become a Buddha.

He mentioned that shoku was a method of gradually leading those with ability to a deeper understanding of the

Dharma, while shakubuku was a method of suddenly presenting the True Dharma or correcting or even confronting error.

He stressed that there was an appropriate time and place for each method of propagation. The lecture was quite enlightening and opened up a great discussion on the correct method of propagation in the time of Mappo.

The rest of the workshop focused on intensive practice of everything that had been learned with respect to services.

Each participant was given an opportunity to lead service and be critiqued on how he/she had done. By the end of the workshop, each participant was clearly on the right track, definitely able to conduct a proper service, and to serve the communities which they will also be able to assist in constructing. These participants will no doubt be of great assistance to any minister with whom they practice.

The participants, after the closing service, were also included in the lectures presented by Dr. Eiichi Terao from Minobusan University on omandala and goibun of Nichiren Shonin.



Practice leading: (rear, from left) Revs. Hirai, McCormick and Faulconer; (front) Sunnie Stanton



Mokusho: (from left) Sunnie Stanton, Cody Kroll, Erin Lauer and Pamela Reaville

Events

February–March, 2008

- Feb. 3: Setsubun Services at temples all over Japan
- Feb. 7: Memorial Service for Nikko Shonin
- Feb. 7–8: Attestation Ceremony for the new shami
- Feb. 10: Service commemorating the completion of the 100-day ascetic practice at the Nakayama Hokekyoji Temple
- Feb. 15: Nirvana Day Service
- Feb. 16: Service in commemoration of the birth of our Founder
- Feb. 28: Memorial Service for Nichiju Shonin
- Mar. 4–7: 96th Regular Session of Nichiren Shu Congress
- Mar. 8: Memorial Service for Nitcho Shonin
- Mar. 14: Service Celebrating the Raising of the Ridge Beam for the Five Story Pagoda of the Minobusan Kuonji Temple
- Mar. 26: Memorial Service for Nissho Shonin

by Rev. Tsuoh Yokoi

The Life of Sakyamuni Buddha (4)

By Rev. Shinkai Oikawa, Litt. D.

7. Sakyamuni's practices —meditation and asceticism

And then Sakyamuni went to teachers in order to begin His ascetic life. Where were the teachers then? They were where they could live comfortably, that is, in the capital city of a big state. The capital city of Kosala, the nearby state, was Sravasti. Although there were many teachers there, it was too close to Kapilavastu, just 60 km away. Since He was afraid that the king might seek and catch Him, He went to another city, Benares (also Varanasi) about 600 km away. He did not stay there either because He heard rumors that there were many untrustworthy teachers there.

According to the rumors that the most faithful teachers were in Rajagrha 600 km away. He went there and began the practices under the guidance of two teachers. There was the following episode at the time. When Sakyamuni was begging for alms in Rajagrha, King Bimbisara was watching Him from a distance. The king ordered his retainers to follow around that respectful priest who was begging. Sakyamuni went up a hill called Vepra and took a rest. The king hurried up to Him and asked, "Who are you?" Sakyamuni answered, "I was born as a prince of a state at the foot of the Himalaya Mountains 600 km away and came as a priest seeking after the truth." The king said, "I understand. I was attracted by your personal appearance, looks and graceful figure. Would you reign over my kingdom with me?"

Sakyamuni declined this offer. "I did not come here for such a purpose. I abandoned my state, parents, wife, and son before I came here to seek after the truth. I determined to study hard with teachers in order to achieve spiritual enlightenment," He said. King Bimbisara understood what He meant and gave up his hope. He said, "Yes, I know your intentions. I want you to come and show me the way as soon as you become spiritually enlightened and become a Buddha." Then both departed.

This is the first meeting of the respectful king named Bimbisara of a large kingdom called Magadha and Sakyamuni. The two great men were to



Rev. Shinkai Oikawa

have good relations with each other from then. I think that Sakyamuni was so excellent and attractive that the great king respected Him at a glance from a distance.

