

Nichiren Shu News

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(1)

'Goal Is to Build a Growing Family'

A grand ceremony, commemorating the 750 anniversary of Nichiren Shonin's proclamation of his faith and the centennial of the propagation in Hawaii, was held on June 21 at the Nichiren Mission of Hawaii. The ceremony was officiated by Archbishop Nichiko Fujii. Some 1,200 priests and lay devotees from Japan and 100 members of local Nichiren temples attended the commemorative banquet held at the Waikiki Sheraton Hotel that evening. Here is an interview with Eric Kawatani, new President of the Nichiren Mission—editor.

Question 1: *What is the immediate task you intend to tackle?*

With the completion of the New Hondo under the leadership of the immediate past President Francis Sonomura and Bishop Ogawa, our immediate goal is to focus on the fiscal stability of the Mission operations so that our Mission will still be here for another 100 years and more. By this, I mean making sure that our finances are in order and that we plan the proper maintenance of our facilities. If we correlate this to a family, we have just build a new "house", we now have to focus on how to keep it up and now, to build a growing family for the future. That is a daunting task that all traditional Japanese Buddhist missions in Hawaii have struggled with for 50 years.

Question 2: *What does the completion of the new Hondo mean for the activities of the Nichiren Mission?*

The new Hondo is a symbol of the grant of a "new start" for overseas propagation. It stands as an overseas beacon telling all in Hawaii that this where you can practice your faith, this is where you can energize your faith with fellow Nichiren Buddhists, this is where you can organize and contribute back to the community. We view the efforts of the Nichiren Shu Order to fulfill the dreams of the late Bishop Kanryu Mochizuki and the many Issei and Nisei predecessors, as a sign that the Order is confident for the future of overseas propagation. It should be a welcome symbol for overseas Nichiren Buddhists wherever they may be. Our congregation must take this sacred grant, and complete the dream by filling the new Hondo with vitality.



Rev. Eijo Ikenaga and Hawaii members are welcoming groups from Japan



Eric Kawatani, President, Nichiren Mission of Hawaii is addressing the guests at the banquet in Sheraton

Question 3: *On the December 1, 1998 issue of our newspaper, we published the gist of your speech you delivered at the Joenji seminar on overseas propagation. In that article you told about your experience in your childhood, the difference of attitudes between Americans and Japanese, the self determination expounded in the teaching of the Lotus Sutra and shown by Nichiren Shonin which is, you said, quite fit for Americans, requirements for those engaged in overseas propagation. In spite of the acceptability of the Nichiren shu teachings our denomination stays a minority in Hawaii. Soto and Jodo-shin sects have more than 30 temples while we have only five.*

For the past half century, everyone can point to the problem of dwindling memberships in the traditional Japanese Buddhist temples of Hawaii, but I know of no clear answer for the cure. We know the reason for the decline: the temples have faded together with the Japanese culture that passed with the Issei and the immigrant-style Japanese culture that is now passing with the Niseis. Our immediate fiscal

problem is that temple finances will continue to be hard-pressed as the pool of members decrease. That is why we need to focus on our operations right now. The religious problem is that the temples will lose their purpose here if they cannot grow the members and thereby serve the community. Our predecessors 50 years ago foresaw the practical problem and tried to find ways to supplement our temple income. But, just as a new school is incomplete without students, a financially stable new temple will lose meaning if we cannot grow our congregation. We have long known this.

Question 4: *How do you evaluate the participation of local priests in overseas activities?*

We give Bishop Ogawa an A + for his efforts to bring the new Hondo into reality. All of the overseas ministers in Hawaii have sacrificed in coming to Hawaii and have tried their best to contribute to the betterment of the missions here. We, in Hawaii, all know that the challenges they face are tremendous and we also know that these challenges have proved to be difficult for not only Nichiren Shu but all the other traditional Buddhist denominations. The language barrier, the cultural barriers, and the basic difference in how the temple is organized in Hawaii make their first several years a huge investment in training. In the future, we will need even more overseas ministers that are committed to overseas propagation as a long-term career such as Bishop Mochizuki, Bishop Ogawa, and Rev. Ikenaga. We will need more overseas ministers who develop expertise in counseling and dealing with spiritual issues in a Christian society. We will need more overseas ministers who not only can speak English but can communicate to the young families and address their problems. Yes, we are expecting multi-talented supermen who will be paid minimal wages and given no job assurances. How can we expect young ministers to commit to our temples when they cannot afford to build their own families on the salaries we pay them? How can we expect such ministers to learn a new language and culture, and also learn new skills when they do not have the funds to pay for proper education? On top of all this, they face a declining congregation with no clear solutions on the cure. Despite such financial and morale-sinking obstacles, we still have energetic overseas ministers.

