

SACRAMENTO NICHIREN NEWS

Sacramento Nichiren Buddhist Church

March 2026

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

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

MARCH 2026

1	11:30am	Sunday Service
8	11:30am	Shodaigyo
15	—	No Service
22	11:30am	Ohigan
29	11:30am	Kaji Kito
		Church Meeting

APRIL 2026

5	11:30am	Sunday Service
12	11:30am	Hanamatsuri (Buddha's Birthday)
19	—	No Service
26	11:30am	Kaishu-e (Nichiren Order Founding Day)
		Kaji Kito
		Church Meeting

CHURCH MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

FEBRUARY 8, 2026

- Merry Hitomi and John Hughes will handle the church bank accounts previously managed by Joe Hitomi
- Considered setting up monthly payments on autopay
- Discussed moving funds into interest-bearing accounts and possibly placing half into CDs
- Discussed repaving the parking lot due to increasing cracks
- Potential upgrade of the electrical system (lights flicker when the large refrigerator is in use)
- Discussed installing an alarm system due to multiple people climbing over the fence onto the church property

OHIGAN

MARCH 22, 2026
(SUNDAY AT 11:30AM)

Buddhists observe Ohigan during the spring and fall equinox. During Ohigan, we set aside time not only for self-reflection, but also to focus on our Buddhist studies.

The spring service will be held in **March**. Please write the names of your deceased family members on the enclosed form and return it to the Church before the service.

HANAMATSURI

APRIL 12, 2026
(SUNDAY AT 11:30AM)

Hanamatsuri (flower festival) is a Japanese celebration of Sakyamuni Buddha's birthday. We will celebrate by reenacting the legend that sweet rain fell in Lumbini Garden at his birth—we will pour *amacha* (sweet tea) over a statue of the baby Buddha placed inside the *hanamido* (flower pavilion). Please join us for this celebration.

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.

NEW MEMBERS

We warmly welcome **Edmund and Vivian Zander** as new members of our church community.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We gratefully acknowledge our generous donations.

SPECIAL DONATIONS

Peter Kato/\$35; Dexter and Emiko Dong/\$520; John Hughes/\$100 (pest control); Fusako Okamoto/ flowers for the church altar.

NEW YEAR'S PARTY DONATIONS

Lily Hitomi/\$200 and manju; Gail and Dave Tanaka/\$100; Yoshiko Hitomi/\$50; Ruby Gotow/\$20, kuromame, kabocha, macaroni salad, and yokan; Mihoko Igarashi/\$100; Barbara Tanaka/\$40; Kiyoko Kuwabara/\$294.47 (groceries); Fusako Okamoto/ oranges.

SETSUBUN DONATIONS (PAPER PRODUCTS)

Yoshiko Hitomi/+soybeans and candy; Mihoko Igarashi; Fusako Okamoto; Ruby Gotow; Kiyoko Kuwabara; Merry Hitomi; Jane Hitomi; Lily Hitomi; Mary and John Hughes; Gail and Dave Tanaka; Kathy Mine; Vivian Zander.

MEMBERSHIP (\$240)

Yoshiko Hitomi; John Hughes; Richard Hughes; Kyomi Igarashi; Kathy Mine; Dearthra Murray; Brian Tsuda; Elizabeth Nettle; Gary and Ruby Gotow; Edmund and Vivian Zander; Yurimi Sawamura; Gail and Davie Tanaka; Keiko Lucas; Dexter and Emiko Dong (\$480 - for 2025 and 2026).

FUJINKAI MEMBERSHIP (\$10)

Keiko Lucas.

MEMORIAL

Nagasawa Family/\$200 - in memory of Joe Nagasawa.

CONDOLENCES

We offer our sincere condolences to the family and friends of **Joe Hitomi**, our church treasurer, who passed away on January 20th, 2026, at the age of 73.

The Privilege of Chanting the Sutra Part One: The Los Angeles Nichiren Sangha Association

Kenjo Igarashi

When I left Japan in November 1975, I was a young minister in my twenties who had recently been assigned as an assistant minister at the Los Angeles (LA) temple. My plan was to stay in the United States for approximately three years as part of my training and to learn about overseas propagation work before ultimately returning to Japan. At the time, immigration procedures allowed religious workers to obtain permanent residency before arriving in the United States. The Vietnam War had only recently ended, and I recall being nervous as I applied for my Green Card. I had heard stories of ministers who were asked during their interviews whether they would serve if drafted and felt obliged to agree for fear of denial. My own interview, however, was brief, and I was soon approved. Little did I know that having this Green Card would ultimately shape my life.

From the moment I arrived in LA, I realized that things were different from what I had been told. For example, young overseas ministers were expected to attend free English as a Second Language (ESL) classes at the local community college to better serve the members. However, because most members were *Issei* and *Kibei Nisei* who spoke Japanese, the head minister felt it was unnecessary for me to learn English and did not permit me to attend these classes. It was only after a member noticed this situation that I was able to briefly enroll.

Less than a year later, difficulties at the temple resulted in the departure of nearly one hundred families. I also left my position. Unlike in Japan where several Nichiren Shu temples can be found within the same city, LA had only one. As a result, these former members were left without a place to gather and practice. I myself was also unsure of my next steps and considered returning to Japan. Soon afterward, however, the San Francisco (SF) temple needed a new head minister, and I was assigned to that position later that month. It was around the same time that the former members approached me and asked if I would guide their practice. Moved by their sincerity and dedication, I agreed to help, and with the understanding of the SF members, I began traveling to LA once a month to conduct services for them.

