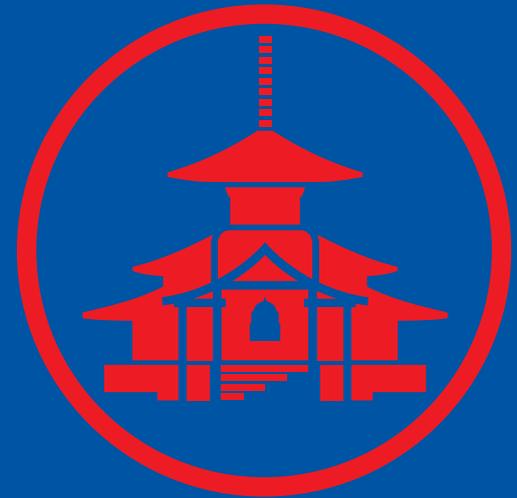


THE PATH OF THE BUDDHA MIND OF HUMAN LIFE



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By Rev. Teinyo Kunugi

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Honolulu Myohoji

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Words of Gratitude

Many people do not understand the idea of God and Buddha. That is because religious leaders, including myself, do not properly explain this.

God is the source of our life. God is the existence that gives us life. Buddha is a human being that awakened to the Truth. The Eternal Buddha that we worship at Myohoji is another name for God. Nevertheless, the name God is accompanied by many religious and philosophical ideas. We clear away those minute issues and simply worship. What we worship is the source of our life and the reality that daily sustains us.

The teachings of Rev. Kunugi are a model that we priests too must follow. If you read and understand his messages, you can understand the Universal Truth. However, since Buddhism is a religion of faith and practice, Truth cannot be known by only knowing it intellectually. For enlightenment, practice is first of all important.

In human life we cannot easily encounter such writings as these. Let us be grateful from the bottom of our heart for the joy of having a karmic affinity with the writings of Rev. Teinyo Kunugi.

Thank you very much Rev. Kunugi.

Rev. Takamasa Yamamura
Head Minister, Honolulu Myohoji Mission

Preface

We are pleased to publish a third booklet featuring the thoughts of Rev. Teinyo Kunugi. In this booklet you will discover stories of people who have been blessed knowingly or unknowingly with the Mind of Buddha and God. From a simple exclamation by a child, to the depths of human suffering, to a search for meaning and, lastly, connections to our deceased ancestors. A common thread? Seeking the Mind of Buddha and God, to lead us to happiness and enlightenment in our lives.

This booklet marks our tenth publication! Somewhat of a milestone for Myohoji Temple! The project started in 2015, with the intention of bringing an understanding and relevance to our Faith, Belief and Practice in the Lotus Sutra and Nichiren Shu Buddhism, for these current times.

As always, we owe a debt of tremendous gratitude to our Head Minister, Rev. Takamasa Yamamura, and the Temple's translator, Mr. Dean Makinodan. Without their tireless effort and work, these booklets, from the current modern day insightful writings of Nichiren Shu Ministers, could not be read in English.

We sincerely hope that you will find comfort, encouragement and understanding in your reading.

Blessings!

Daniel C. Liu
President
Board of Directors
Honolulu Myohoji

The Path of the Buddha Mind of Human Life—The Way of Life that Deepens Love

Thank You Very Much God

This is an episode at a certain kindergarten.

Three or four four-year-olds of the middle class were playing on the slide. They climbed up the stairs and slid down. In time, they tried to climb up the sliding board.

The children climbed up the slide one by one. They forced themselves up and ran up, but they could not easily reach the top. They went up and slipped down. They went up and slid back.

They increased their approach run distance and seemed to be competing about whom will reach the top of the slide first. In time one child finally reached the top of the slide. He was so happy that he yelled loudly.

What do you think the child said?

