

Nichiren Shu News

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North America Ceremonies for Rissho Ankoku-ron and Centennial Propagation Launch

*By Rev. Tsuoh Yokoi
Missionary Department, Shumuin*

On August 29, 2010, a grand ceremony was held at the NBIC (Nichiren Buddhist International Center) in Hayward, California, to celebrate the 750th anniversary of the Rissho Ankoku-ron and the centennial of propagation in North America. The ceremony was officiated by Rev. Ryoko Koga, director of the Missionary Department of Nichiren Shu, who represented Chief Administrator, Rev. Shobin Watanabe, Bishop Shokai Kanai, head of NONA (Nichiren Order of North America) and Rev. Ryusho Matsuda of the San Jose Myokakuji Betsuin, and fourteen ministers from temples and sanghas throughout

North America assisted the ceremony. Eighteen members from the different temples with Mr. John J. Petry, representing the followers attended the ceremony.

The ceremony started on a clear, beautiful day at 10:30 a.m. They vowed before the Buddha, and Nichiren Shonin to carry out the Nichiren Shu movement of "Rissho Ankoku-ron and Odaimoku Kechien Undo (Odaimoku Spreading Movement)" in North America so that everyone can come together in unison "Itai Doshin."

During the service a wasan (special drum beating chant) performance of Nichiren Shonin's life story was performed by some members. Though the participants live throughout the U.S. and with little time to practice their voices chanted in

unison, echoing throughout the hall. This seemed to show the true "Itai Doshin" united into one with the same belief.

Mr. Petry said, "I was so inspired by the service and got a stronger feeling to spread the Lotus Sutra and Odaimoku throughout the U.S. As Rev. Koga mentioned in his sermon about Jogyo Bodhisattva, it is very important to have respect for each other. It is also important to put into practice what is taught in the Rissho Ankoku-ron and I felt that the most important thing is to chant the Odaimoku. What we have to do from now on is to pass down the teachings of the Lotus Sutra which was brought to the U.S. one hundred years ago from Japan. It is our responsibility to teach this to the younger



Rev. Ryokou Koga, Director of Missionary Department



Ministers and members of NONA gathered in front of the NBIC altar

generation. When Buddhism was brought to Japan from China, the Japanese established Japanese Buddhism, so now in America, we must establish American Buddhism. It is impossible to do this immediately, and a step-by-step effort is needed so we would like you to watch us patiently. We are also very grateful that the Japanese people understand our differences in customs and culture. Everyone has hardships, but if we chant the Odaimoku, we will be able to become Buddhas someday. There is no person who is the same as another but through the teachings of Nichiren Shonin and the Lotus Sutra, we are able to become "Itai Doshin." The merit of the Lotus Sutra is equality for everyone. Do not be misled by the outer looks or worldly thoughts but make the belief a certain one," said Mr. Petry to all the Nichiren followers throughout the world.

In the North American propagation region, along with the Rissho Ankoku-ron service a conference was held from August 27-29. All the ministers from temples

and sanghas throughout North America participated along with representatives from the members of each group. The topics of discussion were as follows:

- 1) Financial report for the 2009 fiscal year
- 2) Amendments made to some by-laws of NONA
- 3) Events for the celebration of the centennial for the propagation in North America
- 4) Mutual understanding between Japanese-Americans and non-Japanese-Americans
- 5) Reports from each temple and sangha
- 6) Raising the living conditions of the resident ministers
- 7) Contract of employment with the temple when a new minister is dispatched.

At the same time a research study program was held. Prof. Kaigen Noritake of Rissho University gave a lecture on "The History of Buddhist Negotiations" and Prof. Hirohisa Toda, also of Rissho University, gave a lecture on "Eko-Memorial Services." (Tr. S.S.)