Question 5: *What do you think about the joining in of the former Soka-gakkai people? The teaching of the Lotus Sutra and Odaimoku have become known among Americans owing to the effort of the Soka-gakkai. It is the Soka-gakkai which has spread Odaimoku so widely. It is a lay organization.*



Archbishop Nichiko Fujii reads his congratulatory report in the ceremony held at the Nichiren Mission of Hawaii in June 21

I think it has been a blessing that former SGI members have joined Nichiren Shu. The hallmark of SGI is its training of its members to diligently study the doctrines of Nichiren Buddhism. Even if Nichiren Shu disagrees with the philosophy of SGI, there is no doubt that the training of SGI members in study and prayer has been a benefit when these members join Nichiren Shu. Faith works in unexpected ways. The biggest obstacle in converting Americans is the initial conversion to a foreign, non-Christian faith. SGI has been very effective in educating people all over the world not only about the Odaimoku but also converting them to the Odaimoku.

Question 6: *Do you think the ability of professionals is limited in propagation activities*

No. I assume that the word, "professionals" means the ministers. The ministers are the guides who show us the correct path. In any field, the professional is a person who has committed to learn and practice the principles of that field. That is why we have professors, accountants, doctors and lawyers. The rest of us are occupied in working, raising families, and otherwise, spending our days doing other things.

As we discussed before, our ministers not only are masters of the ceremonial rites, but also function to teach and guide us in practicing Nichiren Buddhism. It is clear that this is very important in Nichiren Buddhism. Perhaps, it is inherent in the vigorous spirit of Nichiren Shonin that his followers through history have become independent thinkers and adamant in their faith. I do not think it is an accident that historically, Nichiren Buddhism has the most number of subjects in traditional Japanese Bud-

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The Legend of Nichiren Shonin (4)

The accurate biography of Nichiren can be perceived through his essays and letters and the ancient documents. But there are many dramatic legends, too. So, let us think about various legends in this paper

By Rev. Gyokai Sekido

Study in Kamakura

The talent of Rencho (The Lotus of Eternity, the first name of Nichiren as a priest) was so outstanding that he had nothing to learn at the Seichoji Temple. Thus in 1238, at the age of 17, Nichiren went to Kamakura to study Buddhism. In those days, Kamakura was the political and cultural center of the Kamakura shogunate. Rencho returned to the Seichoji Temple in 1242, and wrote the Kaitai Sokushin Jobutsu-gi. But, due to the lack of accurate historical materials his life in Kamakura in those years are not precisely known.

At that time, Hojo Yasutoki was the de facto leader of the military government at Kamakura, governing the country benevolently as the shogunal regent. According to a leg-



Rev. Gyokai Sekido

end, Yasutoki was an intelligent man who respected moderation. He was a stern administrator of government affairs who established the new basic code of government (Goseibai Shikimoku). There is a story indicating how seriously Yasutoki took the governmental affairs. One day as he left the office of the Council of State, he noticed that the wind was scattering the petals of the cherry tree in the garden. The flower season had ended while Yasutoki was busy with governmental affairs. Realizing this, he is said to have composed a poem regretting the passing of spring. It is said that Kamakura was crowded and prosperous because it was under Yasutoki's personal management.

It is a historical fact that Rencho learned the doctrine of the Pure Land Buddhism while at the Seichoji Temple. But, he began feeling dubious

about the doctrine and started to search for the truth of Buddhism when he had a mysterious experience.