The child yelled: "Thank you very much God!" And he bowed deeply. It was said that the kindergarten teachers were so impressed that they reported it to the kindergarten head. Since the kindergarten was a Buddhist kindergarten, a "morning prayer" was held each morning. After praying for world peace, with their hands in gassho, the teachers and students recited "God, ancestors, thank you very much. Namu Myoho Renge Kyo." We can say that this prayer is from the hope that the mind of gratitude to God and Buddha, who are protecting us and are sustaining us, will bud within the mind of the pure young-child.

The kindergarten teachers who heard about this episode came to know about the importance of everyday prayer and their confidence was strengthened. Isn't it true that without devotion and effort we cannot realize our wishes and achieve the goals of our lives? There is also no such thing as happiness falling from heaven if we wait. Yet it is also not true that everything will turn out as we wish by just our effort alone. Isn't it true that we can live a happy life from the very fact that the "Great Life and Eternal Buddha" are supporting our devotion and effort,

and protecting us and sustaining us? I believe that to open our eyes to the “Great Existence and Eternal Buddha” guides our life toward a wonderful life.

Centered around the “Great Life and Eternal Buddha” all the many Buddhas, bodhisattvas, deities and gods, and ancestors are working for the sake of our human society and each of us. Isn't that why, in connection with this work, we seek to realize the mission of our natural gifts and live a happy life in this world?

It is written in the sutra, “the Buddha Mind is the Mind of Great Compassion.” The Mind of the Eternal Buddha is the Mind of Great Compassion. I call the “path to connect to the Eternal Buddha” the “path of the Buddha Mind of human life.”

In the same way that our parents are always protecting and helping us, the Eternal Buddha, who is the Parent of our life, is also always protecting and sustaining us with His Mind of Great Compassion.

Isn't the path to connect to the Eternal Buddha our gratitude to His Mind of Great Compassion? In the same way that the prayer of gratitude of the kindergarten children each morning is connecting with God, the prayer of gratitude "thank you very much" becomes our power to live. We must not forget this.

About our ancestors too, we say that from the very fact that they no longer have a physical body, their spirit body is always embracing us with their thoughts of great loving kindness. We also say our prayer of gratitude "thank you very much" to this connection with our ancestor, don't we?

The word happiness (shiwase) is also written with the Chinese character for the "coming together of intentions." In order to become happy by connecting with the intentions of the Mind of Great Compassion of God, Buddha and our ancestors, shouldn't we offer the intentions of our gratitude? It is the coming together of intentions. That is why the prayer "thank you very much" is the great path to our happiness. The mind of "thank you very much" is a pure mind. There is no hatred, anger or complaint.

It is a perfectly clear mind. It is a mind that makes our soul shine. It is truly the path that connects us with the Eternal Buddha's Mind of Great Compassion.

Odaimoku Exchanged for Rice Balls

This is something that really happened. In the fall of 1945, the year that the Second World War had come to an end, K was discharged and returned to his native Kobe. It had been several years since he was mobilized while a student at Kobe commercial college, as part of the wartime mobilization of students for military service, and sent to the battlegrounds of the South Pacific. When returning to his dear hometown, he found that it had become a stretch of burnt ruins. Nevertheless, K was unable to even see those ruins. He had lost his vision in both eyes from a bomb blast on the battlefield.

K's home was a wealthy merchant family in Kobe. He grew up in a comfortable home under his loving parents. While he entered the commercial college with great hopes for his

future, the time for the total mobilization of Japan had come and he was recruited and sent from college to the battlefield.

His body was covered by wounds from an incendiary bomb and he lost eyesight in both eyes. Nevertheless, he returned home looking forward to meet his parents. However, both of his parents were already dead from the bombing.

K, who was all alone in the world, while encountering many hardships, went to Fukuoka in Kyushu to seek the help of a friend. The time after Japan's defeat was a period of great confusion. More than anything else, food was scarce and the people throughout Japan were desperate to survive. It was a time when it was enough to stay alive and there was no way to be concerned about others and the like.

