

INSTALLATION OF NEW CHIEF ABBOT AT MINOBUSAN KUONJI TEMPLE

An inauguration ceremony was held for the Honorable Rev. Nichiyu Mochida to become the 93rd Chief Abbot of Minobusan Kuonji Temple, the head temple of Nichiren Shu, on May 7, 2024.

Rev. Mochida accomplished numerous undertakings as the Director-General of the 700th Commemorative Administration Bureau for Nichiren Shonin's Parinirvana and strengthened bonds among Buddhists in Japan, China, and South Korea. He continues in devoting himself to missionary work not only in Japan but overseas as well.

About 800 people, including Nichiren Shu priests, other priests, and Nichiren Shu followers, came to congratulate the new Chief Abbot on his inauguration with great hope for the growth of Nichiren Shu and Kuonji Temple.

Ceremonies began with Rev. Mochida visiting Onkoji Temple in Kofu on May 6 and leaving for Minobusan the next morning with many followers watching.

In Minobu, he chanted the Lotus Sutra and Odaimoku with gratitude at Enjisuji Temple and Kyoen-bo, known for their connection with Lord Sanenaga Hakii, and passed through the Somon Gate to enter Minobusan.

He also chanted at Hocchin-kaku, which stands near Oshima-no-Iseki, the place Lord Hakii welcomed Nichiren Shonin, and then went to the Sanmon Temple Gate in front of the Bodaitei steps before entering Kuonji Temple through the main entrance.

At the ceremony, Rev. Mochida signed his name and put his seal on Keishofu and took an oath before Nichiren Shonin to propagate Nichiren Shonin's teachings to the world, to achieve Rissho Ankoku, to keep up with the times, to devote himself to improve social well-being in Japan, and achieve world peace as the head temple of Nichiren Shu.



Rev. Eiyu Ono, Supervisor of Minobusan, said, "We kindly welcome the Honorable Rev. Mochida to the position of the 93rd Chief Abbot of Minobusan Kuonji Temple."

The Honorable Rev. Nissho Kanno, Archbishop of Nichiren Shu, explained the accomplishments of the Honorable Rev. Mochida and said admiringly that, "He hasn't lost his passion at the age of 87" in a congratulatory speech.

Rev. Enkaku, the chairman of the Chinese Buddhist Association, said, "Rev. Mochida is an old, close, and true friend to Chinese Buddhism. Let us make our golden bond stronger."

Renemon Tomita, a representative of the Minobusan followers, said, "His leadership makes us realize how sacred Odaimoku is."

Rev. Mochida said in his speech that, "The Honorable Rev. Nisso Uchino advocated the policy of 'Beloved Minobusan.' Let us advance this policy

and create 'Minobusan with Love' through 'Live and Prosper Together Campaign.' Through this campaign, we practice on the Six Paramitas and the Bodhisattva Path. Be considerate to others and respect others. Save others, and be saved by others. Know that we are kept alive, and be grateful. Never discriminate against someone who cannot coexist with others, and live each day to the fullest with altruism. We pray for world peace and to build a society without conflicts."

BIOGRAPHY OF THE HONORABLE REV. NICHiyu MOCHIDA:

Born in Tokyo in 1936, he recognized the horrors of war and human folly when he experienced the Great Tokyo Air Raid in his second year of elementary school.

In 1959, he entered the priesthood and graduated from Waseda University.

In 1961, he studied at The Department of Buddhist Studies at the Graduate School of Rissho University.

He became the Chief Priest of Honkyuji Temple in Sumida Ward in 1966.

In 1972, he became manager of the General Affairs division at the Head Office of Nichiren Shu.

Since 1977, he has served as a Shukai assembly member four times and accomplished numerous undertakings as the Director General of the 700th Commemorative Administration Bureau for Nichiren Shonin's Parinirvana, which had a great success in producing "Oratorio Nichiren Shonin" (composed by Toshiro Mayuzumi) collaborating with the Nichiren Shonin Disciple Association as a special commemorative project.

In 2001, he became the Chief Priest of Sogenji Temple and reproduced "Oratorio Nichiren Shonin" as a commemorative project for the 700th anniversary of Niko Shonin's death.

