

# Nichiren Shu News

Published by the Head Office of Nichiren Shu & NOPPA

No. 241

December 1, 2020

1

## Second Annual Interfaith Mountain Training

Rev. Kanjin Cederman

On September 19, we conducted the Second Annual Interfaith Mountain Training on a sacred mountain here in Washington State. This was established by our *Hokke Shugen*, Lotus Sutra Mountain Practice group. Although this is an ancient practice, even in our modern times many people wish to connect their faith with nature and experience Buddhist practice through such a physical experience. We had a large number of people sign up from many traditions, even during this COVID-19 pandemic. Then, due to regulations, we did not know if this event would happen. At the time there were many wildfires in Washington, Oregon and California. The air quality was terrible because of all the smoke. I prayed every day that conditions would allow us to have this practice. On the day before the training, it rained slightly, and this improved air quality enough to allow us to go.

As we see how Buddhism adapts to the different cultures and geographies of the lands outside of Japan, it is amazing how these practices and concepts are accepted and grow. I was moved to create this training because of my deep respect for the purification we find in nature

and how modern people are missing this connection to the land in which we establish the Lotus Sutra.

You may believe that Kishimojin is a deity found in Japanese Buddhism. However, belief in her originated from an ancient cult found in India. She is also present in the legends of the indigenous people of the Americas. The mountain on which we trained has been shared in the story of the "Basket Carrying Ogress" common to the folklore of many Northwest coastal tribes. It too is indeed the home of Kishimojin.

Buddhism, especially the Lotus Sutra, brings teachings and peace to the lands in which it is supported by those who believe in it. The Lotus Sutra is also delivered to the local deities of the land. We know that the local Ogress has received the teaching of the Lotus Sutra, as she is now a protector of the practitioners of the Lotus Sutra here in Washington State.

The whole mountain hike took about five hours to go up and another five hours to come back down. We wore all white clothing to symbolize entering the

spiritual world. We entered the mountain carrying the special Kishimojin statue given to our temple by Onjuin Temple in Japan. She was carried in a portable shrine that the practitioners took turns



to carry and protect. We also carried a large Ofuda tablet and took turns carrying it.

Upon entering the spiritual world, we walked through the ten worlds of *Ichinen Sanzen*, three thousand worlds contained in a single moment. This allowed each person to experience with their whole body and mind this essential concept in Nichiren Buddhist practice. We endure through the worlds and investigate our own lives as we move towards the Buddha World. We endure and accomplish the goal together.

As we finished praying beside the sacred mountain lake, we began our way back to the *Saha*, the world of endurance. Our prayer was answered as it began to rain heavily. We saw this as a result of our practice and prayer, because it helped extinguish many of the fires across the state, purifying the air from the smoke that was making many people sick, and allowing the sky and weather to become peaceful again.

We look forward to re-establishing these practices on other sacred mountains like Shichimensan. We can learn the true concept of the Eternal Buddha's Pure Land through such experiences. It allows many people to learn about our faith and practice experientially. I hope you will join us!

## New Look for the Nichiren Shu International Website

International Section, Head Office

Like any media, such as newspapers or television, a website must be constantly refreshed and updated to be useful and relevant. When it is not updated, it risks being ignored, becoming an embarrassment, or even worse, misleading people with out-of-date information. The Internet has taken over so much of what traditional publishing used to do, but we now find ourselves in an era where the COVID-19 crisis has upended so much of daily life, from mundane tasks such as mailing newsletters overseas to temple meetings. Everything is now centered online. Like it or not, the Internet is more important than ever.

The Nichiren Shu Japanese website launched in 1995, and there have been many updates and design refreshes along the way to its present version. The Nichiren Shu English language site has a much shorter history that started in 2012. It was preceded by the Nichiren Shu International Center website. There have actually been relatively few changes to the site—until now.

The Nichiren Shu Head Office International Section is pleased to announce a major upgrade to the English website with a new design that matches the Japanese website while adding new features. Here's an overview:

**NEW LOOK** The first implementation of the website matched the multilingual pamphlets highlighting key Buddhist concepts such as Compassion, Peace, Hope, and Patience. The website was secondary to published materials. This

is no longer possible. Instead of a print focus, the new look aims to match the Japanese site design which highlights announcements and news, delivering the rich content of the Japanese site to the world audience in a timely fashion.



