

Nichiren Shu News

Published by the Head Office of Nichiren Shu & NOPPA

No. 256

June 1, 2023

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LGBTQ RAINBOW STICKER CAMPAIGN

By Rev. Kanjo Bassett

We sat down with Rev. Tsuoh Yokoi, who is currently the president of Zennissei, the All Japan Nichiren Shu Young Priest Association, to hear about their Rainbow Sticker Campaign to raise awareness of LGBTQ issues in Nichiren Shu temples.

Q. Please tell us about the Rainbow Sticker Campaign and the aims of the program. Is this the first time for Nichiren Shu doing an LGBTQ campaign like this? Is this only for Nichiren Shu temples in Japan, or is it also for other Buddhist temples that want to participate?

A. The Rainbow Stickers symbolize our 100 Sticker Campaign to get them placed in 100 Nichiren Shu temples across the country. We are also preparing a website to support this. By increasing the number of temples with this sticker, we hope to solve the issues of Buddhist services for LGBTQ people. Temples that display the stickers show that this temple is open to earnestly listening



In his formal priest attire, Rev. Yokoi stood out and received a lot of attention from the local media.



The All Japan Nichiren Shu Young Priest Association, Zennissei, had a booth at the Tokyo Rainbow Pride 2023 event on April 22 and 23 promoting awareness of their Rainbow Sticker Campaign for Nichiren Shu temples serving as the official launch of the year-long campaign to develop greater understanding of LGBTQ issues. Rev. Tsuoh Yokoi (left) and Rev. Gishin Wakasa (right) stand beside the Rainbow Buddha neon sign, which was designed especially for the Tokyo Rainbow Pride event by a friend of Rev. Yokoi so people could have their portraits taken in the booth next to the sign. Rev. Wakasa of Jitsujo-ji Temple in Okayama prefecture came up with the idea for the Rainbow Sticker Campaign. He noted, "Some people opposed the idea. They said that we should spend our time and money focusing on helping the poor and needy. But I strongly believe that we can do both. Opening our minds to help LGBTQ people doesn't cost us anything, and it helps everyone."

and discussing LGBTQ issues. People in the LGBTQ community face many challenges, and we want to support them.

There have been Nichiren Shu groups studying and discussing LGBTQ issues, but as Zennissei we wanted to put something into action and created this project, the first of its kind in Nichiren Shu. The campaign is initially for Nichiren Shu temples, but we hope to expand to other Buddhist lineages inside and outside of Japan.

Q. What has been the reaction to the LGBTQ sticker campaign so far? Positive? Negative? Indifferent?

A. We have seen all three, but mostly we've seen indifference. Many temples do not understand LGBTQ issues and

just tune out the message. "The first job of Zennissei is explaining it to people who do not understand." That is the feedback we have gotten from temples.

Q. Will this be an ongoing program, or will there be other kinds of programs for LGBTQ outreach?

A. We held a seminar on March 23 to kick off the program. A video of it is available on our YouTube channel. On April 22-23, we will host a booth at the Tokyo Pride Event in Yoyogi Park. That will mark the real launch of our project.

Q. Thank you so much for sharing. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

A. This happened about three years ago, but on the day that I participated

in an LGBTQ study group, a friend's child took his own life. The child was transgender, but I can only guess whether being transgender caused him to choose suicide.

However, what I learned in the study group that night was the difficulty of living that he had, such as not being able to be himself as he was, not being able to understand himself as he was, and not knowing whether or not he could show his true self.

I'm not an LGBTQ person, but even so I can understand the pain of the difficulty of living that he had.

When I realized this, I found that LGBTQ issues were not something outside of my reality that have nothing to do with me. They clearly have something to do with me and everybody. I think both LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ people are living in pain. That is the human condition, and we all have that in common. The fact that I thought that LGBTQ issues were not something outside of my reality is the reason why I became interested in LGBTQ issues.



Many people stopped by the booth to talk with the priests or wanted to take pictures together.