In 2018, Rev. Mochida became the General Administrator of Kuonji Temple.

In 2019, he established the "Live and Prosper Together Campaign" under the 92nd Chief Abbot, the Honorable Rev. Nisso Uchino.

In 2022, he worked to organize and produce the opera performance of "The Universe of Nichiren-Mandala World" (which was produced by Kuonji Temple) to great success.

As Chairman of the Rissho Scholarship Association, Rev. Mochida made every effort to raise funds for students who need scholarships.

As the Chairman of the Nichiren Shu Overseas Propagation and Promotion Association, he actively promoted building stronger relationships with Buddhist organizations in China, and South Korea.

He was given the title of Japan-China Buddhist Ambassador from the Chinese Buddhist Association.



NAGOYA KUONJI TEMPLE

A Cultural Intersection for People

By Rev. Yuon Ito

Comparing before and after the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of foreign visitors coming to Nagoya is increasing. People seem to be flowing to this mid-sized city since famous tourist destinations, like Tokyo and Kyoto, have recently become crowded with people due to increasing tourism.

Kuonji Temple is within walking distance of Nagoya Station, which is in a commercial district with many offices. The temple has a small Japanese garden, so many people come to enjoy the seasonal flowers, such as weeping cherry blossoms in spring, hydrangeas in summer, and camellias in winter. Some office workers eat their lunch in the garden. I even heard people refer to our temple an “oasis in the city.”

One day while I was visiting a member’s home, I received an e-mail saying, “We are at the temple and hoping to get a red seal (Goshuin).” When I arrived back at the temple, I met a young person from the U.S. who was in Japan for two weeks and was visiting our temple in Nagoya in the time between trains. It seems that “red seals” are gradually becoming known in Western countries. Even though it

was just a short visit, we could share a joyful moment with a cup of tea. As they seemed to enjoy this Japanese Buddhist temple, we became Instagram friends after this meeting.

On another day, a young Chinese couple wandered in for a visit. They were trying to say something to me with a translation app. Instead, I surprised them by speaking fluent Chinese, “Please

come in, would you like to have a cup of tea? We have Matcha green tea and Chinese tea as well.” They obliged and enjoyed our time together.

On yet another day, I was surprised as I was heading to the main hall for morning service, because there was a young English woman sitting silently and peacefully on a chair. She smiled at me and said, “I found this quiet space

away from the hustle and bustle of the city, and I was enjoying the rich time.” I remembered how I had also entered churches in Europe and enjoyed the quiet time just as she was.

Buddhist temples historically have always been cultural centers for people, not only for members but also for everyone. I hope my temple will become an “intersection” for people in town and for tourists, providing a place where people can take a break and relax in this restless society. I believe that international missions can be carried out at any “international” site, not just outside of Japan.

Nagoya Kuonji Temple is just a five-minute walk from Nagoya Station. We are always waiting for your visit to this “oasis in the city.”



We’ve found that the “red seals” are becoming more and more well known in Western countries. Some have even started to collect them. It is always a good idea to offer a welcoming space for all people.



The Lotus Sutra Spreads to Mongolia



By Rev. Keiji Oshima

On June 17, Rev. Yuichi Hasegawa, Director of Missionary Department, along with Rev. Gyoen Saito of Shunkei-ji Temple, Tokyo, visited Gandantegchinlen Monastery in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia on behalf of the Chief Administrator of the Nichiren Shu Head Office. Gandantegchinlen Monastery is the largest active monastery and the center of Mongolian Buddhism. On this visit, Revs. Hasegawa and Saito met Ven. Javzandorj Dulamragchaa, the Abott of Gandantegchinlen Monastery. Japan and Mongolia have over 50 years of inter-cultural exchange, and Rev. Saito presented Ven. Javzandorj books translated into Mongolian that he had worked on with his translation team.