Members performing Wasan



Rev. Koga officiating ceremony

Calendar

August-September 2010

- Aug. 2-Sept.5: Annual 2nd Shingyo Dojo at Minobusan
- Aug. 15: Memorial service at the Chidorigafuchi National Cemetery for the unknown war dead sponsored by Nichiren Shu
- July-Aug.: Summer schools for elementary and junior high school students held at Nichiren Shu temples throughout Japan
- Aug. 27: Service to commemorate the Matsubagayatsu Incident
- Sept. 3: Memorial service for Niko Shonin
- Sept. 12: Service to commemorate the Tatsunokuchi Incident
- Sept. 17: Memorial service for Nisshin Shonin
- Sept. 18-19: Grand service at Shichimenzan
- Sept. 20-26: Autumn Higan (equinox) Week

by Rev. Tsuoh Yokoi

Buddhism and International Society

By Rev. Kanshu Naito

Introduction

Our world has changed very much since the terrible attacks were made on September 11 in 2001 by the Al-Qaeda terrorists mainly in New York City. It is not an exaggeration to say that Christian viewpoints had been considered as the main criteria in every respect when we think and decide important international matters before the attacks. In those cases, we were compelled to cope with many affairs happening in the world centering on European and American thoughts. In other words we sometimes had to manage international affairs in Christian ways. However, we began to doubt whether such ways of thinking are right or not since then. And then it is also true that many people started to think it is important to look for other ways while laying emphasis on Christian ways.

To make contribution to world peace for example, the same things can be said. There are a lot of ways to contribute to world peace not only in political ways but also in religious ways. Buddhists as well as Christians have been working for world peace at many places abroad for a long time. If they show how to save this confused world and people who



Rev. Kanshu Naito

have trouble, the Buddhist ways can be stimulating ways to discuss world problems. There are many kinds of religions besides Christianity; Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, Confucianism and so on. Religious features have already been endeavoring very hard to save people in trouble and now it is getting more and more important to help and save these people in trouble mentally, physically or economically throughout this chaotic world.

As for the Nichiren Shu Order, many priests have been also working abroad very hard to propagate the teachings of the Buddha and Nichiren Shonin and to save people for a long time. I myself happened to have something to do with the foundation of "Minobusan Kuonji Sri Lanka Betsuin" about twenty years ago. I will write a little about this matter taking it into consideration the importance of helping as many people as possible throughout the world and that in Nichiren Shu there are many priests and religious persons working for people who need help.

have trouble, the Buddhist ways can be stimulating ways to discuss world problems. There are many kinds of religions besides Christianity; Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, Confucianism and so on. Religious

Sri Lanka

Long ago, when Occidentals were trading across the Arabian Sea with Orientals, Sri Lanka, called "An Oriental Pearl," developed occupying an important position as a relay exchange point of "the Sea Silk Road." It is said Sri Lanka began its history when it was conquered by the Sinhalese royal dynasty in the sixth century BC. Although Sri Lanka established its unique Buddhist culture, continuing long conflicts with Tamils coming from India, the kingdom began to be dominated by European powers after a Portugal colonial mission arrived on this island in 1505, and became one of the British colonies in 1815. But in 1948 the country won its independence as the Dominion of Ceylon and became a republic within the Commonwealth afterwards and its English name, Ceylon, was changed to Sri Lanka in the Sinhalese language in 1978.

The island of Sri Lanka lies in the Indian Ocean, to the southwest of the Bay of Bengal and is a little smaller than Hokkaido. Although there are many races, languages, and religions in this country, about seventy percent of its population is Sinhalese and the number of Buddhists there are almost the same percent. So Sri Lanka can be called a Buddhist nation. In India where Buddhism was born, almost all

the people believe in Hinduism and there are very few people who are Buddhists. The reason why Buddhism flourished in Sri Lanka was that Buddhism arrived from India during the reign of King Devanampiya Tissa (250-210 BC) in the third century BC, brought by Bhikku Mahinda, who has been believed to be the son of the Mauryan emperor, Asoka. King Tissa became a believer of Buddhism, built the Mahavihara or "Great Monastery" in Anuradhapura and made it the Buddhist center. Buddhism in Sri Lanka has been prospering greatly since then and is still now believed as the orthodoxy of the Southern Theravada Buddhism by the majority of Sri Lankans.