**ANNOUNCEMENTS** The new home page features the announcement function of the Japanese page, offering announcements from the Head Office and a fuller offering of Nichiren Shu Activities and campaign events such as the 800th Anniversary of Nichiren Shonin.

**NICHIREN SHU NEWS BLOG** A unique feature for the English site is the Nichiren Shu News blog. This is a selection of Nichiren Shu News articles with enhanced content hosted on a new page. The purpose of this blog is not only to highlight important Nichiren Shu News content but also to expand it beyond the printed page with video, podcasts and visual content that tell our stories better than before. This also allows us to tell new and different kinds of stories that were not previously possible on the printed page.

This is where you come in. We want to hear about what kinds of stories and news are important to you and your Nichiren Shu practice. Over time, we are planning to expand our website features to include social media support like Facebook and Twitter to stay connected to the Nichiren Shu international community. Shared experiences in these challenging times can inspire us to overcome them in a positive way.





*Being uninformed, all people, laymen as well as clergy, are unable to distinguish between right and wrong. They just depend on the man, not upon the dharma. They follow the evil dharma in which many people put faith, even if they know it is an evil one, and they do not believe in the True Dharma advocated by one person without followers. It is sad that most people remain wandering in the world of illusion. It is regrettable that these sinful people, regardless of how good or bad they behave, are unable to escape the chain of birth and death.*

—Nichiren Shonin,  
Shugo Kokka-ron (ST 15)  
A Treatise on Protecting the Nation

Chapter 23 of the Lotus Sutra teaches, “The person who keeps this sutra is superior to any other living being.” But this is not the superiority that the world recognizes, the superiority of wealth, power or fame. Our superiority is the superiority of the Lotus Sutra itself, the superior teaching that all beings deserve respect and will become Buddhas. It can be difficult to find what to do as our fellow beings create so much calamity in their devotion to the evil teachings of fear, greed and selfishness. But no matter what we do, it is crucial that we maintain faith in our Buddha nature, and dedicate our superiority to the benefit of all beings.

—Rev. Shinkyō Warner

## Buddhism Q&A

### Shukubo and Omiage

Japanese pilgrimages are never just about visiting a temple or shrine. They are total experiences that mix religious duty with fun, good food, and life on the road with fellow human beings, where all the vexing problems of any given moment ripen over time into warm treasured shared memories.

*Shukubo* is a lodging for pilgrims attached to a famous temple or shrine, but not all temples with a ‘bo’ character in the name indicate a lodging. One example is Hongyōji Daibo in Ikegami Honmonji where Nichiren Shonin passed away. In this case, *bo* was attached to the name to indicate it was the former residence of Lord Munenaka Ikegami.

*Shukubo* flourished in Japan towards the end of the Edo period and Nichiren temples were no exception. In the Minobusan area alone, there were about 180 *shukubo*. They were spread out far and wide compared to what you can see today clustered around Kuonji temple. Since the late Edo and early Meiji days, the number of Minobusan *shukubo* has slowly declined to the current 32. Fewer pilgrims visit them, and fewer people are left in rural areas to take care of them.

An interesting side story is that temples and shrines in rural areas had many *shukubo*, while famous temples in big cities like Ikegami Honmonji had few, if any, which makes sense as people

of those times wanted to travel, and this was encouraged by government officials, because traveling people meant money flowing into local economies.

Which brings us to *Omiage*, the ubiquitous souvenir stores that line the approach to any famous temple or shrine. Pilgrims buying presents supported both merchants and the temple as the temple charged rent. Edo merchants also had a keen sense of ‘branding’ which you can see today in all kinds of famous local foods and souvenirs, but there was also a sense of sharing, because not everybody could afford travel. Buying ‘*omiage*,’ as the sound of the name, but not the kanji characters, suggests, was a way to share the travel experience with family, friends, and neighbors, who then returned the favor, and the fun, when they in turn traveled on a pilgrimage. Sharing good things around to all is Buddhist ‘*en*’ in action, even when it involves money and commerce.