Rev. Saito has dedicated himself to the inter-religious exchange with Mongolian Buddhism for over 15 years. On his first visit in 2006, he heard from a Mongolian priest that, although they had the Tibetan Lotus Sutra translated into Mongolian, there was no translation of Kumarajiva’s Lotus Sutra, which we use in Nichiren Shu. He told Rev. Saito

that, during the Mongolian People’s Republic reign, which began in 1946, the government had an intimate relationship with the Soviet Union, thus adopted the Cyrillic alphabet instead of using their traditional characters. This resulted in numerous Buddhist texts and treasures being lost. He also expressed his wish to spread Kumarajiva’s Lotus Sutra in Mongolia, because he found the story of Nichiren Shonin’s life and various persecutions had a lot in common with the difficult history of Mongolia. He also thought that the Lotus Sutra, which Nichiren believed in, could help to revive the country.

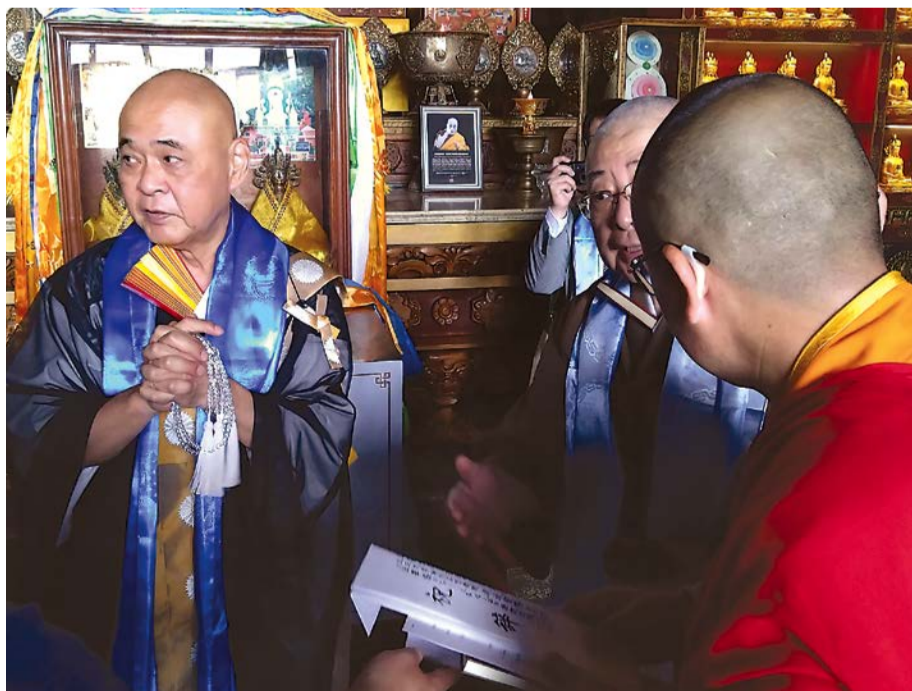
Hearing this, Rev. Saito immediately started the project to translate Kumarajiva’s Lotus Sutra into Mongolian, asking

for help from professors and scholars at the National University of Mongolia. It took over five years to complete the project, and the first version of Mongolian Kumarajiva’s Lotus Sutra was published in 2012.

After the Kumarajiva’s Lotus Sutra project, Rev. Saito and the translation team began work on their next project on translating a commentary on the Lotus Sutra, *Hokekyo no Oshie (Teaching of the Lotus Sutra)*, written by the Honorary Professor Hoyo Watanabe of Rishso University. With the COVID-19 pandemic, progress on the project was slowed down considerably, but the team finally completed the translation and published the first commentary on the Lotus Sutra this year.

In this visit to the Gandantegchinlen Temple, the Ven. Abbot Javzandorj addressed Revs. Hasegawa and Saito, “Through this great work of translation, Mongolian people will be able to reach the teaching of the Buddha in a deeper manner. We would like to keep a good partnership with Nichiren Shu for a long time.”

Rev. Hasegawa replied, “Our goal should be the same, to realize the peaceful Buddha’s land in this world, showing the respect to all beings through Gassho. We also expect that we will work together to spread the teaching of the Buddha.”



Rev. Yuichi Hasegawa, Director of Missionary Department, presenting the Chief Administrator’s address.



Praying before the statue of Avalokitesvara.

STUDY CLASS ON THE LOTUS SUTRA AND NICHIREN SHONIN'S TEACHINGS



THE FOUR GREAT SRAVAKAS: Subhuti, Maha-Katyayana, Maha-Kasyapa, and Maha-Maudgalyayana.

