

Nichiren Shu News

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PUUNENE NICHIREN MISSION 100TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION



By Rev. Kanjo Bassett

The Puunene Nichiren Mission marked the 100th anniversary of its founding on the morning of November 5 with a celebratory ceremony officiated by Bishop Shokai Kanai, former Puunene Nichiren Mission Resident Priest Rev. Tetsudo Takasaki, and Rev. Josho Yamamura. The ceremony was followed by a buffet lunch on the temple grounds.

Around 40 members and guests attended the ceremony, including Rev. Keiji Oshima of Nichiren Shu Head Office's International Section, who was there representing Chief Administrator Rev. Eshin Tanaka and delivered his message which stressed, "As the unprecedented effects of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to ravage society, the hearts of people living today are undergoing a transformation. Now is the time for us, as the youngest followers of our founder Nichiren Shonin, to be a Nichiren Shu that can stand and respond to the 'worries, pain, and sorrow of people' in this COVID-transformed society. The tasks put off 'to be tackled later' must be tackled now. It is our responsibility to pass on the thread of teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha, the Lotus Sutra, and Nichiren Shonin,

threads spun by our predecessors, to society and to the future."

Rev. Oshima also bestowed awards from the Archbishop of Nichiren Shu, the Honorable Rev. Nissho Kanno, to members Mitsue Sato, Iwao Sato, and Stella Yamamoto in recognition of their dedication and service to the mission.

Other distinguished guests included Rev. Riju Kumazawa of Myorinji Temple in Kanagawa, whose father, Rev. Kaiju Kumazawa, was the ninth Chief Priest

and served from 1985-1995, and other Buddhist priests from the region: Rev. John Hara from the Lahaina Jodo Mission, Rev. Ai Hironaka from the Wailuku Hongwanji Mission.

The image of life in Hawaii for many people is a carefree, easy existence but the history of Puunene Nichiren Mission has been anything but. It was originally founded by the efforts of Rev. Genyu Oba, who came to Maui in 1918 and established a temporary place in the

town of Wailuku in November 1920. Land for the temple was later donated by William McGerrow, and the mission was permanently established on November 11, 1922 from the fundraising efforts of temple members Iju Tomooka, Eikichi Yamada, and Jukichi Kawakami. A statue of Lord Kato Kiyomasa was donated by Honmyoji Temple in Kumamoto, Japan, which had special meaning as many Japanese immigrants at that time were from the Kumamoto region.

The mission was closed by military order in December 1941 and was without a priest for 18 years. During this time, the mission was taken care of by Tokichi Suzuki and Jukichi Kawakami. Propagation efforts recovered after the war starting with the fifth Chief Priest Rev. Taimyo Shinkai. Fire destroyed the temple in 1975 during the time of the sixth Chief Priest, Nun Myocho Shinkai. Fortunately, the temple was quickly rebuilt.

It is through the efforts of the mission's members and resident priests through the years that have allowed the mission to prosper. We sincerely hope that the Puunene Nichiren Mission continues to flourish and remains an important foundation in the lives of the members into the future.



COMMENTS ON THE PUUNENE NICHIREN MISSION'S 100TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

"I think that the reason why we have accomplished a glorious history of 100 years on the island of Maui is due to the great cooperation of successive resident priests, the board officers, and, above all, each of the members of the mission. My time at the mission was short, but the magnificent view of Mount Haleakala, the orange sunset over the ocean, the whales of Lahaina blowing on the tides, the big wave of Hookipa, the pure air of the Kura, the smell of sugar cane fields, and the picturesque golf course... all of these are treasures to me. The time that I spent at the Puunene Nichiren Mission was a radiant experience."

—Rev. Dairyo Tomikawa,
Former Resident Priest

"It was hard work, but also a fun, fulfilling, and memorable experience. The Puunene Nichiren Mission is very special to me, and I want to continue to support you as much as I can. Congratulations on your 100th anniversary, I sincerely hope and pray future members will welcome the 200th anniversary."