—Rev. Kanjo Bassett



## Protective Deities in Nichiren Shu (4) – Indra

By Rev. Sensho Komukai

Indra was a violent god of thunder who fought against Asura demons. While Shakyamuni was practicing the Bodhisattva Way, Indra assumed various forms to test His resolution toward perfect enlightenment. But after the Buddha attained Buddhahood, Indra, deeply impressed by the Buddha, became one of the two main protective deities, together with the King of the Brahma Heaven. The first chapter of the Lotus Sutra, Introductory, shows that Indra

with twenty thousand attendants was waiting for the Buddha to expound the great teaching of the wonderful Dharma.

Our Founder Nichiren Shonin often referred to Indra in his treatises and letters. In his *Remonstrance with Bodhisattva Hachiman*, he said, “It is preached in the Lotus Sutra, chapter 14, Peaceful Practices, ‘Various gods always protect the one who practices for the sake of the Dharma day and night.’ This means that the great King of the Brahma Heaven, Indra, the sun and moon, the Four Heavenly Kings and others will never fail to protect those who say ‘*Namu Myōhō Renge Kyo*.’” Nichiren Shonin faced many difficulties in his life. He must have prayed to Indra to expel calamities.

The most famous temple enshrining Indra in Japan is Daikyoji Temple in Shibamata, Tokyo. According to the temple history, the great Mandala depicting Indra, which our Founder carved into a woodblock was missing for a long time. The ninth resident minister of the temple, Nichikyo Shonin, happened to find it on the ridge of a roof of the main hall during repairs in 1779 on the day of the Koshin, the fifty-seventh day of the Chinese sexagenary cycle. It has a length of two meters, a width of 45 centimeters, and a thickness of 1.5 centimeters. Shakyamuni Buddha and Many Treasures Buddha, attended by four bodhisattvas, are described on both sides of *Namu Myōhō Renge Kyo* with



phrases from the Medicine-King chapter of the Lotus Sutra, “This sutra is a good medicine for the diseases of the people in the universe. The patient who hears this sutra will be cured of their disease at once.” A figure of Indra with a fierce facial expression, a

sword in his right hand, and an open palm of the left hand, is depicted on a lower part of the Mandala.

In the 1780s, a great famine, accompanied by plague, spread throughout the country in the Tenmei era of the Edo period. Nichikyo Shonin felt a sense of imminent danger and walked through the Edo towns carrying the wooden Mandala on his back and gave people suffering on the streets a talisman, telling them, “Grain-like pills are contained in the talisman. Drink them and you will recover from illness.” The pills brought about miraculous cures.

Many people who had heard about the good reputation of the pills surged into Daikyoji Temple to get the remedy. Still today, on the day of Koshin, which comes around just once in 60 days, people have free access to the Indra



In the Tenmei era, Nichikyo Shonin would hand out talisman envelopes, containing grain-like pills.

Hall at Daikyoji Temple. Visitors from all over the country come to see the wooden Mandala with their own eyes and revere it.



Daikyoji Temple enshrines a great Mandala depicting Indra engraved by Nichiren Shonin.



Indra, a violent god of thunder, became an important protective deity.



# DEEPENING TIES WITH OUR FOUNDER AT RYUKOJI TEMPLE



By Rev. Kosei Uchida

An old monk once said that something unusual would happen in the memorial year of the Tatsunokuchi Persecution. An unanticipated situation did occur this year in the 750th anniversary. People all over the world have been suffering from visceral anxiety due to the COVID-19 coronavirus peril.

Our Founder was captured at his hermitage to be escorted to Tatsunokuchi in 1271. On the 12th day of September of this year, 2020, I walked from Ankokuronji Temple in Kamakura to Ryukoji Temple. I stopped in front of the Hachiman Shrine to imagine how 750 years ago Nichiren Shonin let out a yell

of anger, "I wonder what has happened to the King of the Brahma Heaven, Indra, the sun and moon, the four Heavenly Kings, Goddess Amaterasu, and Great Bodhisattva Hachiman? Did they all break their vows to the Buddha to protect those who practice the Lotus Sutra and have thus abandoned them?" His outcry led to the miracle at the Tatsunokuchi execution ground.