Nothing could be done for K, who had no sight in both eyes and managed to reach Kyushu to seek the help of a friend. K, who wore the uniform of a disabled veteran, had no choice than to find a place where people gathered and live a life of begging for their kindness.

In Fukuoka's Hakata east park stands a bronze statue of St. Nichiren. It is a large bronze statue that is 11.5 meters high. It is called Hakata's "St. Nichiren Dozo-Sama." People are always worshipping there. K depended on the kindness of those who worshiped at "Dozo-Sama" and he stood each day in the east park. There was an old woman who took notice of K standing there. She was a helper of the temple of the bronze statue. One day the old woman went to K and said: "Since this is a place to worship St. Nichiren and chant the Odaimoku, Namu Myoho Renge Kyo, you should chant the Odaimoku. If you chant for an hour each day, I will give you a rice ball at lunch."

K, who had never chanted the Odaimoku before, began to do so loudly.

By chanting the Odaimoku he would receive a rice ball. Each day K chanted the Odaimoku while looking forward to the rice ball. When he chanted the Odaimoku while touching the statue of St. Nichiren with his hand, he began to wonder about what kind of person was the saint and he wanted to know about him. So he had the old woman, who brought him a rice

ball each day, tell him about St. Nichiren. K also participated in the services of the temple. And he came to listen to the Dharma talks and lectures.

As he gradually came to understand the preciousness of religious faith and the greatness of St. Nichiren, the Odaimoku began to naturally well-up from the depths of his mind.

St. Nichiren spent the last nine years of his life on Mt. Minobu. St. Nichiren dearly loved Mt. Minobu. He is known to have left behind the words: “My soul shall remain on Mt. Minobu to the end of time.” K, who learned about this, very much wanted to worship at Mt. Minobu. Even if he could not see Mt. Minobu with his physical eyes, he hoped to worship Mt. Minobu with his mind’s eye and touch the soul of St. Nichiren. While peddling threads and needles, the journey to Mt. Minobu was a long and difficult religious training. Nevertheless, since K was a person with a honest and humble nature, he was helped by many people, and he was able to reach his long-cherished Mt. Minobu.

When he felt the breezes of Mt. Minobu and the mind of great compassion of St. Nichiren, he forgot his sufferings of his life and the hardship of his journey, and he was choked by deep emotion.

He could not forget his deep emotion, and the following year K realized his wish to worship at Mt. Minobu again, and he set out to climb and worship at Mt. Shichimen. It is a high mountain of 1982 meters with a difficult mountain path. It is a mountain of severe religious training. K, however, firmly clung to the thoughts of great loving kindness of Shichimen Daimyojin and earnestly carried himself upward. Here too, many people lent a helping hand.

At the ceremony exhibiting Shichimen Daimyojin on the mountain top, K was able to experience a religious exultation as though being bathed in the great light of the deity. On his way back from his worship at Mt. Minobu and Mt. Shichimen, K stopped by his hometown of Kobe and was able to meet his relatives. They were happy that K was in high spirits and they encouraged him to be examined by an ophthalmologist at Kobe medical college.

Just at that time, in the world of ophthalmology, research in cornea transplants was advancing. K was encouraged to be the first recipient in Japan of a cornea transplant at that hospital.

It would be none the worse since his eyes has lost their vision and he could not see. And he thought that there would be no greater blessing if he were able to see again. K accepted their offer.

After the operation his eyes were covered for several days with a heavy bandage. Each day the bandage was removed one layer of gauze at a time. K gradually was able to sense brightness and finally light again returned to his eyes. He was so full of joy as though in ecstasy. He was unable to hold back his joy.

“St. Nichiren, Shichimen goddess and the people who have helped me. Thank you very much. Namu Myoho Renge Kyo.” From the depths of his mind the Odaimoku welled up and he continued to chant loudly.

K felt that the old woman, who had encouraged him to chant the Odaimoku, must have surely been a transformation-body of God and Buddha. And he felt that those who helped him, when he was blind, had been sent by the various Buddhas and deities. He firmly pledged that he would never forget their kindnesses.