—Rev. Tetsudo Takasaki,
Former Resident Priest

"I was so pleasantly surprised by all the preparations done before I arrived. It's a tribute to the members who have taken care of the Puunene Nichiren Mission these past several years without a resident priest, just like the members who took care of the mission for 18 years without a resident priest during (and after) the war."

—Bishop Shokai Kanai

"It is difficult work for the members to maintain the mission without a resident priest, but I endeavor to help out and come regularly as long as I am in Hawaii."

—Rev. Josho Yamamura

"I can finally get some sleep now that this important week is successfully concluded. I'm so happy that so many came today and are enjoying themselves. It would be perfect if we only had a resident priest too. I'm not a very religious person, but my father-in law helped rebuild this mission. His wife Stella received a reward for all of her hard work. I felt I could not stand by and watch. I had to help out too. It has been 20 years now, and I'm so happy to have made this connection with Nichiren Shu."

—Yaeko Yamamoto,
Puunene Nichiren Mission,
President of the Board of Directors

"I'm very relieved that everything turned out successful and went smoothly. The Puunene Nichiren Mission is very special to me, because both of my parents were resident priests for the mission. There was a long period of time when I was unable to help the mission, but now that I am retired I have more time to devote to the mission. I want to be hopeful and positive, but I think it is increasingly important to teach younger people about the importance of Nichiren Shonin's teachings and the meaning of the Lotus Sutra. That way, they will come to understand this is a religion for daily life."

—Diane Omura,
Puunene Nichiren Mission,
Vice President and Secretary



OESHIKI FESTIVITIES AND MANDO PARADE RETURN

By Rev. Kanjo Bassett

After the COVID-19 pandemic forced an absence of two years, the famous mando procession is finally back as part of Oeshiki. This ‘Tokyo Institution,’ attested to by souvenir picture postcards from the Taisho era, has long been a favorite draw for many people wanting to join and enjoy the noisy parade and festival atmosphere. All of the major Nichiren Shu temples in the Kanto region, which



includes Tokyo, Yokohama, and Chiba, ‘celebrate’ Oeshiki (and, yes, it may seem odd to celebrate one’s passing, but it is actually a celebration of leaving this life and being reborn as a Buddha). However, no temple is more famous for Oeshiki than the actual place where Nichiren Shonin passed away on October 13, 1282, namely Ikegami Honmonji Temple.

Despite some restrictions, including stalls being limited to the temple area instead of lining the streets, many of the familiar old sights returned. Special



Though his government is unjust, and I fully expected to be treated unfairly, I have determined not to hold a grudge against others no matter what persecution befalls me. Perhaps due to this determined mindset, which might have become a prayer, I was able to escape many ordeals.

—Shijo Kingo Shakabutsu Kuyo-ji, Opening the Eyes Service of Shijo Kingo’s Statue of Shakyamuni Buddha (ST 220)

When we believe we are treated badly by others, it is easy to develop hard feelings against them. Despite the strong language Nichiren often used towards those who slandered the Wonderful Dharma of the Lotus Sutra, which created unimaginable difficulties in his life, he never lost respect for them. He lived within the protection of the Buddhas and protective deities and remains an example for our lives today.

—Rev. Shinkyo Warner

station exits were set up by the railroad company to accommodate the huge influx of people, local street traffic was closed, busy crowd control police with megaphones worked diligently to keep the right amount of people moving in the right directions.

People wanted to experience the excitement of Oeshiki at Ikegami Honmonji Temple again. Those who came were not disappointed.