According to a legend, Rencho was interested in the doctrine of the



Pure Land Sect when he went to Kamakura to study. In those days, Nen'a Shonin represented the Pure Land Buddhism in Kamakura. Rencho went to see him, too, and learned his doctrine. There was another famous Pure Land priest named Daia in Kamakura. When Rencho heard about the tragic death of Daia, he is said to have separated himself from the Pure Land doctrine. According to Daia's disciples, Daia suffered from a bad sickness and unbearable pain toward the end of his life. Daia was tumbling about in the hermitage and crying out when he finally stopped breathing. His dead body had shrunken to the size of a child and was black as if it was smeared with ink. Highly trained Pure Land priests were supposed to reach a moderate end. From Daia's tragic end, however, Rencho and many others felt sure that Daia had fallen into hell. At this time, it is said, Rencho determined to research Buddhism again from the beginning.

The wood-block printing shows the tragic death of Daia, Pure Land priest. The picture is reproduced from the "Nichiren Shonin Chugasan (Comments and Pictures)"

(continued from page 1)

dhism. Even in America, the growth of new American offshoots from SGI is an indication of this tendency. Even though we all have our own independent thoughts and opinions, we also need our teachers to instruct us when we are wrong or develop misunderstandings of what Nichiren faith is.

We believe the doctrines of Nichiren Shu are the orthodox teaching of Nichiren Shonin. Our ministers are the resources for those doctrines.

One of my vice presidents, Keith Nagai, pointed out to me that there could be another class of religious professionals; that is, lay persons who perform non-religious duties such as being instructors, writers, researchers, computer specialists, and counselors. One day I do hope that our organization will have grown to a size where we can afford to hire such lay professionals.

Question 7: Is it advisable to mobilize the force of lay members to further develop the activities of Nichiren Shu and how it can be organized?

A definite "yes." I believe that the future of the Mission lies in the development of lay activities. Right now, we only have a limited number of active lay members and therefore, the scope of our activities is also limited. Unfortunately, we do not have the funds to hire religious professionals so we must start small by relying on our active members. We cannot our ministers to be supermen and do



Bishop Joyo Ogawa

everything either.

However, as we spoke before about step-by-step goal-setting, I hope that we will be able to focus on small realistic goals to achieve progress. For example,

a. Family Buddhism. I believe in the concept of family Buddhism advocated by Rev. Shingyo Imai. We need to get families involved with our faith. Using the families as core groups, we need to educate them of our faith and also reach out to them to activate their faith in their daily lives. We need to educate the parents so they know what Nichiren Buddhism is about and how to use its doctrines in keeping a happy family. The parents can then pass this knowledge to their children. At our 100th Anniversary celebration in June, Bishop Ogawa stressed that our focus must be to build up our congregation and especially, the younger membership.

b. Opening our Potential. The

Nichiren Shu creed focuses on the concept of cultivating our Buddha Nature. The NBIC site states: "We believe that Nichiren Shonin was the messenger of the Buddha who has guided us in cultivating our Buddha nature, a quality inherent in all beings, and establishing a way of life consonant with the eternal truths preached by the Buddha."

What does this mean that we have Buddha nature and how do we cultivate it? In lay terms, I interpret this to mean that we each have natural and positive abilities and skills by which we can contribute to society and find meaning in life. We are all different but we have it in ourselves to do good; not only at the temple and before the altar but in work, in school, and in interacting with our family. Through the ministers, we learn that faith in the Lotus Sutra through the Odaimoku assures spiritual salvation. But, we need to somehow get the message across that it also will help us be better and more fulfilled people.

Whether it is being a parent, a spouse, a student, a professional, an office worker, a volunteer, or any other occupation or practice, we should be trying to be the best that we can be. I believe that developing our Buddha nature means that. While this is important in all aspects of our lives, it is most evident with our children. They are growing, learning, and trying to learn to



The ceremony to unveil the Odaimoku monument, glorifying the initiation of overseas propagation by Rev. Gyoun Takagi, was held at Kapapala, Hawaii Island on June 23



Ms. Shizue Isogai and her Pundarika chorus group entertain the banquet guests with their favorite numbers



Some 100 local members join the banquet held at the Waikiki Sheraton



At the Sheraton banquet table are from left: Mrs. Yoshiko Imai, Mrs. Yasuko Ogawa and Kenji Ogawa

cope with the issues of growing up. Families have a duty to make sure that their children are given the guidance and the keys so they can develop throughout their lives. Teaching people to pray is the first step. But as a community institution, we need to reach out to our members with active programs to implement our creed. I am sure we have many members that want to help and just need the place and organization to develop projects where they can participate. By gathering such people at the temple, we can re-establish that tie between the temple and the congregation that flourished in the immigrant years.