THE ENTRANCE TO MINOBUSAN

By Rev. Sensho Komukai

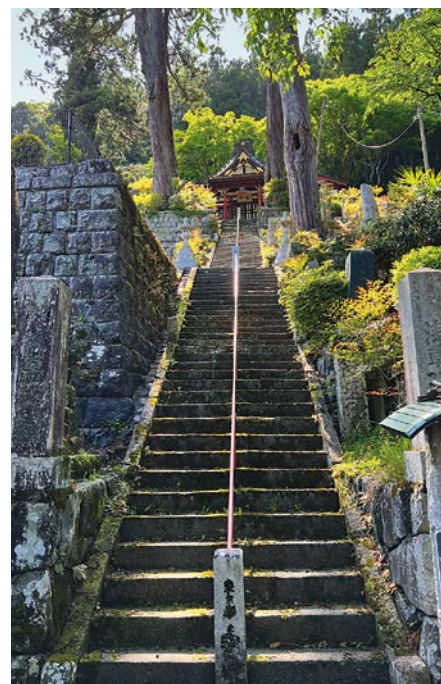
The entrance gate to Minobusan is called "Somon" in Japanese. The *Somon* was constructed in 1665. Why is there a large gate built at this place? Because this is the very spot where Lord Sanenaga Hakii waited to greet Nichiren Shonin, who had departed Kamakura for Minobu days prior. Lord Hakii was greatly delighted to see his master arrive safely, saying to him with profound reverence, "I will devote myself to giving you full support during my lifetime. Do not worry even after I pass away. The land of Minobu is all yours."

Nichiren Shonin left Kamakura on May 12, 1274. After taking a long and arduous journey, he arrived at Mt. Minobu on May 17. Though he appreciated the warm welcome and contributions from Lord Hakii, he was extremely exhausted and sat down on a small rock for a while. The rock is still there, and you can view it through a stone barricade.

You will find steep stone steps to the left side of the main gate. If you go up



the 85 steps, you will see a hall called *Hocchinkaku* at the top. Today, you can get to the temple by car traveling on a well maintained road. However, there was no paved road here during Nichiren Shonin's time. To reach the temple, people had to climb up the hill and take a narrow trail. The *Hocchinkaku* Hall was built on the hilltop in 1650 to commemorate Nichiren Shonin's entrance to Mt. Minobu. The word "*hocchin*" originally means the beginning or the start. This is the place where Nichiren's life on Minobusan began. This is the place where the history of Mt. Minobu, the physical mountain,



became Minobusan, the spiritual abode of Nichiren Shonin for all time. Since that time, 750 years have passed.

Look up at the plaque written in golden letters at the entrance of the *Somon*. It

reads, "*Kai-e-kan*," meaning literally, "the gate revealing the true teaching by merging all the provisional doctrines." Simply put, once you pass through the gate, you will be able to enter the world of the Lotus Sutra taking the best path toward attaining Buddhahood.

Nichiren Shonin stayed at Minobusan for nine years. While there, he was able to read the Lotus Sutra peacefully day and night. He was firmly convinced that Minobusan should be a sacred place equivalent to Mt. Sacred Eagle where Shakyamuni Buddha revealed the Lotus Sutra. "All the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas including other protective deities reside in this mountain. Whenever you come to pay a visit here, your sins accumulated in the past can be extinguished in this life," said our Founder.

The *Somon* is the entrance to Minobusan, the entrance to this sacred place and the entrance to the Lotus Sutra. When you pass through the gate, you should place your palms together in Gassho to show your appreciation and reverence for this place.



The condition of the world today is such that there is a natural yearning for the Bodhi-mind [aspiration for enlightenment]. We are weary of the world as it is. It is obvious that we are in the midst of experiencing a period of major difficulty. The uprising of Hojo Tokisuke on the 11th day of the second month in the ninth year of the Bun'ei Era (1272) was an event of hopelessness and transience like the scattering of flowers in full bloom or silk goods being burned in a large fire. How can anyone not tire of this world after seeing all this?