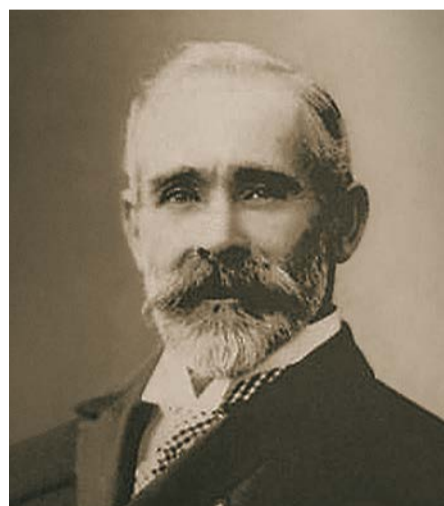
Captain James – Contributor to Japanese Navy and Devotee of the Lotus Sutra

Rev. Sensho Komukai

When you visit Minobusan and go up the long slope behind the main hall of Kuonji Temple, you will find the tomb of Captain John James next to Honji-do Hall where Superior Practice Bodhisattva is enshrined. At the age of 28, James came from Britain to Japan in 1866 at the end of the Edo period to teach seamanship including steering, navigating, outfitting, and searching for missing ships. Later, he received the Second Order of the Rising Sun from the Meiji government in honor and recognition of the remarkable contribution he made to the Japanese Navy and the Meiji government.

While James stayed in Nagasaki, he became acquainted with Yoshiomi Seki, a feudal retainer of the Fukui Domain, who advocated the opening of Japan to the outside world. Because Seki, having only lived in times of national isolation, was eager to know what a modern nation was like, he asked Captain James if he could travel to Britain as a stowaway.

Seki was allowed to sail with Captain James. The ship set sail for Britain in July of 1867. Just before the ship arrived in Singapore, they encountered a violent storm. The ship was so badly damaged



Captain John James was recognized for his remarkable contributions to the Japanese Navy.

that major repairs had to be done. Even worse, they were attacked by pirates. After the crew fought forcefully, the pirates fled. However, there were many casualties on both sides. Some of the crew were about to behead a captured pirate. Seki implored them to stop the decapitation, saying, “It disregards the laws of humanity to take the lives of those who plead for their lives.” In another case, he stopped other crew members from kicking dead bodies into the sea. Crossing the hands of the corpses on their chest and reciting the

Lotus Sutra, Seki buried the bodies at sea with courtesy and respect. James asked Seki with a quizzical look, “Why and how do you kindly offer up a prayer to the disgusting pirates who tried to kill us?” Seki replied, “I cannot stand this either, because many innocent lives were stolen. However, according to the Lotus Sutra in which I have deep faith, even the brutal pirates have the potential to become a Buddha. I recite the Lotus Sutra for them so that they will be able to attain Buddhahood.”

This incident led Captain James to embrace the Buddhist faith, especially the Lotus Sutra. John James, when settling down in Tokyo, studied under the lay Nichiren Buddhist scholar, Taido Ogawa, and the first Nichiren Shu Archbishop Nissatsu Arai. His faith never declined. Indeed, he chanted the Lotus Sutra and the Odaimoku in front of the three Buddhist statues in his residence daily in the morning and again in the evening.

One day, when John James visited Minobusan with Seki, he learned the history of the Bodhi Stairs leading to the front of the main hall of Kuonji Temple. Deeply impressed by the story of Nizo from Sado Island who had made great contributions to create the stairs,

James spent his own money to improve the steep slope near his own residence in Tokyo. Because people had trouble walking up the steep road, they were pleased with the gentler slope. The slope is still called “Zemusu-zaka” (James-slope) out of respect to him. James was also so fond of children that he made a generous donation to rebuild a nearby elementary school.

He passed away on January 8, 1908 at the age of 71. He left a will requesting that his tomb be erected at Minobusan. He closed his eyes in death as he was chanting the Lotus Sutra in a loud, clear voice. Please do not forget to visit the tomb of Captain John James next to Honji-do Hall, when you have an opportunity to come to Minobusan.



Captain James’ grave stands near the Honji-do Hall.