Sakyamuni studied "meditative concentration" or "dhyana" under the two teachers in Rajagrha. He trained Himself in such practices as He sat, calmed down and contemplated deeply. Although He did almost the same practice as Zen priests' "Zazen," that is, meditation with one's legs crisscrossed, He was dissatisfied.

Zazen makes us very peaceful in mind, but we cannot continue Zazen for long. We must come out of the meditation, because we will die if we do not stop it. Whenever we eat and go to the toilet, we come out of the meditation. It is inevitable that we return to ordinary human beings if we come out of the state of mind. Although while in meditation we are in a good state of mind, while out of meditation we want to eat deep-fried pork cutlets at a restaurant and to drink sake or beer at a bar offering skewered chicken when walking down the street. We easily return to the state of ordinary humans.

So Sakyamuni seems to have thought that Zazen was not true achievement of spiritual enlightenment. He said good-bye and left the two teachers. He thought He needed no teacher and had to practice alone.

He started asceticism by Himself then. This is to inflict pain upon oneself to the limit. The reason why He did this was He thought human beings had minds and bodies, and that minds could not resist becoming impure. Men cannot see a charming woman without

being roused unconsciously. We tend to be drawn unknowingly to an eel restaurant when passing by. Our mind will easily become unstable. This is caused by our body. Therefore He thought our mind would not be influenced by our body if we inflicted much pain upon it and weakened physical powers. He practiced asceticism for this purpose. This was a great experiment. He continued this asceticism for six years.

There are many ways of asceticism. One of them is fasting, not eating anything. Trying to eat less and less, or trying not to eat anything for a week or 10 days. We get utterly exhausted this way. Can we feel purged of stress after fasting? No, not at all. Sakyamuni says it is of no use. This is His conclusion after many experiences.

What He did next was to stop breathing. This is also unbearable. Nevertheless, He tried it because He wanted to inflict as much physical pain as possible upon Himself. I suppose He became faint, became painful and unconscious as if He were dead. What is more, as He thought He must not open His mouth, He closed it completely so that He could not breathe at all. What happened then? It is said that air came in from His ears. We think it is quite incredible. Ears let in only sound, don't they? But it is written thus in the old books. Since air came in through His ears, His ears were also closed. The old books say that air inside His body went around here and there looking for an exit. We do not know whether this was true or not. It is said so. At any rate He inflicted much pain upon His body,

stopping breathing.

He had been doing this for six years. As a result, it is said that the skin on His stomach stuck to the skin on His back. Of course it is impossible. It may be said that it was as terrible as this.

There is a statue named the "Fasting Siddhartha" in Lahore Museum in Pakistan. When I visited the museum, its door was closed. I said to the guard, "As I came from Japan, could you allow me to see the statue?" The guard said to me, "No. It is Friday, the day for fasting. I cannot allow you to see the "Fasting Siddhartha" in the middle of the fasting time." To my regret I was obliged to give up without seeing the statue.

As this statue, the "Fasting Siddhartha," is very famous, we can see it in many books. All His veins appear. His eyes are sunken as if they were caves. We cannot discriminate between His arms and bones on the statue. These were experiments to see whether it were possible or not to make His mind vivid and pure by fasting, stop breathing and inflicting pain upon His body thoroughly. He stopped the experiments after six years of practice because He could not succeed in gaining the desired goal.

What did He do next? He ate food. It is very simple. We cannot live without eating. After He left the place of asceticism, He went to the famous River Nairanjana and washed Himself after six years of asceticism. He was given a bowl of porridge by a young girl called Sujatha and recovered His strength. He went into a wood of Buddhagaya (old name: Gaya) after recovery, and decided to sit in meditation and never to stand up till He achieved spiritual enlightenment.