I left Kamakura at 9:30 a.m. and arrived at Ryukoji Temple by noon, walking about 14,000 steps over the seven-kilometer distance. It was a good opportunity to experience going on foot to understand what it must have felt like for our Founder who was led on horseback through the streets.

The memorial service at Ryukoji Temple was held after scaling back the original plan. Attendees sat well away from each other with their masks on. Where can we honor the memory of our Founder who faced the biggest crisis in his life 750 years ago? There is a Dharma stupa, a square pole, commemorating the 750th anniversary of Tatsunokuchi Persecution, around which a white cloth is wound. The cloth rope called "otazuna" extended into the main hall of the temple to tie with a hand of the stature of Nichiren Shonin. By holding the "otazuna" rope when entering the main hall, you are shaking hands with Nichiren Shonin. In this age of uneasy atmosphere, with all the spread of remote

online services, it is a precious experience to touch him and feel bound with rigid ties with him in the very place where Nichiren Shonin was almost executed. I am sure that the thread of his life is still sustained.



## SHIZUOKA AIR RAID MEMORIAL

During World War II, American planes bombed Shizuoka City on June 19, 1945. The raids killed about 2,000 people in the city. At the top of Mt. Shizuhata, near the Sengen Shrine, there is a statue of Kannon dedicated to the memory of those casualties. Next to the statue is a stone monument for the memory of the airmen who died when two bombers crashed during the raid. Since 1946, there has been a joint memorial service for both Japanese and American casualties of the war. Many surviving families and groups of soldiers from Yokota Airbase usually join the service.

I learned about the memorial service in Shizuoka when I was Bishop of Hawaii and organized a joint memorial service for Japanese and American casualties of the Pearl Harbor attack, since there had been no memorial for the Japanese servicemen who died. I was able to persuade the Consulate General of Japan in Hawaii and U.S. Navy Region Hawaii to sponsor the service, and we held the first one on December 8, 2016. Through those events, I met Dr. Hiroya Sugano who organized and paid for a memorial service every year for all casualties of the Shizuoka City bombing. I was invited to the service for the first time in 2018.

This year is the 75th anniversary of the bombing. I heard that the service for 2020 was canceled because of COVID-19. I felt sorry, but I decided I should go



there by myself and make prayers for them. I asked a sales clerk at the Sengen Shrine how to get to the summit. She tried to stop me from going since the ground was muddy from heavy rain. However, I believed that the Buddha would lead me if it was possible. I went up to the summit while chanting the Odaimoku. I could not wear my minister's robe, because I was holding an umbrella in my hand while climbing. The higher I got, the weaker the rain got. Finally, I arrived where the statue and the monument were. I chanted the Lotus Sutra and the Odaimoku there and prayed for all casualties of Japan and the United States 75 years ago. I pray such casualties never happen again.

—Rev. Chishin Hirai

## IN MEMORY OF MY OLDER BROTHER



Rev. Hoyu Maruyama, my dearest older brother, passed away in the evening on April 4th of this year. He was intelligent and clever, keeping a step ahead of the times. He knew many things but never put on airs. He always answered kindly no matter what I asked him. I have been entirely relying on him since childhood. He was a true gentleman, always patient and honest. But he was so strict with himself that he gave his work priority over to his health. As a result, when it was found that he had gallbladder cancer, it was so late that he was told that he had only six months to live.

He chose to receive home treatment. He attended to his temple duties even more diligently, though he must have put up with intolerable pain. Mercilessly, the cancer spread to other parts of his body. Only three months after the cancer was discovered, the heart-rending

parting came all of a sudden. He departed quietly and peacefully, without even saying goodbye to me.

There has not yet been a formal funeral because of the coronavirus-related confusion. One day, Rev. Kosei Uchida, who took over the position of chief priest of Sempukuji Temple from my brother, brought a copy of Nichiren Shu News to me. It was the last thing I would

have expected, that the death of my brother would be reported in the English newspaper of Nichiren Shu.