'Nichiren's Universe - The World of the Mandala'



OPERATIC INSPIRATION: Sakuzo Sendo was inspired to create a new opera, "Nichiren's Universe - The World of the Mandala" when he visited the gravesite of Nichiren Shonin in 2018, which debuted on August 31, 2022.

By Sandra Seki

On August 31 and September 1, an opera depicting Nichiren Shonin's life was performed at the Shin Kokuritsu Gekijo, the New National Theater Tokyo-Opera Palace. This was the first time an opera about Nichiren Shonin was written and performed. Although there were restrictions for entering the theater due to COVID-19, a large crowd came to see the performance on both days.

Sakuzo Sendo, the composer and producer of the opera, said that when he first saw the Gohonzon Mandala that was written by Nichiren Shonin, it was as if the sacred Odaimoku was written to save the people of the Kamukura Period who had been suffering from pandemics and natural disasters. He said that he seemed to have heard the Buddha, Gods and Bodhisattvas' voices like an orchestra.

Born in 1945 on a farm in Akita Prefecture, Sendo came to Tokyo on a group employment project after graduating from junior high school. He realized that he had a keen interest in music and studied for eight years under Mino Shibata, a famous Japanese composer and musicologist. After his studies and training, he wrote several books and composed music receiving the Kenji Miyazawa Award.



THE GRAND FINALE: The performers strew lotus petals (*sange*) around the stage in the opera's final scene.

"In October 2018, I went to Minobusan and visited Nichiren Shonin's gravesite. Surrounded by valleys on the east and west, with the Minobu River flowing from north to south, Nichiren Shonin's grave was in the center of a flat area, surrounded by the graves of former archbishops and priests. As I listened to the gurgling of the river with the birds singing in the background, I became determined to write an opera about Nichiren Shonin.

"That afternoon, I was able to meet the Director of General Affairs of Minobusan Kuonji Temple, Bishop Nichiyu Mochida. I told him about my determination to write an opera, and he was thrilled. He told me to write something that has never been seen or heard before depicting Nichiren Shonin's compassion for others and his love for his parents."

The following morning, Sendo attended the morning prayer service at Minobusan Kuonji Temple where he was amazed at the unison of the priests reciting the sutras. He felt that he needed to include this in the opera.

Sendo traveled to the places where Nichiren Shonin lived and propagated. He completed the opera in June 2020. However, due to the pandemic, it would take another two years for it to be performed on stage.



SETTING THE STAGE: Lady Oman plays a pivotal role in the opera as she introduces each scene.

The opera opens with Nichiren Shonin's birth in Kominato, features important events in his life, and concludes with his passing at Lord Ikegami's residence.

Professional opera singers performed, and the staging combined elements of 'Noh' performance and Japanese traditional dancing. The main characters, including Nichiren Shonin, Nichiro Shonin, Nichion Shonin, Lady Oman, and Nichiren's parents, sang arias about the different phases of Nichiren's life.

The finale was performed with the singers strewing lotus petals (*sange*) on the stage as Nichiren Shu priests in the background recited the Jigage (Chapter 16) in unison.

Many people from Chiba, Yamanashi, Kanagawa, and Tokyo came to the opera.

Minobusan Kuonji hopes to make a DVD of the opera with English subtitles so that people around the world can see and enjoy this masterpiece.

RECOMMENDING A BUDDHIST WEDDING CEREMONY

By Rev. Kosei Uchida

Major transitions, such as growing to adulthood, marriage, the birth of a child, or death, have been regarded highly important for religions around the world.

Shakyamuni Buddha, who founded Buddhism in India, lived in splendor as a royal prince, got married, and had a child. Facing the reality that one could not avoid aging, sickness, and death, he renounced his royal life and became an ascetic monk at 29 years of age.