—Nichiren Shonin, *A Letter to the Ikegami Brothers*,
Kyodai-sho (ST 174)

As we survive the plagues, disasters, and cruelties in our world, we can indeed become weary and wonder if our meager efforts can ever make things better. In these times, we must remember that we are not seeing the world with the Eye of the Buddha. If we see with the Eye of the Buddha, then we realize that “In reality this world is peaceful, it is filled with gods and humans.” Thus revived, we can continue our pure work of leading all beings to their natural yearning for enlightenment.

—Rev. Shinkyō Warner

OUR NEW ODAIMOKU TOWER

By Rev. Shoryo Tarabini

In the summer of 2019, I went on a pilgrimage to Minobusan with a small group of temple members. While there, we visited the Head Temple and were fortunate to be able to meet with the General Administrator of Minobusan Kuonji Temple, Venerable Nichiyu Mochida. We discussed our temple's activities for the 800th anniversary of the birth of Nichiren Shonin, which included planting 800 cherry trees in the city of Cereseto and our dream of erecting a statue of Nichiren Shonin. Rev. Mochida encouraged us and expressed his desire to help. Everyone left the meeting inspired by Rev. Mochida's words and the unforgettable experience of visiting Minobusan.

Upon returning to Italy, one of the members, Dario Bic, decided to devote himself to sculpting an Odaimoku Tower to be enshrined at the entrance of our temple. Dario devoted himself every day for four months to hand-carving the Odaimoku into marble. Upon its completion, Dario brought it to the temple. Soon thereafter, the pandemic broke out, so we were not immediately able to properly erect it. A few months ago, some temple members volunteered to make a proper base and finally erect the marble Odaimoku Tower. They wanted to honor Dario and his offering to Renkoji Temple.

The newly erected Odaimoku Tower is a beautiful addition and an inspiration of faith for all those who see it.

Interestingly, since it has been put up, people who pass by the temple and see it



have started coming to Renkoji Temple. It almost seems as if the Odaimoku Tower is calling people to come and learn about Nichiren Shu Buddhism. We all feel profoundly grateful to Dario for his beautiful and heartfelt offering to our temple and Nichiren Shu as well as to the temple members who built and erected the base for the Odaimoku Tower.



Kenji Miyazawa, A Great Devotee of the Lotus Sutra



By Rev. Kosei Uchida

Kenji Miyazawa (1896-1933), a famous poet and author of children's stories, was born into a rich family in the Tohoku region. “The Night on the Galactic Railroad” is considered to be one of his most noted works. His many works have long been used in textbooks in elementary and junior high schools in Japan. The context of his written work is understood very clearly so that children can recall his many poems with ease.

Known as a great devotee of the Lotus Sutra, his firm faith is shown in his famous poem, “Amenimo Makezu (Unbeaten by the Rain).”

*I will never yield to rain.
I will never yield to wind.
Neither to a heavy snow,
Nor to intense summer heat.
I wish to keep in good health,
free from greed,
Trying not to lose my temper,
Smiling all the time.*

...
*People may call me a blockhead
No one will applaud me
or even detest me.
Such a person I want to be.*

The patience and spiritual strength required in the harsh living conditions in a snowy district are clearly depicted in this poem. He wrote this poem two years before he passed away. It is worthy of note that his deep vows to follow the Way of Never-Despising Bodhisattva to attain Buddhahood are found in the last three lines. No matter how much the Bodhisattva was despised or abused, he never stopped bowing to anyone passing by. Greatly influenced by the Way of Never-Despising Bodhisattva, Miyazawa showed his determination in this poem to bow to people with high regard, no matter what criticism he might receive.

The poem was written down in his pocket notebook. At the very last part of the poem comes “*Namu Limitless-Practice Bodhisattva, Namu Superior-Practice Bodhisattva, Namu Many-Treasures Tathagata, Namu Myoho Renge Kyo, Namu Shakyamuni Buddha,*

Namu Pure-Practice Bodhisattva, Namu Steadily-Established-Practice Bodhisattva.” This shows how deeply he had faith in the Lotus Sutra and how earnestly he wished all the people to attain salvation.