Unfortunately, we are far from this right now. To start, I hope that our ministers and our lay members are able to work together to put small programs into place.

O-mandala Now Installed at Indonesia Hqs.

By Rev. Kanshin Mochida

On May 29, the Opening the Eye Ceremony for the mandala and the wooden statue of Nichiren Shonin of the Nichiren Shu Indonesia was held in Djakarta with Rev. Mochida, 16 members of the "Nichiren Shu Hokekyo Indonesia," and four members of the Penang Nichiren Shu Buddhist Association including its President, Ang Tiang Soon.

Last year, the Penang Nichiren Shu Buddhist Association was first contacted by this Indonesian Daimoku-chanting group through the internet, and some members visited Penang when the Nichiren Shu Headquarters sent a missionary tour there with Revs. Eikoh Watanabe and Eiki Ono. They were very much interested in Nichiren Shu Buddhism and asked the Headquarters to send a missionary group to Indonesia.

As a result last February, Revs. Shoryo Tarabini, Shoyo Tamura and Komyo Ohsawa visited the Nichiren Shu Indonesia to perform Buddhist services and to give some lectures.

After that missionary tour, the group happily decided to join the Nichiren Shu Order, and a copy of the Nichiren Shonin's mandala was officially presented to them by a staff of the Nichiren Shu Headquarters, Rev. Kanshin Mochida.

On May 30, after the Buddhist services, Daimoku-chanting practice and discussions, Tony, one of the main members of Nichiren Shu Indonesia, who has been supporting this religious group for decades, expressed gratitude to the Headquarters for the presentation of the mandala and the recognition of the Nichiren Shu Indonesia, and thanked the Penang members for their help.

Ang Tiang Soon, President of the Penang Nichiren Buddhist Association said, "I am also very happy about the opening of the Nichiren Shu Indonesia, and whenever I get a chance, I will help the missionary work in order to spread the teaching of the Buddha and the Lotus Sutra."

Rev. Mochida said smiling, "This is another



In front row from left are: Ms. Yovin Dainty, Ms. Ervinna, Rev. Kanshin Mochida, Mr. & Mrs. Tony Soehartono, and Ms. Lorensia. Behind from left are Wijaya Suryanto, Suyono Wijaya, Ms. Christine, Ms. Yani Susanti, Lily Mother, Ms. Mery, Wendy, Jimmy, Sidin Ekaputra, Aknur, and Hanlung

memorable event after the Penang Association joined our family. We, Nichiren Shu Headquarters, would like to thank all the members of the "Nichiren Shu Hokekyo Indonesia," especially Sidin Ekaputra and Tony Soehartono who have been contacting us for months to hold this opening

the eye ceremony. I am surprised to know that Rev. Tarabini is already very popular though he visited there just once."

Now the Headquarters is planning missionary tours to Indonesia regularly as well as monthly messages and lectures through e-mail.

New Overseas Assignments

Two overseas ministers and one trainee have been assigned to Europe. On May 20, Rev. Kangyo Noda was assigned to the Europe New Missionary and departed for Germany to help the dedication ceremony of the Daiseionji Temple. Rev. Noda said, "I will do my best to help the Daiseionji Temple and its chief minister, Rev. Shohei Stephanes, and the staff.



Rev. Kangyo Noda (left) receives instructions from Archbishop Iwama, Chief Administrator

"I have just become an overseas minister of the Nichiren Shu Order this year although I have been a priest only for two years. While living in England, I met many friends who asked me about Buddhism because they knew that my father was a priest. I couldn't answer their questions, however, because I had never studied Buddhism before. I felt ashamed and started to feel that I was born to take over my father's achievement. I also began to wish that Nichiren Buddhism should spread widely in the world. This is the reason why I began

to study Nichiren Buddhism and I applied for an overseas minister assignment. I studied psychology at Buckingham College while in England and I am studying in Germany right now. There are a lot of things to learn. I would like to learn as much as I can.

Rev. Myokei Kanatsuna, who was a French translator specialized in the literature field, was assigned as a trainee on June 5, and went to London. She will receive the training under the guidance of Rev. Shoryo



Rev. Myokei Kanatsuna (left)

Tarabini.