In India, the idea of *asrama*, a life period divided into four terms, has been spread from old times. First is the learning period, when a man can retain the basic knowledge, acquire any fundamental skills, and learn religious rites. Second is the patriarchal period, when a man gets married, and has a duty to support his family as the family head. Third is the secluded period, when a man surrenders the charge of the family and retires from the world living in a forest to read and study sacred books

or be lost in meditation. Fourth is the itinerant period, when a man walks around streets to preach the path of duty. Following the idea of *asrama* has been considered as an ideal way of life. However, a man cannot enter the itinerant period unless he has a grandchild to continue the family line.

This is not only the case in India but in Japan as well. Only after a man gains a wife can he be accepted as attaining manhood. Great importance has been placed on having children.

The number of people remaining single is on the rise in Japan. In such a situation, to encourage more people to get married by showing how wonderful it is to have a companion for life, Buddhist wedding ceremonies are warmly welcomed in an increasing number of Nichiren Shu temples. In the ceremony, the bride and groom receive a pair of *juzu* beads and read marriage vows aloud in front of the Great Mandala. Nichiren Shonin's words are cited: "You and your husband have promised a long-lasting affection for each other. An arrow flies by the strength of a bow. Likewise, the activities of a man depend on the power of his wife."

Our Founder truly wished that his followers would live together in happy

unions until separated by death. Nichiren Shonin did not emphasize that the role of wives was just to quietly support their husbands behind the scenes as was common in that era. Instead, Nichiren focused on the idea that husbands and wives should support one another.

For your marriage, we recommend that you hold a Buddhist wedding ceremony in a Nichiren Shu temple where you will be able to recite the Odaimoku and pledge mutual fidelity before Nichiren Shonin.



Exchanging nuptial cups in a Nichiren Shu Buddhist wedding ceremony.



Wedding items are all set for the ceremony.

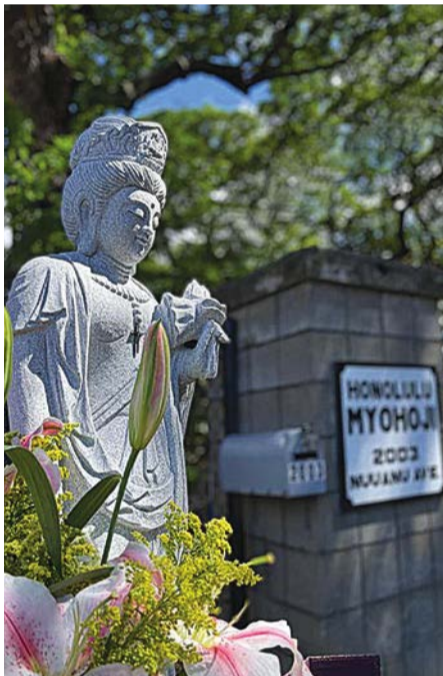
TEMPLE EVENTS

Honolulu Myohoji Temple Rev. Josho Yamamura

Helping People Find Their Way

Honolulu Myohoji is a Buddhist temple in Honolulu spreading the teachings of Nichiren Shonin and the Lotus Sutra. Because of its inconspicuous location on Nuuanu Avenue, it has had some issues with people getting lost when trying to visit. Sadly, there are others who desecrate the grounds. Rev. Josho Yamamura wanted a way to make it more obvious, to people unfamiliar with Nichiren Shu, that this is a temple, and our grounds are sacred.

Religions are universal and open to everyone. The values behind them are basically the same. Rev. Yamamura decided to place a statue at the entrance of the well-known and recognized Kannon Bodhisattva instead of just the name of the temple. He also asked the mason to place a cross around the statue's neck since most everyone recognizes this as a sacred symbol. An eye-opening ceremony was carried out for the statue on October 18.



Rev. Yamamura is a trained opera singer and holds events like harp and *koto* concerts, hula performances and chanting at the temple. With this new landmark erected at the entrance of the temple, less people will get lost, and many more will come to visit.