(Trans. by Rev. Kanshu Naito)
(to be continued)



The present view of River Nairanjana which flows near Buddhagaya (courtesy of Tatsunori Ohtsuka)

The 2nd European Shami Seminar

By Rev. Chishin Hirai

Four Youths Join Seminar in Preparation for the Shingyo Dojo

The Second European Shami Sem-



(front, from left) Rev. Tsumyo Murakami, Shoryo Tarabini, Chishin Hirai and Endo Ryojun; (rear, from left) Antonio Parascandolo, Reberto Progetto, Shami Shodo Sanchez, Shoken Conley and Takamasa Yamamura

inar was held at the Milan Renkoji Temple in Italy from December 11 through 15, 2007. The instructors were Rev. Chishin Hirai (NBIC), Rev. Tsumyo Murakami (Shomyoshi-kai), Rev. Ryojun Endo (Shomyoshi-kai), and Rev. Shoryo Tarabini (Renkoji Temple). The participants were Shoken Conley (UK), Shodo Sanchez (Spain), Takamasa Yamamura (Japan) and Shojun Beta (Italy).

The purpose of the shami seminar is threefold. The first is to give them enough opportunity to practice. It is because some of them are far from their masters to receive training.

The second is to build mutual friendship among

them, which is very important and they can learn with get-together practice. Lastly, it is to let them get used to living a shami life before the Shingyodojo in Japan.

The practice of the Shingyodojo is quite different from their ordinary life. For example, some of them have a hard time with Japanese vegetarian dishes.

What surprised me when I arrived at Milan was the nationwide strike by the truck drivers. They closed major freeway entrances and exits by force. Rev. Tarabini picked me up at the airport in the morning on December 10 and we went to another airport in order to pick up a shami.

When we arrived at the Renkoji Temple, it was three hours later than the original plan.

The seminar itself went better than

I expected despite many unexpected happenings. The instructors tried to show everything that they had and the shami tried to learn as much as possible.

We all did our best to make this seminar fruitful and meaningful. For example, Rev. Murakami and Rev. Endo explained every single detail of shomyo, and let the shami practice it again and again.

What was different from previous seminars was that they practiced how to hold the same service over and over. What they practiced was only one basic style. However, they learned many things from the one basic style. They took turns and held services.

I do hope they continue to practice everyday and they will be certified ministers soon. Of course, to be a minister is not a goal. The goal is to be a Buddha and let everybody be a Buddha. We all know that there is no end.

Nichiren Shonin and His Lay Followers (4)

By Rev. Kanji Tamura
Professor, Risho University

Nichiren Shonin and Shijo Kingo Yorimoto (2)

Religious Conflict with His Lord

About the time when Nichiren Shonin entered Minobusan, a rift occurred between Yorimoto and his master, Lord Ema, due to Yorimoto's faith in the Lotus Sutra and the Odaimoku. Lord Ema was a devotee of Priest Ryokan (1217-1303) of the Gokurakuji Temple of the Shingonritsu Sect (a school of Buddhism which conducts prayer services through the Buddhist precepts as the source of power and energy) and Ryuzo-bo, a Tendai priest patronized by Ryokan.

Ryuzo-bo was an eloquent speaker who had a base of activities in the Kuwagayatsu Section of Kamakura. In the sixth month of the third year of Kenji (1277), Sammi-bo, a disciple of Nichiren, and Yorimoto went to Kuwagayatsu to listen to Ryuzo-bo preach. On this occasion Sammi-bo started arguing with Ryuzo-bo, refuting him and finally silencing him. One of Yorimoto's colleagues who found out about this incident secretly reported it to Lord Ema. It made Lord Ema so furious that he demanded to know whether or not (1) Yorimoto was accompanied by an armed faction when he listened to Ryuzo-bo preach, (2) Yorimoto criticized Ryokan and Ryuzo-bo, whom Lord Ema believed in, and (3) Yorimoto did not obey his lord and parents, which he should by all means. And he ordered Yorimoto to submit a written pledge to the effect that Yorimoto abandon his faith in the Lotus Sutra following the lord's order.