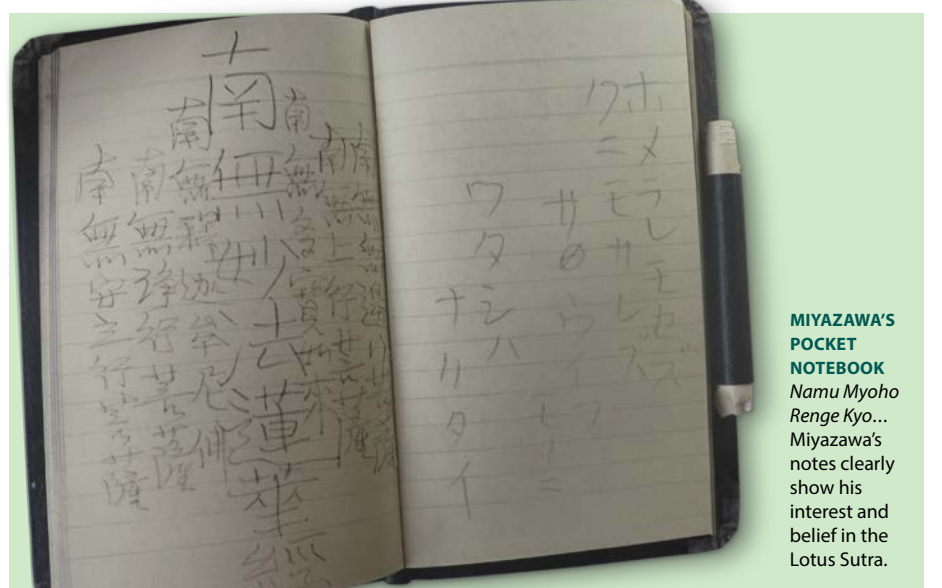
At the age of 18, Miyazawa read the Lotus Sutra. He pleasantly trembled with excitement when reading Chapter 16, “Duration of the Life of the Tathagata.”

As his younger sister, Toshi, succumbed to tuberculosis at the age of 24, his faith in the Lotus Sutra deepened further. His immortal work, “The Night on the Galactic Railroad,” is a story about Giovanni and his friend Campanella who travel the Milky Way Galaxy by train. It is said that Giovanni is Miyazawa

and Campanella is his sister, Toshi. The infinite view of the universe in the Lotus Sutra, where the eternal Buddha resides without end, is expressed in “The Night on the Galactic Railroad.” Hence his works focused more on his prayers to people all over the world with his full love and tenderness.

Miyazawa's dying wish was to print 1,000 copies of the Lotus Sutra and hand them out to his acquaintances. The postscripts read, “All I can do is to send you the Lotus Sutra, wishing you to realize what the Buddha's true intent in the sutra is and to enter into the Unsurpassed Way to Buddhahood.”

This year, 2023, marks the 90th anniversary of Miyazawa's passing.



Catching Up in Japan Post-COVID

By Rev. Kanjo Bassett

Pamela Reaville lived and worked in Japan for over 20 years and has been an international Nichiren Shu member since 2001; first in Tokyo with Rev. Tarabini's International Sunday Service, then with the Seattle Nichiren Buddhist Church, and now with Choeizan Enkyoji Temple in Seattle. With her many friends and deep connection with Nichiren Shu, Pamela would visit Japan every year, traveling to Minobu to celebrate Shingyo Dojo 'graduation' of international priests, or enduring the cold dark February mornings at Hokekyoji Temple to greet priests emerging from Aragyō training back into daily life. With COVID tourist bans finally lifted, she visited in March to see the Tokyo cherry blossoms. It was her first visit in over four years. We caught up with her for an interview as she was visiting Horinouchi Myohoji Temple in Tokyo.