Sri Lankan Buddhism is the Southern Theravada Buddhism, once called the Lesser-vehicle Buddhism. The Lesser-vehicle Buddhism was libelously named by the Great-vehicle (Mahayana) Buddhists. While the Mahayana means a great superior vehicle, the Theravada is a small inferior vehicle because the Mahayana Buddhists thought the Theravada Buddhists aimed only at self-emancipation and that they were inferior to the Mahayana Buddhists aiming at altruistic salvation. From the viewpoint of the history of philosophical thought, Theravada Buddhism has the important religious significance playing the role as a forerunner of the fundamental teachings of Mahayana Buddhism.

(to be continued)

Wesak Day

By Rev. Kangyo Noda

Penang, Ichinenji

Wesak (Vesak) Day is one of the most important celebrations for Southeast Asian Buddhists. The Penang Nichiren Shu Buddhist Association, Hokkezan Ichinenji, also commemorates Sakyamuni Buddha's holy day every year on the full moon day of the 4th month of the lunar calendar. On the morning of the 28th of May over 200 people, temple members, members' friends, and temple neighbors gathered at the temple, recited the Lotus Sutra and chanted the Odaimoku to Sakyamuni Buddha. All of them poured the sweet tea onto the statue of the baby Buddha during the ceremony. But this year was different. Ichinenji joined the Wesak Day procession organized by the Malaysian Buddhist Association. In Penang, the Wesak Day procession is performed in the evening of Wesak every year. Many Buddhist schools praise Sakyamuni Buddha's life and his practice. Ichinenji believes that the procession is a good opportunity to introduce the Lotus Sutra to the people of Penang, and that the Buddha appeared in this world and expounded the Lotus Sutra for one great purpose. Since the beginning of the year, they started talking to MBA for permission to participate. Formal approval from MBA came one month before the procession day. From that time, Ichinenji members strived for a successful event. Not only members, but also members' family and friends came together. They searched for a float, and spent much time decorating the car. They made many artificial flowers. In the meantime, they needed to arrange many fresh flowers to decorate Ichinenji altar for the morning prayer of Wesak Day. For two days prior to the actual day, they worked very hard until late at night.



Rev. Kanno Preaches (8)

To make charity
To observe precepts
To persevere

To be diligent
To practice meditation
To attain wisdom

The Six Practices (Paramitas)

These are the Six Practices to reach the other shore of enlightenment from this shore of sufferings of birth and death. By conducting these practices, we will be able to reach the state of peace attained by Buddha Sakyamuni. To follow these practices means to follow the rear view of the World Honored One. In Shizuko Watanabe's poem, "Head," she says:

When a lion leads 100 sheep they all become lions.
When a sheep leads 100 lions they become sheep.
A baby's heart is so soft like a newly pounded mochi.
Responsibility of adults who lead babies is so important.

In this poem, she is calling attention of grownups to their own attitude towards infants. A lion is likened to Sakyamuni Buddha, and we, unenlightened, to sheep.

"The Six Practices" shows us the rear view of Sakyamuni Buddha. Let us observe at least one of the Six Practices to become like the lion.

(Rev. Nissho Kanno, head priest of the Kaichoji Temple, Shizuoka)

After the morning ceremony, they prepared for the procession. Around 130 members, family, and friends joined Ichinenji team. All groups gathered at the field of the Chinese Recreation Center in front of MBA. The march started from 6 p. m. They walked around George Town, central Penang. Ichinenji team chanted 3 different phrases, "Namo Ben Su Si Kya Mu Ni Fo"

(Devotion to the Original Master Sakyamuni Buddha) in Mandarin, "Namo Miao Fa Lian Hua Jin" (Devotion to the Lotus Sutra) in Mandarin, and "Namu Myoho Renge Kyo" while beating the Uchiwa Daiko. This was the first time in history to chant the Odaimoku under the skies of Malaysia. The people of Penang chanted together with us while beating the drums. We

finished the three-hour procession at 9 p. m.

Thanks to the sincere contribution of many members, family, and friends Ichinenji had a successful Wesak Day event. We do wish to make Wesak Day parade our big annual activity so that the Lotus Sutra and Odaimoku can reach the Malaysian people's heart quickly through our Bodhisattva practice.