Conversely, Yorimoto immediately wrote a letter to Nichiren Shonin on Minobusan, vowing he would never submit such a written vow to his lord. Nichiren Shonin praised Yorimoto for his steadfast faith in the Lotus Sutra and encouraged him to carry through the Lotus faith to the very end, even if he had to go against his parents or lord. It was because to Nichiren Shonin the



Rev.
Kanji Tamura

true repayment of indebtedness to the lord and parents was not attaining Buddhahood by himself but together with his parents and lord.

At any rate Yorimoto had his territories confiscated and was given a less desirable territory due to this incident. However, the situation began to change soon. We don't know exactly why—perhaps due to Yorimoto's honest and sincere character or he might have had a chance to cure the lord's illness—but he was summoned by the lord at about the first month of the fourth year of Kenji (1278), his confiscated former territories were returned in the following year (1279), and his relationship with his lord became as solid as it used to be.

Shijo Kingo's Art of Medicine

Yorimoto was a master in the art of medicine. It is known that he prepared various herb medicines. In the ninth month of the third year of Kenji (1277) Lord Ema came down with an illness. As his sickness lasted long, the lord had to be treated by Yorimoto. It is surmised that the illness of the lord helped Yorimoto to regain his lord's trust. Nichiren Shonin, too, trusted Yorimoto's art of medicine. In his letter to Shijo Kingo written in the sixth month of the first year of Koan (1278), Nichiren Shonin states that his long-lasting diarrhea, which started at the end of the previous year, had been reduced to one hundredth by the good medicine prepared by Yorimoto. Nichiren expresses his gratitude in this letter, "Is it the Lord Preacher Sakyamuni Buddha entering the body of Yorimoto in order to rescue me, Nichiren? Or is it the bodhisattvas emerged from the soil granting me the excellent medicine of the Lotus Sutra?" In his letter written in the ninth month of the second year of Koan (1279), Nichiren states, "Nichiren's life and death is entrusted to him. I will not con-

sult any other medicine man." Thus Nichiren showed his utmost trust in Yorimoto as a medicine man.

Statue of Sakyamuni Buddha Constructed by Shijo Kingo and His Wife

In the second year of Kenji (1276), Yorimoto constructed a wooden statue of Sakyamuni Buddha and wrote a letter to Nichiren Shonin requesting him to hold a service to open its spiritual eyes. Nichiren wrote a reply stating that opening the eyes of Buddhist portraits and wooden statues must only be through the Lotus Sutra.

According to Nichiren, there are five kinds of eyesight (eyes of unenlightened beings, heavenly eyes, wisdom eyes, dharma eyes, and Buddha eyes), all of which are naturally equipped by those upholders of the Lotus Sutra. And Buddhas are all equipped with Three Bodies: Dharma Body (eternal, universal truth), Reward Body (reward of Buddhist practices), and Accommodative Body (body of the Buddhas appearing in the living beings). Nichiren states that these five types of eyesight and Three Bodies of the Buddha exist only in the Lotus Sutra, making it imperative to perform the eye-opening service through the Lotus Sutra.

Nichiren further explains the attainment of Buddhahood by grass and trees through the doctrine of "3,000 existences contained in one thought," maintaining that only the Lotus Sutra can instill the spirit into the Buddhist portraits and statues. Namely, referring to the realm of environment (realm of grass and trees) of the "3,000 existences contained in one thought" doctrine, Nichiren states that because as portraits are drawn by colors made of grass and trees and wooden statues are carved out of trees, only the power of the Lotus Sutra can instill the spirits into the portrait and statue of the Buddha. The doctrine of "3,000 existences contained in one thought," can be construed to mean that the Buddha's momentary thought penetrates through all existences. Therefore, it is possible for the Lotus Sutra with the power of

the "3,000 existences contained in one thought" to inspire the spirit of the Buddha into the portrait and statue made of grass and trees although they appear soulless at first sight. Thus, Nichiren states in this letter to Yorimoto that the statue of Sakyamuni Buddha "eye-opened" through the Lotus Sutra will become a living Buddha, and the King of the Brahma Heaven, the sun and moon, and the Four Heavenly Kings will protect Yorimoto all the time just as the shadow follows a body.