- Q.** You worked in Japan for a long time, are there any post-COVID differences you see in daily life or any other things you've noticed?

A. I'm not sure what I was expecting, but things in Japan are surprisingly normal. The biggest difference I notice is that the overwhelming majority of Japanese people continue to wear masks even outdoors, even though masks are no longer required. This hasn't stopped people from getting out and about, though. The temples, shrines, and parks where I went to see cherry blossoms in Tokyo, Yokohama, and Kamakura were packed, and there were long lines outside many restaurants.

Q. Have you been able to connect with any former group members or Rissho Koseikai friends? Is it as easy to connect as before COVID?

A. I had been planning on going the English Sunday service at Rissho Koseikai on the second Sunday that I was in Japan. Fortunately, I found out in advance that they decided to keep holding their services online permanently. I was able to attend the



Pamela Reaville points out the image of her in the "You're a Buddha" poster at Horinouchi Myohoji Temple.

- meeting on Zoom since I brought a laptop computer with me to Japan, but I never got a chance to see any of them in person.
- I did manage to meet up with other friends in person, including former co-workers and friends from Nichiren Shu. One friend from Nichiren Shu mentioned that they are now doing about the same number of private memorial services at their temple as they did before COVID, but that attendance at public services is way down.
- Q.** You mentioned that Rissho Koseikai members are sticking with online virtual meetings even though all restrictions in Japan have been lifted for some time.
- A.** That's correct. I had a brief online discussion with their international advisor on the subject. In my opinion, online services can be useful when meeting in person is not possible for one reason or the other, but it is not the same as being there in person. It's hard to build a feeling of sangha with people on a computer screen, and chanting at an

- online service is not much better than chanting alone. The advisor stated that they've found that they have steadier participation with online services, because it's easier for people all over the Tokyo area (and the world) to attend. They do occasionally meet in person for special events.
- Q.** Do you see the same trend with Nichiren Shu temples in America or with your volunteer work in Seattle?
- A.** Yes, definitely. I can't speak for all temples in the U.S., but I know that a lot of people who came regularly to Choeizan Enkyoji Temple in Seattle have been coming rarely or not at all since COVID. I'm not sure whether there's still a fear of catching COVID or whether they just got out of the habit of coming. I'm actually one of those people — it's a lot easier to click on a Facebook or Zoom link than to make the effort to go to the temple. And I'm a lot less likely to catch anything. The two shami at our temple recently started an outreach effort to visit members in their homes, which I

think is an excellent idea. They came to my condo shortly before I came to Japan, and I found that chanting with them felt considerably more powerful and meaningful than chanting while watching the service on my computer. I'll be making the effort to go in person, at least once in a while, in the future.

I've noticed a similar situation at the Seattle Aquarium where I volunteer. The aquarium closed twice during the first year of COVID. It's now been open since February 2021. Visitor attendance levels are now close to pre-COVID levels. However, the number of volunteers is way down. Many people did not return after the re-opening, and bringing new volunteers on board has been slow.

Q. Has it been a good trip, and do you anticipate coming again now that the English-language Shingyo Dojo is taking place this fall?

A. It has been a wonderful trip. This is really the first time that I've traveled since COVID, and I was a little reluctant at first, but it has been great. I'd love to come again in the fall, but I don't know if I can manage two trips in one year.



VISITING TEMPLES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Rev. Zedo Yamanaka

The All Japan Nichiren Youth Priest Association, Zennissei, conducts training for young priests to deepen their understanding of overseas propagation.



As part of this, we visit overseas sites and make videos of their situation and publish them on YouTube.

Last fall, I visited Kanonji Temple in Kuala Lumpur and visited Ichinenji Temple in Penang.

The Malaysian temple members were very bright and cheerful, and they welcomed me kindly. Malays, Indians, and Chinese live in Malaysia, but most of the temple members were Chinese. There were also many people who had converted to Nichiren Shu in search of correctness from other Odaimoku chanting groups.