When the Joshin-ji Temple (Bunkyo-ku) and Chosho-ji (Taito-ku) in Tokyo participated in the 1997 Japan Festival in France, I had an opportunity to accompany the priests from the Nichiren Shu Order. I was not a priest then but a translator of French literature. Nevertheless, this occasion strongly influenced me and changed the direction of my life. After becoming a priest, last year in



Rev. Myosho Obata

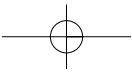
2002, I decided that I would like to propagate Nichiren Buddhism abroad. In the near future, I hope a Nichiren Shu temple will be founded

in France.

Rev. Myosho Obata also became an overseas minister on May 20, after the eight-month-training in London. She was also assigned to the Europe New Missionary, and for now she is in Japan, waiting for her assignment, which should be decided soon. Rev. Obata mentioned the motivation for overseas missionary, saying, "I was born as a daughter of a Buddhist minister, and when I got married, my husband became a Buddhist minister to take over my father's temple, so I have been supporting the missionary work as a family member of Buddhist ministers for my life. Now it is my turn to repay the favors of the Buddha directly."



"We are happy here in Mililani, and I am busy translating Nichiren Shonin's writings for publications of Kaigai Fukyo Koenkai." Photo shows from left to right: Rev. Kyotsu Hori, Mrs. Doris Hori, and Ms Hiroko Hori, their niece, at the front door of their home



Church Events

By Sandra Seki

Reflections on My Trip to Hawaii

By Sandra Seki

Although my recent trip to Hawaii was a short and busy one, I was glad to return to the islands and attend such a grand celebration. The islands are special to me since my mother was born and raised there more than 80 years ago.

Now several decades later I was so glad to visit the islands to celebrate the grand centennial of Nichiren Shu in Hawaii.

The serenity of the location of the Honolulu Betsuin Hondo seems to cleanse our souls from worldly troubles. The white washed walls of the building with its beautifully lined pews, the open windows bringing in the breeze from the mountains gives the Hondo a special 'glow' to it.

I accompanied our temple (Jokyoji) sodai and his wife who are both very religious. It was their first visit to any Nichiren temple overseas and they were amazed at the number of members participating in helping to make this ceremony a success. It also fascinated them to see how the services were conducted just like they are in Japan.

The preparation for the several services and the

grand banquet for more than 1000 people must have taken hours and hours of planning, organizing and lots of menial work. I am sure all of the attendees from the mainland and Japan were just amazed at the hospitality shown to them as a demonstration of gratitude for helping the people of Hawaii build a long lasting holy place for worship.

After hearing from Bishop Joyo Ogawa and Rev. Eijo Ikenaga about the toil and hardships the first members of the Nichiren Sect had in Hawaii, I realized that the foundations of this grand event had all been laid out by their forefathers and it was the duty of their descendants to pass the religion on to generations to come; to nurture and grow the seedlings which their forefathers had planted way back in the early 1900's.

I hope that this new Hondo will become the spiritual backbone for all the members and supporters of the Hawaii Betsuin and furthermore, I hope it becomes a place where the odaimoku is passed onto the younger generation. The dedication of the members and the spiritual and monetary support from many overseas temples have made this project a success.

Garden Completed

The garden work around the newly erected odaimoku monument has been completed.

Mr. Morikazu Nakada



The O'Daimoku and calligraphy written by Rev. Kanshu Ikuta

and other temple members and supporters finished the garden work beautifully! Mr. Nakada says that the plants and flowers in the garden are aimed for ten and twenty years later. People in the neighborhood stop and look at the monument and garden making it a relaxing spot.

Seminar at Salt Lake City

The Rocky Mountain Nichiren Buddhist Temple hosted the Nichiren Shu seminar at the Best Western Garden Inn in Salt Lake City, Utah, on June 15, 2003. Fifteen people participated in lectures on the Lotus Sutra given by Revs. Shokai Kanai and Will Warner of the Kentucky Nichiren Shu Sangha.

After the lecture, the participants traced images of the Buddha, bodhisattva and or Nichiren Shonin. The event ended with everyone chanting the odaimoku and meditating for 45 minutes.

Rev. Kanai also held services at five cemeteries in different cities, made visits to four member homes and two care centers during his four day stay in Utah.

SAN JOSE

12th World Kendo Championship

Three Kendoists from the San Jose Kendo Dojo representing the U.S. teams participated at the 12th World Kendo Championship in Glasgow, Scotland, from July 4th-6th.