Also in the second year of Koan (1279) Yorimoto's wife Nichigen-nyo, who was at a critical age of 37, constructed a wooden statue of Lord Preacher Sakyamuni Buddha and made an offering to Nichiren as a protection against calamities. Nichiren speaks of the vastness of her merit assuring her of peace and tranquility in this life and attaining Buddhahood in the next life.

In a letter written in the fifth year of Koan (1282), Nichiren praises Yorimoto for holding the Eighth Day Meeting on the eighth day of every month. As you know, April 8 is the day Sakyamuni Buddha was born. Nichiren states in this letter that he is happy to know Yorimoto and others, having faith in the Lotus Sutra and Sakyamuni Buddha, hold a meeting on a holy day of the Buddha to pay homage to the Buddha. Reading carefully these letters of Nichiren Shonin addressed to Yorimoto, we notice here and there our Founder's realization that he is a follower of the Bodhisattva Disciple of the Original True Buddha who emerged from the soil.

(Trans. K. H.)
(to be continued)



The Naisenji Temple, founded by Shijo Kingo, located at Utsubuna, Nambu-cho, Yamanashi Prefecture. Tradition has it that a Buddha's hall built by Shijo Kingo in his mansion in 1285 was turned into a temple after his death

Klang Sangha Temple Opened

By Rev. Myosho Obata
Southeast Asia Regional Missionary

On February 16, we celebrated the opening of the temple of the Nichiren Shu Buddhist Sangha in Malaysia and concurrently observed Nichiren Shonin's birthday ceremony, as well as the eye-opening of the Great Mandala

Gohonzon at the newly-opened temple. The new temple is accommodated in a room of a building in Klang, one-hour ride from Kuala Lumpur.

About 100 devotees of Nichiren Shu from Penang, Singapore, and Indonesia participated in the ceremony, including 38 members of the Klang Sangha which was established in August 2007.

Voices of chanting the Lotus Sutra and the Odaimoku filled the hall. We expressed our gratitude to the Three Treasures of the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. In front of the Great Mandala Gohonzon, we, united in one, vowed to propagate the Lotus Sutra and the Odaimoku in Southeast Asia.

At the dinner table in the evening four members of the sangha talked about their experiences of faith, and we renewed our determination to deepen our faith in the teaching of the Lotus Sutra and Odaimoku and widely spread them.

We had difficulties celebrating the opening ceremony of our sangha. Thanks to the support of the sangha members of Penang, Singapore, and Indonesia, however, we were able to overcome them. Eventually, everything went on very smoothly.

I believe that we can learn and practice the Lotus Sutra and the Odaimoku through the Founder of our Order, Nichiren Shonin. I really appreciate the favor received from the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.

Sincerely in Gassho.



Photo shows: (front, from left) Lee Hew, Yoo Liu Hoe, Liew Kwee Hong, Sunny Ng Chwee Cheng, Rev. Obata, Chua Gan Chen, Lim Peck Chou, Wong Kow Chai, Foo Yang Yit and Tjhin Lie Lie; (rear, from left) Lai Pah Kah, Liew Kwee Leang, Ang May Lee, Lim Peck Geok, Lee Soon Kian, Tony Soehartono and Choo Seng Poh



Miss Ewe Jun Hua, University College Sedaya International, Malaysia (left) and Miss Tai Yee Chean, Paylor's University College, Malaysia



The get-together of devotees of Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia at a restaurant in downtown Klang after the opening ceremony of the Klang Sangha



Temple Events

By Sandra Seki

LEXINGTON NICHIREN COMMUNITY

Let's Have Better Meetings!
By Rev. Shinkyō Warner

Meetings are an essential part of how the NONA ministers work together.

They help us organize ourselves effectively to grow and spread the Wonderful Dharma in North America. However, the ministers in North America are spread out in a vast area and it costs a lot of money to hold or attend a meeting. The distance from Boston to Los Angeles, for example, is about 5,000 km, much farther than the distance between Sapporo and Nagasaki, which is about 1,500 km.