First of all, temple members gathered because a priest was coming from Japan. I held a memorial service, and we chanted the Lotus Sutra and Odaimoku together. Also, there is a culture in which members can receive many merits by offering food to priests, so I ate a lot and talked a lot.

What I felt most through such relationships was that temple members were active. They are actively involved in the management of the temple and voluntarily conduct chanting sessions. Seeing that, I could feel that the Buddha is an important existence and that this temple is an important place for them to belong.

While we were talking, I asked them if they had any problems continuing their faith in Malaysia. One follower answered, "I would like to study Buddhism more. However, I am troubled by the lack of an introductory explanation of the Lotus Sutra in English." He wanted to learn more and wanted to be able to share the Nichiren Shu teachings with others. In response, Zennissei is now working to create teaching materials.

There are sanghas of Nichiren Shu Buddhism all over the world who share the same thoughts. The value of that

community is enormous. I also felt that the local believers wanted more contact with Japanese priests.

Now we can connect online and share our stories through video. It is important to make more use of modern technology to deepen mutual understanding. I feel hope for the future that our faith will deepen through this.

I would like to continue to visit each propagation point in the future.





**Busshinji Nichiren Buddhist
Association of Sri Lanka**
*Gemunu Ranasoora,
Chairperson*
New Year Celebrations

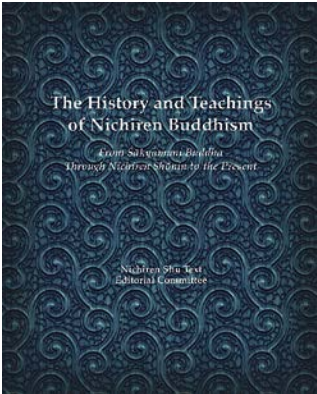
The Nichiren Shu Buddhist Association of Colombo, Sri Lanka celebrated the Sinhalese and Tamil New Year on Sunday, April 16.



Sri Lanka has been facing many problems, so members gathered to chant and pray for a peaceful year ahead. A Dharma talk was given online by Rev. Ervinna Myoufu from Indonesia, who is the supporting priest of this association. The group meets regularly to enhance their faith in the Lotus Sutra.

Nichiren Mission of Hawaii
Rev. Shokai Kanai
**New Textbook for
Thursday Night Class**

Starting May 4, 2023, we will begin studying with a new textbook called “The History and Teachings of Nichiren Buddhism” by the Nichiren Shu Text Editorial Committee. If you are interested in joining our study class, please purchase a copy of the textbook from Amazon (\$21.11) and join Bishop Kanai every first and second Thursday night at 7:00 p.m. on Zoom. The textbook is filled with maps, diagrams, and pictures which highlight the lives of Shakyamuni Buddha and Nichiren Shonin. Bishop Kanai has been offering these classes since April 2019. Before the pandemic, we had in-person classes in the mission library. Since the start of the pandemic, classes have been held on the Internet using Zoom. The pandemic



encouraged us to adapt and look beyond our traditional propagation methods to reach those who are interested in the Lotus Sutra and Nichiren Shonin. We look forward to seeing all of you! Please join us in this study class! (Zoom Meeting ID 722 0124 8932; Password: 4V35nU)

**Congratulations,
Shami Shougou Kini!**

The Nichiren Shu Head Office recently informed us that Shami Shougou Kini passed the chanting and standard written examination administered late in 2022. He is now qualified to participate in the upcoming 2023 Shingyo Dojo being held in the fall to attain full ordination as a Nichiren Shu priest. Shami Shougou continues to work hard towards fulfilling his goals to serve the Hilo Nichiren Mission. On behalf of all his supporters in Hawaii and around the world, Ganbare! (Good luck)

**Nichiren Shu
Buddhist Temple of U.K.**
Shami Kanse Capon
**Lotus Sutra
Study Group Session**

Our Temple’s Lotus Sutra Study Group has been running for well over a year now, meeting every other week on Friday evenings. The Study Group started its

life as a Book Club, in which we read and discussed Gene Reeves’ “Stories of the Lotus Sutra.” The aim was to help people access the Lotus Sutra in a way that could inform and enrich their practice, rather than being merely an intellectual pursuit. Having whetted their appetites, we embarked on our journey of reading, discussing, and studying the Lotus Sutra directly. We are fortunate that it is now easy to find good summaries of the Lotus Sutra in English as well as books which explain the main points of each chapter. However, the sutras are traditionally read and studied out loud and within a community of practitioners.