On reflection, he was very fond of reading and writing. I am sure that the editorial work with Nichiren Shu News, which he was engaged in for about 30 years, fully satisfied him, because he was able to bring his abilities into full play through his vast knowledge. He would be happy if you could share the memorable experiences on the editorial committee with him and keep a memory of how actively he worked there. He would often say to me, "Suppose anyone mourns you with great respect and solemnity when you die. It clearly indicates that you have lived your life properly." His words are inscribed indelibly on my mind. I pray that his soul may rest in peace.

—Shoko Hasegawa,  
Sempukuji Temple, Yokosuka, Japan



## TEMPLE EVENTS

### Nichiren Mission of Hawaii

Rev. Shokai Kanai

#### 2020 Pilgrimage Canceled

We were planning to go on a pilgrimage to Japan in October. Several people were interested in this event. Then just as Rev. Kanai was about to publicize the itinerary in March, the coronavirus attacked the whole world, and the tour was canceled.

We are still hoping to have our pilgrimage in 2022. If you are interested, please contact Rev. Kanai and tell him any places you would like to visit, besides the religious pilgrimage sites. The tour will include visiting Nichiren Shonin's memorial temples, like Minobusan Kuonji, Ikegami Honmonji, and Tanjoji.

Would you like to visit Kyoto, ride the bullet train, or stay in a Japanese inn with hot springs? Please contact Rev. Kanai and share your suggestions.

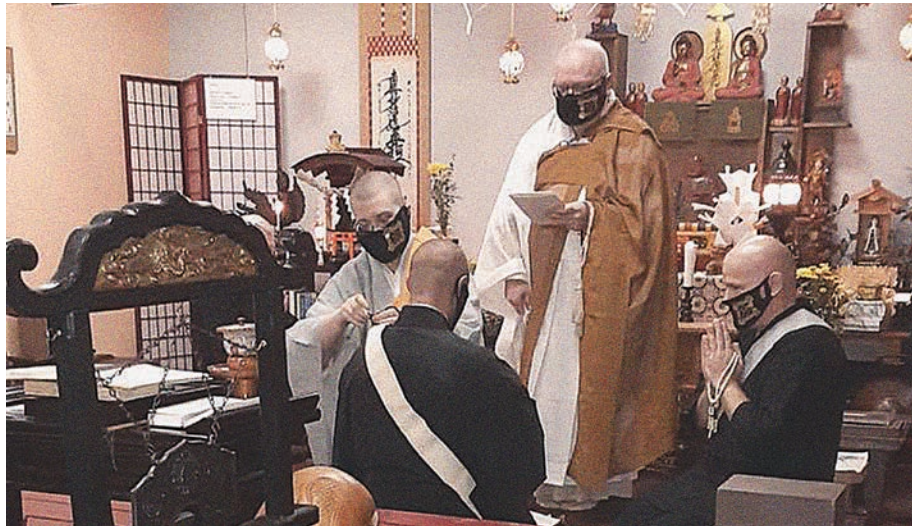
Let's make this not just a pilgrimage but also a fun and interesting tour!

#### 739th Oeshiki

We held our annual Oeshiki Service on Sunday, October 11.

Oeshiki refers to the day when our Founder, Nichiren Shonin passed away on October 13, 1282 at Ikegami Honmonji Temple. Legend says that cherry blossoms bloomed, out of season, in the yard of Lord Ikegami, where Nichiren Shonin passed away. This is the reason why we decorate the altar with hand-made paper pink and white cherry blossoms. Thank you to the volunteers who took their time to place the cherry blossoms on the *mando*, lantern pagoda, on the stage this year.

Our Founder has opened our eyes to the Buddha's true teachings as expounded in the Lotus Sutra. We hold the Oeshiki Service every year to remember him and express our gratitude for his leadership and devotion.



### Nichiren Buddhist Sangha of Greater New England

Shami Ryoen Drewello

#### Tokudo Ceremony Using Zoom

On October 17, a *Tokudo* Ceremony took place at Kosenji Temple, Nichiren Buddhist Sangha of Greater New England for Keith Kreyling, who has been a member and lay leader in our sangha. This ceremony is where a novice takes vows to become a priest.

The service was conducted online using Zoom with Rev. Ryuoh Faulconer initiating as head minister, supported by Revs. Myokei Caine-Barrett of Myokenji Temple of Houston, Shoda Kanai of Kannon Temple of Nevada, and Kanjin Cederman of Enkyoji Temple of Seattle.