The Seven Great Parables in the Lotus Sutra (3): "A Rich Man and His Poor Son"

By Rev. Kosei Uchida

In Chapter Four, "Understanding by Faith," the four great Sravakas, namely Subhuti, Maha-Katyayana, Maha-Kasyapa, and Maha-Maudgalyayana, were glad to hear the parable of "The Burning House and Three Carts" in Chapter Three, which denotes the teaching of One Buddha Vehicle. They had felt self-satisfied with the Hinayana (Lesser Vehicle) teaching in a secluded place, seeking just for their own enlightenment for a long time. To show how happy they were to be assured by the Buddha of their future attainment

of Buddhahood, they told the "Parable of the Rich Man and His Poor Son." A son had run away from his rich father a long time ago. He had been leading a hand-to-mouth life for 50 years. One day, he was hired as a day laborer at a magnificent house which was his real home that he had left 50 years ago. But the son did not realize that the large house was his real home or that the rich man was his father. The father realized that this poor man was his real son, but he did not reveal their parent-child relationship, because his son firmly believed himself to be so humble that he would be sure to run away again from his rich father. The father asked him to clear dirt with other servants. The father always encouraged him to work hard. The poor son worked diligently for 20 years. On his deathbed,

the rich man confessed to the assemblies including his relatives and householders, "Telling the truth, the man who has been occupied with clearing dirt for 20 years is my son, my real son! I am his father. All my treasures are his." The poor son was surprised but said with pleasure, "I never dreamed of having this store of treasures for myself. It has come to me unexpectedly."

As you know, the rich father is the Buddha, and the poor son is the four great Sravakas who were satisfied with the Lesser Vehicle teaching, looking only for their own salvation. The Sravakas wandered about like the poor, humble son without knowing the true teaching for 50 years. But even Sravakas, who originally possessed Buddha-nature, will come closer to the Truth, whether consciously or unconsciously. As a result of their devoted practice, like clearing dirt under the guidance of the Buddha, the Sravakas will be assured of their future Buddhahood. The four great Sravakas said with joy, "We have obtained unsurpassed treasure, although we did not seek them." Abandoning their selfish desires, they finally realized that they were all the Buddha's children and vowed to aspire for the Great Vehicle. Aspiration for the Great Vehicle means to do something good for others. When we think not only for our own salvation but for the sake of others, the Buddha will have no hesitation in expounding the Mahayana (Great Vehicle) teaching. The Buddha will never forsake us, because we are all His children. When we understand that, our selfish attitude will cease to exist, and we will be able to feel His true intent and compassion toward us.

make people wake up from the state of spiritual darkness and understand the Truth of Buddhism.

Nichiren Shonin wrote this treatise for three primary reasons. First, he had to quell the unrest of his disciples and followers and clear up their doubts. Since he vowed to spread the Lotus Sutra from the age of 32, he encountered many hardships, including the Four Great Persecutions. After the Tatsunokuchi Persecution, scores of people dropped their faith in the Lotus teachings. Doubts arose among them. The Lotus Sutra says in Chapter Five, "The Simile of Herbs," that after hearing the Dharma teachings you become peaceful in your present lives, and you will have rebirths in good places in your future lives. Nevertheless, why must our master as well as his disciples and followers suffer persecutions? Why don't guardian deities protect us? Annoyed, oppressed, or even imprisoned, most of the disciples and followers gave up their faith. Nichiren Shonin had to dispel their doubts and prove the rightfulness of his way of spreading the Dharma.

Secondly, it was likely written as his keepsake. Sado was often said to be an island where one can rarely return home alive once exiled. Nichiren Shonin prepared himself for death. As his memento, he wrote down *Kaimoku-sho* about what he believed in Buddhism. For those who were still following his teachings, he wanted to leave this important message, hoping that they would understand and accept what is written in *Kaimoku-sho*, so that they would make strenuous efforts to spread the Lotus Sutra widely.