Rev. Arnold Matsuda, Reika Mikuni, and Kaori Kikunaga accompanied by

Mr. Charlie Tanaka, the sodai of the temple and the president of the All U.S. Kendo Federation, left for Scotland.

Nichiren Scholarship

An award of \$300.00 per honoree will be presented to the following persons: Myokakuji Betsuin Fund to Shami Ryushin Matt Miller, a temple member, for studying and practicing Buddhism as shami; Joenji Fund to Sean Takase (son of Mrs. Reiko Takase), affiliated with the Tachibana School, for studying at De Anza College.

Docho Ceremony at Kiyosumi

Shami Matt Miller took his vows at the Seichoji Temple, Chiba Prefecture, Japan, this April. He was accompanied by his teacher Rev. Michael Ryuoh Faulconer and two other disciples of Rev. Faulconer, Philip Sorenson and Linda Caine-Barrett, who also took their vows as shami.

The ceremony took place at the Seichoji Temple, where Nichiren Shonin himself went through his first training as a shami and was ordained as a priest. This is also the place where Nichiren first chanted the odaimoku at the top of the mountain facing the rising sun when he founded the Nichiren Shu Order 750 years ago.

A series of lectures were held on how to begin their training, how to hold the juzu, how to bow when kneeling at the altar and how to chant loudly. A traditional, Japanese vegetarian meal was served followed by another long lecture. This was not translated but the American shami were later told that the long lecture was about studying hard and striving to be a good priest.

The ceremony was all in Japanese but after the service all of the shami had a feeling of accomplishment and understanding for the importance of the docho ceremony.

HONOLULU

Thanks to All

The formal 750th and 100th anniversary services were carried out very successfully. The temple would like to thank each and every one for his support.

New Minister for Puunene

Rev. Bungen Kaneko,



Gassho

By Rev. R. Matsuda
San Jose Myokakuji Betsuin

Gassho is the most important form of expression in the Buddhist faith. When you meet a friend in the western world you shake hands to show sincerity or respect.

In Asia the gesture of gassho, an expression of maximum respect which originated in India, still prevails. Ancient Indians believed that the right hand represented purity and the left impurity. When both palms are placed together, you will find a true nature of humankind—a combination of purity and impurity. When one worships the Buddha with gassho, you (imperfect and impure) will be united with the Buddha (perfect and pure).

In Nichiren Buddhism, the Lotus Sutra repeats the word "gassho" 57 times. This is how one sees the importance of the expression gassho.

The Buddhists greet people by doing the gassho. This means that you pay respect towards the other person's inward Buddha-nature.

How to do gassho:

1. Eliminate thoughts of self before the Buddha.
2. Relax shoulders to remove all tension.
3. Place palms together with each fingertip touching.
4. Fingertips are in line with the throat.
5. Fingertips are pointing 45 degrees out from the body with the joints of the thumbs touching the chest.
6. Elbows remain relaxed. Pressure under arms is so light that an egg can be held there without breaking.

When you have a perfect gesture of gassho, you are already united perfectly with the Buddha!

who had been helping at the Honolulu Betsuin, was installed as the new resident minister of the Puunene Nichiren Mission on Maui.

LOS ANGELES

Annual Obon Service

The origin of the Obon services comes from the story of Maudgalyayana, who saved his mother from the region of hungry spirits by offering food to all his fellow monks and nuns in the monastery and dedicated many prayers for her poor soul.

The merit of his good deeds saved her from the unbearable region of the hungry spirits in hell. Nichiren Shonin teaches us that the merit of the obon memorial service extends to not only seven generations of our ancestors but also to all the deceased.

The temple held a special service on Sunday, July 13 at 1 p.m. Special tobas (wooden stupas) were dedicated to the loved ones who had passed away since last year's obon.

Outdoor Picnic

A Sunday service and outdoor picnic will be held on Sunday, August 31 from 11:00 a.m. at the El Dorado East Regional Park, Long Beach. A short service will be held under a huge tree before the picnic. Please bring your favorite food and drinks. The park has fishing lakes, bike trails, children's playground, train rides and an archery range (you must bring your own equipment). Or you can just enjoy a walk in the woods.

NICHIREN SHU NEWS

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