Keith has been a member of our sangha since 2015. Shortly after joining us, he started training as a lay leader. My new Shami brother was given the name "Ryusen." "Ryu" means dragon and comes from his master, Rev. Ryuoh Faulconer. "Sen" comes from the name of our temple, Kosenji, which was taken from "Kosen Rufu" reflecting the mission of our temple to widely proclaim the teaching of the Lotus Sutra.

Shami Ryusen has been a great asset to our temple, helping with temple finances as well as heading up our Recovery Dharma

Sangha, which offers mindfulness and meditation teaching to people who are in recovery from addiction. We are looking forward to seeing how widely our newest "dragon" will be able to help propagate the Wonderful Dharma. Though we are separated by the COVID-19 pandemic, we are still a Dharma family. Thank you to everyone who participated and witnessed the ceremony!



### Nichiren Buddhist Kannon Temple of Nevada

By Mrs. Kumiko Kanai

#### American Phone Scam from Family Member in Distress?

The other day, I heard from a friend of mine who is a widow living alone in Las Vegas. With the turmoil caused by COVID-19, she has been staying home most of the time. She had an experience with a phone scam like many that have increased lately. One day she got a call from her "grandchild."

Scammer: "Hi, Grandma!"

Friend: "Hello!"

Scammer: "Grandma, how are you?"

Friend: "I'm fine."

Scammer: "Grandma, I borrowed money from a friend but I just can't pay it back. Can you help me?"

Friend: "I can hardly hear you. What is your name?"

Scammer: "Sean."

Friend: "Sean? I think you have the wrong number, let me call you back."

The scammer then seemed to have slammed the phone down.

My friend felt that the voice on the other end sounded like an echo and her grandson's name was different. She then realized that it was a phone scam involving family members.

I suggested that she add a caller ID to the phone, so that she could tell who is calling and not to pick up the phone if she doesn't recognize the caller. If someone wants to reach her, they would certainly leave a message!

Everyone, please be careful about phone scams involving people impersonating your family members. In these trying times, crime escalates in different ways!

### Renkoji Temple, Italy

Rev. Shoryo Tarabini

#### New Decree

A new decree was issued by the government regarding COVID-19, since a second wave has been spreading throughout Europe. For the time being, for everyone's health and safety, we are required to limit visitors to the temple to no more than five people at a time, excluding myself.

In light of this, please contact the temple to make a reservation before coming. In order to accommodate everyone, I will be conducting up to three services each Sunday with up to five participants per service at 10:00, 14:00, and 16:00.

The 10:00 service each Sunday will be shared live on Facebook.

Please remember to make a reservation before attending the service.

Thank you so much for your understanding and cooperation.

### Enkyoji Temple Seattle

Mrs. Mamiko Cederman

#### Online Sermon

On Saturday, October 3, an online sermon was conducted by Rev. Kanto Tsukamoto, who is Rev. Cederman's master. Rev. Tsukamoto gave the sermon from his temple in Saga Prefecture, Japan and talked about "The Way of the Bodhisattva." His sermon lasted 20 minutes. A question-and-answer session followed that lasted 40 minutes. About 20 participants logged in from around the U.S. and Europe.

Because of the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, all of our services and sermons are still being held online.



## Calendar for December 2020 – January 2021

**DEC 8** Jodo-e (Enlightenment Day) commemorating the day when the Buddha attained Enlightenment.

**DEC 31** New Year's Eve Service; Bell Ringing Ceremony held throughout Japan.

**JAN 1** Memorial Service for Nichiji Shonin, one of the six main disciples of Nichiren Shonin.

**JAN 13** Minobusan Opening Ceremony for the New Year at Kuonji Temple

**JAN 21** Memorial Service for Nichiro Shonin, one of the six main disciples of Nichiren Shonin

**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, Hosei Nakagawa, *Chief Administrator*.

**Editorial Board** Sensho Komukai, *Editor*; Shinkyo Warner, *Assistant Editor*; Kosei Uchida, *Staff Writer*; Sandra Seki, *Advisor*.

**Art Director** Alan Rowe