Thirdly, based on the two previously mentioned reasons, Nichiren Shonin had to prove himself to be the true practitioner of the Lotus Sutra. *Kaimoku-sho* reveals how much he prepares himself as a practitioner in the Latter Age of Degeneration, and how he will lead his disciples and followers to follow the way of his steadfast faith in the Lotus teachings.

If you are to know what kind of person Nichiren Shonin was, *Kaimoku-sho* is the best treatise to read first.

Kaimoku-sho, Open Your Eyes (1)

Rev. Sensho Komukai

Nichiren Shonin was exiled to Sado Island after the Tatsunokuchi Persecution in 1271. While in Sado, it took two months to complete his treatise, *Kaimoku-sho (Open Your Eyes)*, in 1272 when he was 50 years old. On the title, "Open Your Eyes" was put his wish to

LOTUS JEWELS

A sleeping lion does not turn angry unless it is provoked. Waves do not rise unless a pole is thrust in the river. Likewise, if we do not refute the slanderer of the True Dharma, we will not encounter hardship.

—Nichiren Shonin, *A Letter to Lord Nambu Rokuro, Nambu Rokuro-dono Goshō (ST 80)*

All beings wish to live in peace. But as Nichiren demonstrated with Risshō Ankoku, we cannot have true peace without practicing the true Dharma. Too often we settle for a superficial peace, where we give in to our fear of making trouble and stay silent in the presence of abuse and injustice. Nichiren teaches us that for the world to live in true peace, we must learn to speak up for the benefit of all beings, even those who threaten us with hardship

—Rev. Shinkyō Warner



Nichiren Shonin wrote his treatise *Kaimoku-sho (Open Your Eyes)* in two months while living in exile on Sado Island in a modest dwelling that is now known as the Tsukahara Samadhi Hall at Konponji Temple.

WESAK DAY CELEBRATION IN PENANG

Wesak Day celebrations in Georgetown, Penang throughout the years have always been a vibrant and lively tradition with one of the highlights being the Wesak Day Procession. Huge crowds of devotees were treated with visual feasts of highly anticipated floats from the various temples, creatively crafted with luminance and flowers.

Penang Hokkezan Ichinenji Temple has been actively participating in the Wesak Day Procession since 2010, with this year being no exception. Members of the temple started the day early by joining the morning service led by Rev. Myofu Ervinna and Rev. Yuon Ito,

offering incense and bathing the statue of young Prince Siddhartha. Then other members of the temple meticulously prepared for the evening's procession, and final touchups were done on the temple's float by adding blossoming flowers. Once everything was in place, the Buddha statue was carefully carried and positioned on the float. All of the provisions, such as bottled water, raincoats, and other things, that might be needed during the procession were prepared beforehand as well.

At approximately 4:00 p.m., the temple's float and vans transporting fellow members departed from the

temple to the Malaysian Buddhist Association in Penang. This year's theme was "Living Harmoniously, Thriving Society." Of the 24 floats that participated in the procession, Ichinenji Temple was placed 19th in line.

Participants of the evening were greeted with light drizzle. However, as soon as the procession began, the rain subsided. With unshaken faith and abundance of joy, every float and the respective temple members trekked seven kilometers in the procession. It was not long until the streets were filled with performances, colorful lights, chanting, and soothing music. Waving Buddhist flags, members of Ichinenji Temple followed the lead of Revs. Ervinna and Ito in chanting *Odaimoku*, *Namu Myoho Renge Kyo*, and singing homage to the Buddha in Mandarin, *Nan Wu Ben Shi Shi Jia Mo Ni Fo* (*Honor Be to the Original Master Shakyamuni Buddha*).

Throughout the route, spectators of all ages and various ethnicities, standing with palms together in *Gassho*, enjoyed the spectacular floats. Many joined in the chanting and singing on this special day to honor the birth, enlightenment, and passing of the Buddha.

It was undoubtedly a long yet fulfilling day. It has been 14 years since our first participation in the Wesak Day Procession, and the same streets of Georgetown have witnessed 14 different float designs over the years, handmade by the fellow members of Penang Hokkezan Ichinenji Temple. The procession ended at its starting point, where members of Ichinenji Temple gathered and returned to the temple for some rest and well deserved refreshments prepared by some of the members. Apart from the festive celebrations, Wesak Day also serves as a reminder to the significance of our faith to the Buddha's teachings.