Wesak procession holding Odaimoku banner



Nichiren Shu float adorned with flowers and lanterns

The Small Talk on Various Topics of Buddhism (2)

By Rev. Gyokai Sekido

Sakyamuni's Attainment of the Truth

Sakyamuni was enlightened and attained Buddhahood at the age of 35 (or 30 in another opinion). He left his home at Kapila Castle at the age of 29 (or 19 in another opinion) and practiced asceticism quite hard for six years. He lived for six years begging for alms by which he fed himself as a bhiksu. A bhiksu is a Buddhist monk who practices asceticism begging for food and feeding himself as if he were a beggar. Sakyamuni practiced many kinds of hard asceticism like having one meal a day, stop breathing, burning himself in the sunshine on hot days and staying awake all night. He continued to practice it without rest for six years. His body was emaciated, but, Sakyamuni's mind did not reach the state of spiritual enlightenment so he stopped practicing asceticism. The five priests who followed Sakyamuni after he left the castle thought that it was no use following and left him. When he went alone into a village, a young girl named Sujata feeling pity took a milk



Rev.
Gyokai Sekido

porridge to him. Sakyamuni ate the milk porridge and recovered his physical strength. Then he bathed in the nearby clear river called Nairan, and washed away the dirt of hard practices.

He went into the woods of a nearby town called Gaya, now Buddhagaya, and sat in meditation. There stood a large "Bodhi tree," under which he sat and meditated. At last Sakyamuni became completely enlightened. There are many figures which symbolized his hard practices. Sakyamuni practiced asceticism hard for six years in the snowy mountains (the Himalayas). But he realized that practices were not perfect and left the mountains. The pictures of Sakyamuni Emerging from the Mountains were popular in the temples of the Zen school after the Sung Age. It is because the founders of Zen and other schools sympathized with his humanity who experienced collapse and distress (refer to the photograph). The Buddha became completely

enlightened by meditation. But, meditation is not taken seriously in the Nichiren school. The concentration and insight of Ichinen Sanzen (the three thousand realms are contained in one mind) is an exception. It is an important practice to chant the Daimoku which makes the heart peaceful. It can be said that Shodaigyo (practice of chanting the Daimoku is the meditation in the Nichiren school).

There was a priest of Nichiren school named Gensei (1623-1668) who led a plain and noble life in the Edo Period. He was born in Kyoto, and became the clan person of Hikone clan (present Shiga Prefecture). But, he retired when he was 26 years old, and became a priest because he was an invalid and wanted to care of his old mother. He built a hermitage in Fukakusa (south of Kyoto, present Zuiko-ji Temple) at the age of 33, and he led a pure life by reading the Lotus Sutra and many Buddhist texts. He was friendly with other schools of religion in that hermitage, and associated with many priests and men of culture.

Gensei wrote a book "Sozan-Yoro" (10 chapters) for the beginning Buddhist priest in 1655. He took the three learnings (precepts, meditation, and wisdom) seriously.

In its 8th chapter, he mentioned that faith in the Lotus Sutra is most important, and meditation is the important practice which helps it, too. A simple tomb of only three bamboos exists in Fukakusa now. (to be continued)



"Sakyamuni Buddha Emerging from the Mountains," preserved at Kyoto Honkoku-ji Temple

The 1st Nichiren Shu Workshop in South America

By Rev. Yodo Okuda

Brazil, Hokekyoji

We held the 1st Nichiren Shu Workshop in South America in Buenos Aires, Argentina, from May 28 through May 30, 2010. The instructors were Bishop Giko Tabata, Rev. Chishin Hirai and myself. We had 76 participants in total during the workshop.

The purpose of the workshop was to build the foundation of the teaching of Nichiren Shu in the members' minds. We used to have 3 sanghas in Argentina. Most of the members of these sanghas belonged to other religious groups that chanted the Odaimoku. They had been fighting each other for leadership. Argentineans are a proud and passionate people. Fighting often gets very serious. As a result, most of the members left Nichiren Shu, but only one member Mario, remained. Mario, tried to organize a sangha again with Shami Pablo Yosei. I thought that I could not miss this opportunity. What I mean was that a house no matter how beautifully built, would be destroyed if there was no firm foundation. Organizing a sangha is the same. We need to build a firm foundation for a sangha.

