

SACRAMENTO NICHIREN NEWS

Sacramento Nichiren Buddhist Church

January 2026

5191 24th Street, Sacramento, CA, 95822 | (916) 456-8371 | www.sacramentonichirenchurch.org

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

JANUARY 2026

1	12:00am	New Year's Service
4	11:30am	Sunday Service
11	11:30am	Kaji Kito
		Church Meeting
18	—	No Service
25	11:00am*	Tsuito-e Service
	12:00pm	New Year's Party

*Please note the special time for this service

FEBRUARY 2026

1	11:30am	Sunday Service
8	11:30am	Setsubun Service
15	—	No Service
22	11:30am	Kaji Kito
		Church Meeting

MOCHI TSUKI

Thank you to all the Church members, family, and friends, for your hard work during our 2025 mochi tsuki!

Item	#	Total
Mochi (\$10)	180	\$1800
An Mochi (\$12)	76	\$912
Kasane (\$10)	35	\$350
Fujinkai Sales (Donations by Fusako Okamoto)	—	\$410
GRAND TOTAL		\$3472

All supplies were donated (see "Acknowledgments" for details).

NEW YEAR'S PARTY

JANUARY 25TH, 2026 (SUNDAY)

The New Year's Party will take place after the church service (Tsuito-e), which will be held at 11:00am. Please note the special time for this service.

The cost to attend the luncheon will be **\$25 per person**. Please contact the church if you would like to attend. The deadline is **January 15th**.

SETSUBUN

FEBRUARY 8TH, 2026 (SUNDAY)

Setsubun is a special service for members who were born in the year of the horse (12, 24, 36, 48, 60, 72, 84, and 96 years old). We will have a raffle after the service so please bring "paper products" for the raffle.

2026 CHURCH MEMBERSHIP DUES

Please mail in your annual Church membership dues for 2026. The dues are **\$240** per year.

2026 FUJINKAI MEMBERSHIP DUES

Membership dues for the Fujinkai are **\$10** per year. Please mail in your dues to the Church.

CHURCH MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

NOVEMBER 30, 2025

- Mochi Tsuki: Rev. Igarashi will start setting up at 6:30am; everyone else will arrive by 7am; asked people to help

DECEMBER 21, 2025

- New Year's Party: we will no longer be holding the annual raffle

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We gratefully acknowledge our generous donations.

SPECIAL DONATIONS

Fusako Okamoto/flowers for the church altar, \$20 (tsukemono); Ruby Gotow/cookies; John Hughes/\$100 (pest control); Mary Hughes/\$100, cookies and chocolate; Elizabeth Kono/\$100 (year-end donation); Peter Kato/\$30; Keiko Lucas/\$200 (New Year's donation); Joe Hitomi/\$1350.65 (postage stamps and items from Home Depot).

OESHIKI

Gail and Dave Tanaka/\$50; Kiyoko Kuwabara/\$10; Ruby Gotow/\$20; Kathy Mine/\$40; Lily Hitomi/\$50; John and Mary Hughes/\$20; Joe Hitomi/\$20.

MOCHI TSUKI DONATIONS

Fusako Okamoto/\$410 in Fujinkai sales (pomegranate jelly, takuan, fukujinzuke, and nasubi); Yoshiko Hitomi/\$37 (sweet rice); Merry Hitomi/\$37 (sweet rice); Jane Hitomi/\$37 (sweet rice); Ruby Gotow/\$110 (red bean paste (An), donuts) and making An; Lily Hitomi/\$55.86 (sweet rice, pastry brushes, and rice flour); Gail Tanaka/\$39.98 (sweet rice and rice flour); Kiyoko Kuwabara/\$96.21 (sweet rice, rice flour, and packaging supplies from Smart & Final) and lunch (pork curry).

MEMBERSHIP (\$240)

Takashi Mizuno; Jon Kitamura; Joe Hitomi.

The True Meaning of *Ofuse*

Kenjo Igarashi

Happy New Year. I hope everyone had a restful holiday season and a good start to the new year.

Since ending the season of “giving” just last month, I have found myself reflecting on how this idea is interpreted in the Buddhist context. In Buddhism, this concept is known as *ofuse*, commonly translated as “religious offerings”. Many people today associate *ofuse* primarily with money, in particular, donations to a temple or offerings made in connection with funerals and other special services. While monetary offerings can be part of *ofuse*, they represent only one aspect of its meaning. I feel that our understanding of *ofuse* has greatly changed since I first became a minister several decades ago. In recent years, something essential about it has been lost or misunderstood.

To better understand *ofuse*, it is helpful to look back to the time of Nichiren Shonin in the 13th century. Nichiren Shonin devoted his life to propagating the teachings of the *Lotus Sutra*, initially as a fiery street preacher in Kamakura, the political and cultural capital of Japan at the time. However, he was also known as a devoted and prolific letter writer, spreading the teachings through correspondence with his followers. These letters were often read aloud within households and communities, allowing propagation through personal relationships rather than formal institutions.

In return, his followers supported him and his practice through *ofuse*, which could take many forms, including food, clothing, money, time, or acts of care. In this sense, *ofuse* was not payment for services rendered; it was an expression of gratitude from those who had received the teachings, and a sincere wish that their offering would help sustain both their own practice and continued propagation of the *Lotus Sutra*. It arose naturally from the hearts of the followers, not from any request or demand made by Nichiren Shonin.

In his writings, Nichiren Shonin frequently expressed deep gratitude for the *ofuse* he received. He compared this relationship to an oil lamp: the priest is the flame, but without the oil, the support of his followers, the light cannot continue to burn. Material offerings sustained him physically, but more importantly, *ofuse* enabled him to continue praying and propagating the teachings of the *Lotus Sutra*. After he settled down in Mt. Minobu, it would support not only him, but the training of his disciples.

I came to understand this meaning of *ofuse* during my very first 100-day *aragyo* practice. During this training, we live with very little food, no heating or light, and minimal sleep. Wearing only a thin hemp robe and no socks, the cold is constant and severe. However, what sustained me during that time was the warmth of a simple cotton under-robe worn beneath my hemp robe. My mother had sewn it for me as her way of supporting my practice. That garment represented her time, effort, care, and concern for my well-being. Through this experience, I realized that this was the true spirit of *ofuse*—to feel the intention and compassion of the person offering it.

Unfortunately, in recent years, I feel that this understanding of *ofuse* has been increasingly overshadowed. In some cases, religious practice across various Buddhist sects has come to resemble a business, with some ministers and temples setting fixed fees and issuing detailed bills for funerals and other services. When I heard of this, I could not help but feel concerned about the future of Buddhism. This is not the *ofuse* Nichiren Shonin described in his letters. He did not place prices on the propagation of the *Lotus Sutra*, nor did he demand offerings from those he taught. *Ofuse* was always about what the donor felt was appropriate, offered freely and sincerely. At the same time, it is also true, as Nichiren Shonin acknowledged, that without *ofuse*, the institution or temple and the people who propagate the *Lotus Sutra* cannot survive or continue their work.

As we begin this new year, I invite you to take a moment to reflect on what *ofuse* means to you. It is not about the amount or expectations, but about the intention behind an offering. Whether it takes the form of material support, time, sincere practice, *ofuse* is an expression of gratitude for the teachings we receive and the connections that sustain us. It is my hope that by returning to this understanding, we can continue to nurture an environment rooted in mutual care, humility, and appreciation, just as Nichiren Shonin envisioned.