A rough estimation may cost about \$10,000 per meeting including travel, lodging and meals. Therefore it is very important to use the occasions of our meetings well and continually consider how to run our meetings better.

One purpose of our meeting is to socialize in person, even though we can communicate via the internet and phone. Another reason why we meet is to share information.

Many of us have long-term projects going on or plans we have made individually and want to share the news with our fellow ministers. The main purpose of the meetings should be to make decisions. These decisions should be about concrete goals that will help us grow the Dharma.

Ideally, meetings should also energize their participants to act and realize the power they have through their inclusion in an efficient and well-run organization. People who leave the meetings drained and exhausted often doubt whether the organization can accomplish tasks which are much more complicated than holding meetings.

There are three important elements to any meeting: planning, execution and follow-up. Meetings often have more focus on some of these elements than others, however, all of them are essential.

WNY BUDDHIST SANGHA

Lecture at School

Rev. Kanjin Cederman of

the West New York Sangha was invited to attend and give a lecture on Buddhism to the elementary school students at the Universal School and Mosque located in Amherst, New York, last fall. The students were studying the differences found in the variety of religions and cultures throughout the world. One of Rev. Cederman's friends, who is an instructor at the school, asked him to give a lecture on Buddhism.

The lecture consisted of Buddha's life, Buddhist Art and culture. The students were very eager to learn and they asked many questions about Buddhism and its tradition. They were also able to find teachings in Islam that were very similar to those of the Buddha.

"I realized that as Buddhists we must also become enlightened about other traditions and teachings so that we do not speak from ignorance when we refer to other religions," said Rev. Cederman. "Buddha taught us that ignorance comes in many forms and is the source of suffering. We must allow all people to have the opportunity to learn from each other and embrace our differences," added Rev. Cederman. He believes that this is the strength of the Buddha and Nichiren Shonin's message.

"All teachings contain wisdom and we should understand our inherent connection which is our Buddha-nature. On this level our communication is the sincerest and the purest.

"We as a universal society should dispel our ignorance and incorrect judgments concerning each other. Once we can understand this nature of others, we can generate compassion and fulfill the mission of being a Bodhisattva.

"This is the teaching found in the Lotus Sutra, that all beings can attain Enlightenment. We thank our Islamic brothers and sisters," concluded Rev. Cederman.

HAWAII

New Resident Minister in Wahiawa

Rev. Junsei Nagayoshi, who had been serving as assistant minister at the Nichiren Mission of Hawaii, was appointed resident minister of Wahiawa Nichiren Mission on February 1, 2008. The Wahi-

awa Mission, which had no resident minister for eight years, will celebrate its 60th anniversary this year.

In his inauguration ceremony held on February 10, he declared: "Since I became a minister, I felt that my destiny should be left up to the Buddha. Therefore, I think my appointment as the resident minister of Wahiawa Nichiren Mission is the will of the Buddha, and I will do my best to spread the Buddha's teachings not only at the Wahiawa Mission but also throughout Hawaii. Please support me in realizing my goals."

CHARLOTTE SANGHA, NORTH CAROLINA

Setsubun and Shakyo
By Shami George Jeffus

On February 3, the Charlotte Sangha celebrated its first Setsubun, with the tossing of toasted soy beans and candy. For many in the Sangha it was the first time they had experienced such a celebration to mark the change of season. Everyone present had a wonderful and happy time.

On this day also, the first 1,000 Odaimoku Shakyo were placed in the base of the altar in the main hall. In October 2007 the Sangha began an effort to copy the Odaimoku 10,000 times to place in the base of the altar.

Special sheets were prepared, each with five Odaimoku printed in light grey for people to use to copy out the Odaimoku. On February 3, 200 sheets were collected representing the first 1,000 of our 10,000 campaign. In addition to local members copying the Odaimoku, Pam from Seattle contributed a large amount. Each sheet has the name of the person who wrote out the Odaimoku along with the date. These sheets are being offered for the purpose



Shakyo: Allen Rodgers places 200 shakyo sheets with a total of 1,000 Odaimoku on the altar for later placement in the base

of spreading the Dharma in the Carolinas and throughout the world.