Another reason was for my own study. Once we go abroad, we seldom have opportunities to attend lectures sponsored by the Head Office, Young Ministers Association of Nichiren Shu and others. As I have been in charge of the New Mission in South America by myself since last April, I wanted to study and experience more. So, this was a precious chance for me.

I made the best program possible for this workshop under the guidance of Rev. Hirai. That's why it became a rich and tight program. It seemed to be too tight for two priests to carry out the workshop by ourselves so we asked the Head Office for help. They decided to send Bishop Tabata to Argentina. We were so surprised because Bishop Tabata was a director of the Department of Propagation of the Head

Office when I became an overseas priest. I had never dreamt that such a great priest would come to South America. It was very kind of them. I should say that that was a wonderful gift for us in South America.

I discussed details about the workshop with Shami Yosei, Mario and Ana-Paula such as the time, place, etc. It was very difficult to find a good interpreter. Finally, we found a man who spoke Japanese fluently. However, he had difficulty to translate sensitive matters such as Buddhism into Spanish. So, we prepared two ways. The first way was that the interpreter translated what we said into Spanish from Japanese. Another way was that I translated what Bishop Tabata said into Portuguese and Ana-Paula translated what I said in Portuguese into Spanish. When Rev. Hirai spoke in English, there were not so many problems because some of the participants understood English. Anyway, we used four languages for this workshop.

On May 28th, I joined Bishop Tabata and Rev. Hirai at the Sao Paulo International Airport and we went to Argentina together. Shami Yosei and two other members picked us up at the airport. I could not smile as we greeted each other because I was tense with worry and expectations. We had to go to the place where the workshop was going to be held directly from the airport. As soon as we arrived at the place, I was so surprised. There were more people than I had expected.

Some people had an interest in our Buddhism and joined the workshop without reservation on that day. There were 26 people in total in spite of it being a Friday night. The more people I saw, the more I was pleased and excited. We started our 1st workshop in South America with an opening ceremony under the leadership of Bishop Tabata.

Bishop Tabata talked about Odaimoku, the essence and life of our Buddhism. He prepared pictures and materials for the lecture in order to make it easy to understand. He also delivered lectures

about Wasan and the Song of Nichiren Shu. Their singing and laughter were heard even through a wall. I could learn new ways of propagation and saw a different face of the members.

Rev. Hirai talked about Nichiren Shonin and the history of Nichiren Buddhism. He also explained Rissho Ankoku-ron with its replica. Nobody understood kanji characters in Argentina. However, people living on the opposite side of the earth sensed Nichiren Shonin's high spirit in his strong strokes even after 750 years. They were moved by the Rissho Ankoku-ron presented to the shogunate at the risk of Nichiren Shonin's life.

I talked about the Lotus Sutra. It took many days to prepare for it. I wrote my manuscript for people who would join us for the first time and people who might be influenced deeply by other faiths.

The style of the lectures was to explain the righteousness of our Buddhism without criticizing others. As you might know, Catholicism is the most popular religion in South America. Although someone claims that he/she is a Buddhist, he/she may still be under the influence of Catholic ideas and

they may not even be aware of it. If someone criticizes Catholicism in the South America, it means also to criticize their culture and customs. We didn't criticize other religions chanting Odaimoku at the beginning. We gradually told participants what was right from aspects of teaching and history. I think that one of the good points of Buddhism is having a deep capacity to recognize others and accept them into our teaching.

I had been worried about the workshop for a while. However, I felt fine after finishing it. All the teachers delivered passionate lectures and every participant was very sincere. The workshop was heated and often extended beyond the scheduled hours. I believe that this was a true Itai-doshin.

I may be the first missionary of Nichiren Shu in Argentina. I always pay attention to the country. Mario was the only member staying with Nichiren Shu after previous conflicts. He is cheerful but has a stern look and is stubborn. Such a man showed tears in his eyes at the airport when we departed. I think that the tears expressed the result of our workshop. We left Buenos Aires for Sao Paulo.