Nichiren Mission of Hawaii Rev. Shokai Kanai

Open House for New Altar

A new altar from the former Wahiawa Nichiren Mission was installed on October 9, after our annual Oeshiki Service. The altar was brought from Wahiawa after the mission closed earlier this year, and its new sanctuary is in the mansion's Lotus Room.

Every morning, Rev. Kanai, Shami Shougou and Shami Myoshin chant the Jigae and Odaimoku to show appreciation to all the deceased ministers of Hawaii.

Everyone who attended the installation service received an incense holder inscribed with "Wahiawa Nichiren Mission" as a keepsake and remembrance of the former mission.

Kannon Temple of Nevada Rev. Shoda Kanai

Shichimen Dai Myojin

If you have visited our temple, you may have seen a print of the Goddess Shichimen on the wall next to the Kannon Bodhisattva

statue. However, it can be easy to miss as it is tucked away in the corner. It is a work of art completed by the 89th Archbishop of Minobusan Kuonji Temple, Ven. Nichiko Takeshita. If you look at it close up, you can see it is not an ordinary drawing. It is composed of various passages from the Lotus Sutra. Those that I have found are the *gatha* portion from Chapter 25, Universal Gate of World Voice Perceiver, the *dharanis* from Chapter 28, the Encouragement of Universal-Sage Bodhisattva, and portions from Chapter 12, Devadatta, regarding the Dragon King's eight-year-old daughter. I am sure there are also more portions as the characters get quite small and are difficult to decipher.

Legend says that when Nichiren Shonin was teaching the Lotus Sutra to many followers while sitting on a rock on Mt. Minobu, a beautiful lady would come and listen. One day, someone called out to her as no one knew who she was. Nichiren Shonin then asked her to drink water from a vase which reflected her true identity as a dragon. She then turned into her true form and returned to her abode, Mt. Shichimen to the southwest, and vowed to protect Mt. Minobu and the practitioners of the Lotus Sutra.

Today, she is revered as one of the many protective deities of the Lotus Sutra. At Shinnyoji Temple, where I trained for three years in northern Osaka, there is a small hall dedicated to her where the



priests conduct special blessings for many followers. There are other temples throughout Japan that also revere Goddess Shichimen. She is an important deity in Nichiren Shu.

When you visit Kannon Temple, please take a close look at this special piece.

Renkoji Temple, Italy Rev. Shoryo Tarabini

Grand Oeshiki Ceremony 2022

After going through nearly three years of COVID-19 lockdowns and a lingering fear to mingle, many temple members yearned for a return to normalcy, to openly



practice with others and to experience the joy of our practice together. How better than with the most important ceremony and event of Nichiren Shu – the Grand Oeshiki Ceremony?

At 10:00 a.m., we started the Oeshiki Ceremony with the sounding of the large temple drum. We entered the main temple hall accompanied by more than 30 people chanting. We all felt a deep sense of gratitude for Nichiren Shonin, reciting his original words from the *Ho'on Jo*. The ceremony concluded with all standing and singing *Tachi Wataru*. All of the attendees were given handmade paper cherry blossoms to take home.

LONDON TEMPLE CELEBRATES ITS 25TH ANNIVERSARY

The London Temple celebrated its 25th anniversary on October 16 with a mostly online gathering and with 15 people at the temple. The temple was founded on October 12, 1997 by Rev. Chishin Hirai, who joined Rev. Kanto Tsukamoto, the current Chief Priest. Rev. Hirai spoke for all saying, "Let me express my deep gratitude to the priests, members, and other people who've helped this temple. I hope to see you all again soon."

Many people gathered to mark this important milestone in the life of the London Temple. Shami Kanse Capon spoke on behalf of the temple members saying that "25 years is a wonderful achievement, and our temple is now the spiritual home of a thriving community of devout practitioners across Europe. Now, we are looking forward to the next 25 years and more!"

—Shami Kanse Capon



Calendar for December 2022–January 2023

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

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Art Director Alan Rowe

日蓮宗
Nichiren Shu