CHALLENGES OF BUDDHIST CHAPLAIN WORK IN HOSPICE CARE IN JAPAN

By Kanjo Bassett

"As Buddhist priests, we preach a lot about the afterlife. However, when it comes down to giving comfort to people in the last weeks of their lives, there's nothing we can really do," said Rev. Kosho Hoshi of Hononji Temple in Saitama Prefecture. "There is value in that, because you learn what you can do just by being there to listen or to talk. Just by being there can be something you give to a suffering person, and it can make a difference."

Hospice care in Japan has had a difficult journey becoming recognized as an essential part of giving quality care at the end of life. People recognize the value, or at least say they do, but holistic thinking doesn't come easily to the average professional, or even for Buddhist priests. "Nichiren Shu as an organization doesn't have much recognition of the need for hospice care, spiritual care, and grief care. I don't think many traditional Buddhist organizations do, except for maybe Jodo Shu with their grief care outreach." Then, there are hospitals.

Rev. Hoshi found out the hard way after chaplaincy training and certifica-

tion under the Rinbutsuken Institute for Engaged Buddhism. "I contacted hospitals in Saitama to ask about chaplain volunteer work, their first reaction was usually, 'we don't know what a chaplain is or what your certification means or what it has to do with us.'" He eventually contacted a hospital that had some experience with Christian chaplains, but as the facility was Christian-based, they had no need for a Buddhist chaplain. "It comes down to trust, because hospital organizations think only of risk. Building trust takes time with the entire staff, from



administrators, doctors, and nurses, even down to the cleaning crew. You can't do a good job if someone is saying, 'Who's that, and why are they here?'"

There is also the traditional stigma of Buddhist priests in hospital settings, "Buddhist priests are seen as a bad sign, only coming because somebody has died." Most hospitals will ask a priest to leave, especially if dressed in robes. Rev. Hoshi kept trying, and he finally found an end-of-life facility, Hanamizuki (Dogwood) Home, which accepted his offer of volunteering for everything and anything.

"I have a standing rule of 'no propagation.' It's the first thing I tell people under my care. I am only there to listen or talk about anything they want to talk about. Hardly anyone is interested in Buddhism, and there is a traditional cultural resistance to talking about one's suffering. Instead people will say, 'I'm fine' to ease the minds of family members. Sometimes, people want to talk about the afterlife, but most of the time they're thinking of their suffering or worrying about their families."

Many times, Rev. Hoshi helps family members who are at a loss of what to do or say. An end-of-life event can expose

fault lines and divisions in families. Sometimes, he feels like a traffic cop trying to keep cars from taking wrong turns and crashing into each other. And it's not just the families that need help dealing with end-of-life situations. The nursing staff can grow too emotionally close to patients and burn out. He estimates that only 30-40% of the nurses stay long term. Most leave for other jobs.

There are many challenges, not the least of which is that most people wait until they have to go to a hospital, and hospitals don't want to take people until the end is clearly in sight, the shorter the better. "There is very little that I can do to help in the last two weeks when a patient is slipping into a coma. Having hospice care for six months can make a big difference," said Rev. Hoshi.

He thinks people will gradually choose to spend their final days at home or at special facilities instead of in hospitals. Even Nichiren Shu is taking notice, "I was on the Shingyo Dojo teaching staff in 2023, and one of the lectures I gave there was about chaplain work in hospice care. Some other teachers thought it was too early to expose priests-to-be in their final training, but I think there is no better time to do so."

Calendar for August–September 2024

AUG 13-16 Obon (Traditional Lunar Calendar)

AUG 15 Memorial Ceremony for Victims and Unknown War Dead and Prayer for World Peace at Chidorigafuchi National Cemetery, Sponsored by Nichiren Shu

AUG 27 Matsubagayatsu Persecution Memorial Day

SEP 3 Memorial for Niko Shonin

SEP 12 Tatsunokuchi Persecution Memorial Day

SEP 17 Memorial for Nisshin Shonin

SEP 18-19 Grand Ceremony at Shichimensan

SEP 19-25 Autumn Higan (Equinox) Week

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