Attendees of the first South American Workshop (front row:L to R) Revs.Chishin Hirai, Giko Tabata, Yodo Okuda

Temple Events

TORONTO NICHIREN BUDDHIST TEMPLE

By Rev. Kenno Fukushima

Farewell Message



Rev. Kenno Fukushima

It has been three and a half years since I was assigned to the Toronto Nichiren Buddhist Temple. I intended to continue my propagation work here but due to inevitable circumstances at home, I must return to Japan. Before becoming a minister, I had lived with my wife and her mother. Our two children are independent and each has his own family. Recently, the condition of my mother-in-law has become bad and she needs nursing care. My 94 year-old mother-in-law and my wife supported my overseas propagation work. They endured a lot of hardships while I was away. However, my wife became ill and somebody has to take care of her mother. My family sacrificed a lot for me so now I must return their understanding and go back to Japan to help them.

I will do propagation for Nichiren Shu in Shiga Prefecture where I live, while I take care of both my wife and mother-in-law. I do not have a temple in Japan because I became a minister after I retired from an ordinary company. I intend to propagate supporting my master.

Because my English ability was not sufficient during the three and a half years in Toronto, I don't think my missionary work was satisfactory. Missionary work must be done through verbal communication. Acquisition of the language where the propagation is going to be done is very important for future missionary work overseas. For this, a person must be young, because for an older person the reality of daily propagation through language is very difficult.

However, I was supported by many enthusiastic members while I was here and was able to hold the annual events successfully. My dream was

to increase the membership but this could not be fulfilled.

As Nichiren Shonin said, "All things are possible if people are united in one spirit. Nothing can be accomplished if they are not in unity." I hope you members can come together and continue to develop the Toronto Nichiren Buddhist Temple in the years to come. This idea of becoming one is what I hope will continue to be the main objective of this temple. Thank you for all your help and support.

Hilo Nichiren Mission

By Rev. Hosho Sugawara

Hilo Bon Dance

The Hilo Nichiren Mission held its Obon service and dance on Saturday, August 7. The dance was resumed after a year's absence. It was a huge success because many people supported and participated in the event. About 200 people gathered at the mission. This time, the members of the Kin Ryosho Dance Academy took care of the food booths from the beginning to the very end and did a terrific job even though most of them were members of the Puna Hongwanji Temple. The Hilo Meishoin Tsukikage Odorikai group joined us and provided the music. There was a game booth for children and they were happy to receive prizes which were from Japan.

Many people from the community came to the mission, bowed their heads and placed incense at the altar. There were some who sat and read the Nichiren Shu literature that was on the shelves. One could feel the camaraderie among the people. Hilo is a special place and we at the Hilo Nichiren Mission are fortunate to be part of a community that helps one another.



Food booth at Hilo Bon Dance

Nichiren Shu Betsuin 2nd Annual Bon Dance

By Rev. Eisei Ikenaga

The Hawaii Nichiren Shu

Betsuin's second annual bon dance started with Bishop Shingyo Imai's blessing upon the yagura on Saturday, September 4. The bon dance committee members (Eric Kawatani, Nelson & Diane Fujio, Keith Nagai, Kalei Kini, Leo & Kathy Nakano, Carol Adams, Ramona & Midori Chiya, Grace Yagi, Florence Aihara, and Jerry Muller) were able to use the lessons they learned from the first bon dance to make this year's bon dance a great success. As the Betsuin's bon dance was held on the last day of a total of 32 bon dances held on the island of



Taiko performance at Bon Dance

Oahu, many people showed up to flaunt their kimonos and dancing skills. The cooperation between all the Hawaii temples was also very evident. Rev. Tetsudo Takasaki of Puunene Nichiren Mission and Rev. Hosho Sugawara of Hilo Nichiren Mission managed game booths, contributing to the fund-raising of each of their temples. All the while, Rev. Junsei Nagayoshi was busy making shaved ice in the food booth to support his temple, the Wahiawa Nichiren Mission. Rev. Josho Yamamura and the Myohoji Kendo Club barbecued chicken and served it with corn on a cob and spam-musubi, a local favorite. The bon dance was also greatly helped by the precision drumming of the Hawaii Matsuri Taiko.