Reading the Lotus Sutra directly as a group practice enables us to connect with and immerse ourselves in the world of the Lotus Sutra — to taste it and to feel it in a way that you can’t by just reading a summary. I remember the Lotus Sutra classes Rev. Tsukamoto gave at our temple. With his explanation and commentary, as well as through questions and discussion, and with additional insights from our congregation, the Lotus Sutra really came to life for me, and I was able to begin to have glimpses of understanding of what had previously seemed like an impenetrable text. The deep and profound, and subtle truth contained within it, and lessons concerning a way of life waiting to be found in it seemed accessible for the first time.

After reading Reeves’ book, rather than simply moving on to another book, I wanted to use the meetings to help our congregation — both those who attended Rev. Tsukamoto’s classes and newer members — connect with the Lotus Sutra in the same way. In each session, people take turns reading sections of the Sutra out loud, and we study it together, discussing the meaning, the implications, and relating it to our own lives. I provide commentary and background based on what my master shared with me, and what

his master shared with him. These things cannot be found in any book. I also do my best to study traditional Nichiren Shu commentaries on the Lotus Sutra and use these to provide further insight. At my master’s recommendation, I have been especially drawing upon Kobayashi Ichiro and Kubota Shobun’s excellent “Hokekyo Dai-Koza” in 12 volumes. Attendees log in from all over the U.K., France, Holland, Canada, Italy, and China to join the study group. We have basically been the same group of dedicated practitioners since we began. I think we must have come together because of what we call “en” in Buddhism — a previous connection. After around a year and a half, we arrived at Chapter 16. My hope is that these classes will help people connect with the Buddha’s profound wisdom and deep compassion and help them on their own journeys of enlightenment.

Kannon Temple of Nevada
Rev. Shoda Kanai
Crystals and Dancing Rainbows



Kannon Temple has windows that only face south towards a busy street. The windows do not open, so it is difficult to get flowing air and sunlight into the interior. In addition to continually offering chanting and prayers, I use the power of crystals, especially one shaped like a ball, to bring good energy to the temple. My mother would always hang crystal balls on the windows. She said the rainbows that formed as the sunlight passed through the crystals, were magical and help purify the room. It also brought good fortune. The greater amount of little rainbows on the wall, the greater the fortune. Here at the temple, I hang a crystal ball, especially during the winter months as the sun is to the south, to bring forth good energy and purification. It is pleasant to see the little rainbows dancing on the back wall and moving around the main hall as the sun heads from east to west. You can try this in your home. Use fishing line to hang a crystal in your window, and let the little rainbows dance in your room. Hopefully, this will help purify your house as well!



Calendar for June – July 2023

JUNE 13-18	Minobusan Kaibyaku-e, Commemoration Day of Nichiren Shonin Entering Minobusan	JUNE 25	Nitcho Shonin Memorial Day
		JULY 13-16	Obon (Western Calendar)

Nichiren Shu News c/o The Head Office of Nichiren Shu, 1-32-15 Ikegami, Ota-ku, Tokyo 146-8544, Japan; Tel. +81-3-3751-7181, E-mail: editor-nichirensnunews@nichiren.or.jp *Nichiren Shu News* was founded by the Nichiren Shu Overseas Propagation Promotion Association (NOPPA), Nichiyu Mochida, *President*. Funding is provided by NOPPA and the Head Office of Nichiren Shu, Eshin Tanaka, *Chief Administrator*.
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