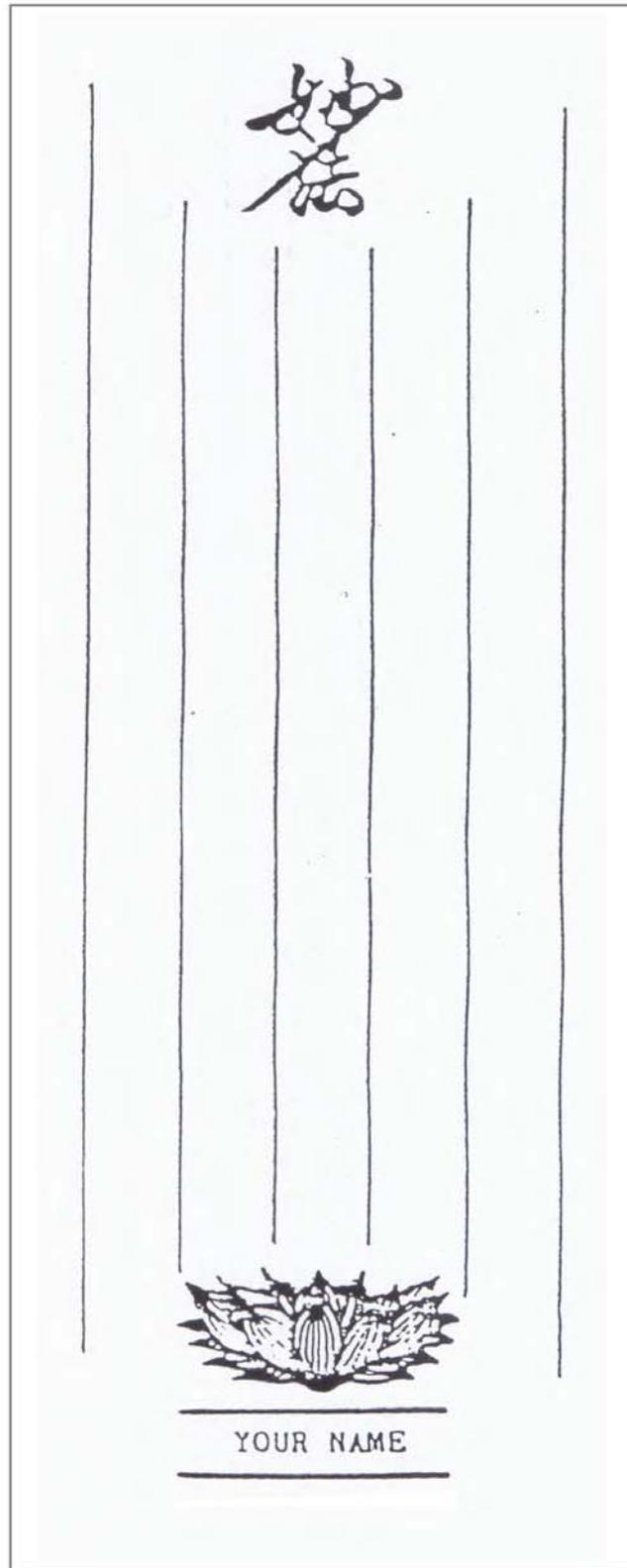
Because these activities were conducted independently of the LA temple, we received no financial support or official recognition from the Nichiren Shu headquarters in Japan. Nevertheless, the members came together and contributed whatever time and resources they could to make the services possible. At first, we met in a small hall attached to a retirement home in Boyle Heights, and later at the Long Beach Japanese Cultural Center. The members gathered the necessary items for the altar, which we assembled before each service and carefully took apart afterward. Certain families prepared offerings, while others stored and transported the altar items. Even without a permanent temple, the room was full at every service, with members dressed in suits and their best attire out of respect and devotion to their practice. When we chanted together, the atmosphere felt no different from and at times even more powerful than anything I had experienced before or since in a temple.

We came to call this group the Los Angeles Nichiren Sangha Association, or "Shintokai" ("the gathering of [Nichiren Shu] followers"). Its purpose was not to recruit new members but to provide these families with a place to continue their practice. At first, I thought that many would eventually want to return to the LA temple. Instead, a strong bond formed, and most remained with the Shintokai for the rest of their lives. The children and grandchildren also attended, many of whom had never known a permanent temple building. What I expected to last only a short time continued for 49 years.

The Shintokai endured without a physical temple because of the strong faith, effort, and commitment of its members. It is easy to take a place of worship for granted and assume it will always exist. Yet for the Shintokai, the opportunity to practice and chant the sutra together was a privilege. Although no building bears its name and little written record of its existence remains, the Shintokai is an important part of the history of Nichiren Shu in America. There is much we can learn from the determination of the Shintokai members to continue their practice, regardless of circumstances.

Few ministers are given the opportunity to witness such dedication as I experienced through the Shintokai. I am deeply grateful to the families who entrusted me with this role, as well as to the members of the SF and Sacramento temples who allowed me to continue this work. It has been a true privilege to have practiced alongside them.

Write the names of your deceased family members on the form below, cut out the form and return it to the Church before the service.



Calligraphic symbol

YOUR NAME