Along with the first 1,000 Odaimoku, one copy of Chapter 16 of the Lotus Sutra written out by Shami Ryusho was offered as well.

Other than some mandalas which were donated to the Sangha we have no treasures. These Odaimoku will be the future temple's treasure throughout the ages and be the continuing prayer for peace and happiness for all people through spreading the Dharma.

On February 10, the first annual meeting of the Sangha was held to vote on the by-laws for the future temple. At this meeting it was also decided that we would begin collecting pocket change to purchase a small taiko drum for the temple.

LAS VEGAS

Wedding Ceremony

Rev. Shokai Kanai performed the first wedding ceremony in Nevada on March 1, following his receipt of the certificate of permission to perform marriage from Clark County of Nevada.

The bride was Candace Kashi Flowers who was one of Rev. Kanai's Sunday school students in Salt Lake City, Utah in the 1970s. The groom was Billy Gene Zumbrun. The ceremony took place at Lake Las Vegas in Henderson, Nevada on March 1.

Employer Identification

The Nichiren Buddhist Kannon Temple of Nevada received an Employer Identification Number from Internal Revenue Service on March 28. The temple is now able to operate as a non-profit organization. All donations to the temple will be tax-exempted from now on.

Place for Inner Peace

The Nichiren Buddhist Kannon Temple was established in Nevada for us to feel inner peace by removing our frustration and agony.

For this purpose Rev. Shokai Kanai uses various methods such as amulets, prayer tablets, Kito Blessing, Reidan for divination and others depending on each individual case.

The most important thing to do for our inner peace in Nichiren Buddhism is to chant the Odaimoku, "Namu Myoho Renge Kyo."

"I started the weekly services on New Year's Day. Those who visit this temple say, 'Wonderful, Tranquil, Good Feeling, etc.' I feel grateful when you feel an inner peace at the Kannon Temple of Nevada," said Rev. Kanai.

Buddha's Birthday

Buddha Sakyamuni's birthday is on April 8, according to Mahayana Buddhism. During the service, Rev. Kanai will bless all new born babies or infants to be Buddhists. He will give a special amulet to each child. After the service, "Life of the Buddha" will be shown on DVD.

Celebration at Red Rock Canyon

On April 28, 1253, Nichiren Shonin, climbed Mt. Kiyosumi in Chiba Prefecture, Japan. While facing the rising sun, he chanted "Namu Myoho Renge Kyo" for the first time. This began the propagation of Nichiren Buddhism throughout the world. In order to commemorate this occasion, please join Rev. Kanai, at Red Rock Canyon on April 27 at around 5.45 a.m. to chant the Odaimoku as the sun rises. Those who are interested in joining Rev. Kanai, please inform the temple.

First Board Meeting

On February 3, after the Setsubun service, the first board meeting of the Kannonji Temple was held. Rev. Kanai announced that the temple had received status of a nonprofit organization from the State of Nevada on January 15, 2008. A lawyer is working on the By-laws and IRS forms.

Weekly Events

First Sunday—Monthly Kito Blessing: Rev. Kanai, who has completed the 100-day Aragyō three times, will give blessings and pray for your good health and prosperity throughout the month. He also will read your name and pray for you during his morning service.

Second Sunday—English Service: We read the Lotus Sutra in English and in Japanese. Sunday School for the children and a Dharma discussion for adults will follow the service.

Third Sunday—Japanese Service: We read the entire sutra little by little in Japanese and learn the significance of the sacred words.

Fourth Sunday—Shodai-Gyo: We chant "Namu Myoho Renge Kyo" and also practice meditation.

Nichiren Shu News

c/o NICHIREN SHU Shumuin

1-32-15, Ikegami, Ota-ku, Tokyo 146-8544, Japan Tel. 03-3751-7181 ~ 3

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