Nichiren Buddhist Kannon Temple of Nevada

By Shokai Kanai

Chant the Odaimoku One Million Times

On April 1, I declared to chant the Odaimoku one million times, together with your help. After calling several members to start this pronouncement, the count has already reached 17,000 times as of April 28.

There are many benefits that you will receive when you chant the Odaimoku. You will be grateful to offer, will follow the rules and laws, will be patient, will continue to endeavor, will have a calm mind and periodically will have wisdom. To chant the Odaimoku is

an act of gratitude to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. It is also an offering to your deceased loved ones. The best gift to them is the offering of the Odaimoku. They will attain Nirvana and reach the Buddha Land by listening to your chanting. In return you will attain Buddha-hood, too.

"Namu Myo-ho Ren-ge Kyo" is your vow to follow the Buddha Dharma, the constitution of the country and the rules of whichever society you belong to. Even if you do not know the benefits, when you chant the Odaimoku, little by little you naturally follow the community rules, family rules and universal laws. What this means is that you naturally harmonize yourself with nature and rules of your community.

When you chant the Odaimoku a thousand times a day, every day you will realize that you are less angry and less upset. You will be more patient which will make this society a much safer and better place. In order to continue chanting you need patience and effort. This effort will make you have more endeavor in your studies and work. When you chant more often, your mind will become calmer and you will prefer to be in a quiet place rather than noisy places. When your mind is calm, you will have better understanding and remember what you need to do. While you chant, you often get some inspiration and remember what you have forgotten. This chanting can be done by anyone regardless of your faith.

Boston Lantern Floating

By Rev. Ryouh Faulconer

In a southern suburb of Boston, tucked in the community known as Jamaica Plain is Forest Hills Cemetery. It is one of Boston's oldest and largest. The Forest Hills Trust has many events during the year to help maintain the cemetery in a pristine condition. Many of the headstones and crypts are beautiful works of art.

As one of the ongoing events to bring people to Forest Hills, twelve years ago the curators of the cemetery decided to have a lantern festival. This festival was prompted by the Obon season of Japan. Looking at the floating of lanterns at the end of the Obon season, they saw a way to remember those who have gone before. A small lake deep within Forest Hills is the perfect location and offers a nice place to celebrate the lives of ancestors, loved ones and all those who have come before us.

The event began without a Buddhist minister so even though

the festival originated from a Buddhist celebration, it is a secular event. Several years ago, Reverend Ryouh Faulconer was assigned to New England to develop and grow a Sangha. He joined the Lantern Festival and has slowly recalled the event's origin in Buddhism by writing Odaimoku on lanterns and chanting as the lanterns are launched. At first many people watched and some asked questions. As the years have gone by and the Sangha has grown, members have joined Reverend Faulconer.

This past July several members of the New England Sangha joined the Lantern Festival. The festival started around five in the afternoon on a Thursday. People came and found spots around the lake. They had a picnic while listening to different entertainers which included Taiko drummers and gospel singers. They purchased paper lanterns and wrote wishes and remembrances for their loved ones who had passed. As the sun set, they launched the lanterns into the lake. The estimated attendance for the event was somewhere between three and five thousand. The cemetery usually sells around one thousand five hundred lanterns each year. Reverend Faulconer writes several of the lanterns for the Sangha and also for anyone who requests them. The Sangha sat and enjoyed the late afternoon remembrance. Then when the sun set, they assembled at the shore of the lake and prepared to launch the lanterns. Reverend Faulconer started chanting Jigage and then Odaimoku as the lanterns were launched. The Sangha joined the chanting as they placed the flickering lanterns onto the lake. After the last few lanterns were being launched bag pipes, played in the Scottish tradition at memorials began to play.

The lantern festival was a wonderful way for the Sangha to end the Obon season and share the Dharma with others. Throughout the afternoon and evening members of the Sangha talked to people and answered questions about Buddhism, Odaimoku and the Lotus Sutra.



A member launching a toro lantern into the lake

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