Later, K won the confidence of the owner of a food store, who had helped him during his worship at Minobu. He married the owner's daughter, was blessed by children, entrusted with the store's management and lived a happy life.

Namu Myoho Renge Kyo Is the Buddha Mind

In the Tang period of China there lived the Zen Master Dorin Choka. The Zen Master traveled about China and he arrived at Mt. Shinbo, north of the West Lake in Hangchow. He was attracted to this wonderful place and stayed. There was a large pine tree whose foliage was thick like a canopy. And since the branch beneath it had

a good place to sit, the Zen Master climbed the tree and lived there like nesting bird. That is why the people at the time called him Zen Master Bird Nest.

At that time the poet Hakurakuten arrived to take up his position as governor of Hangchow. When he was enjoying a visit to West Lake, he heard the rumor about Zen Master Bird Nest and he immediately went to Mt. Shinbo to call on the Zen Master. Hakurakuten looked up at the Zen Master, who was living in a thick growth of pine trees like a nesting bird, and he asked: "Please tell me in a word about what kind of teaching is Buddhism."

In response, from the top of the tree, Zen Master Bird Nest answered: "Do not engage in the various evil deeds and carry out all that is good."

"Doesn't even a three-year-old know this?" When Hakurakuten said this, in return, the Zen Master answered: "Although this is something a three-year-old child knows, even an old man of eighty years cannot carry this out."

Hakurakuten, who was accomplished in learning and virtue, bowed his head to the teachings of the Zen Master. And from that time on he established a close relationship with the Zen Master. Later, Hakurakuten became devoted to Buddhism and he made his residence into a temple and called it Kozanji, and he gave himself the title of the Devotee of Kozanji. “Do not engage in the various evil deeds and carry out all that is good”—this teaching that Zen Master Bird Nest conveyed to Hakurakuten is the first two lines of the Shichibutsu-Tsukai-Ge or the Verse of Commandment of the Seven Buddhas. “Purify your own mind” and “This is the teaching of all the Buddhas” are the next two lines. These four lines are the great source of all the teachings of Buddhism.

Before the appearance of Shakyamuni Buddha in this world, six Buddhas had taught their teachings. Shakyamuni Buddha appeared as the seventh Buddha and taught Buddhism. The universal teaching of the seven Buddhas is Shichibutsu-Tsukai-Ge or the Verse of Commandment of the Seven Buddhas.

“Do no engage in the various evil deeds and carry out all that is good.” This teaching seems

simple but it is difficult, isn't it? It is just as Zen Master Bird Nest said: "Although this is something a three-year-old child knows, even an old man of eighty years cannot carry this out."

If everyone did good things and refrained from doing what is bad, the home would be peaceful, society would be peaceful and the world would also be in peace. Without a doubt this world would become the Pure Buddha Land. The troubles of human society lie in the fact that this has yet to be realized. That is why the second half of Shichibutsu-Tsukai-Ge is telling us that each one of us must purify our own mind.

A mind that is like the endless clear sky, a mind of great joy like an energetic soul, a mind of gratitude of thank you very much, a mind of action that seeks to live its natural gifts—in order to uncover this mind that joins us with a happy human life, we purify our mind, don't we?

It was St. Nichiren who taught the path that anyone could follow to purify the mind.

In the Lotus Sutra the infinitely pure mind of the Eternal Buddha is being taught. His infinitely great work is being explained.

His infinitely profound teachings are being expounded. His infinitely great miraculous powers are being revealed. The Lotus Sutra is the Mind of Great Compassion of the Eternal Buddha and His Soul.

The Eternal Buddha of the Lotus Sutra has been given the name Myoho Renge Kyo. The words that we chant to be joined in oneness with the Eternal Buddha are Namu Myoho Renge Kyo. When beset by sadness and in tears, chant Namu Myoho Renge Kyo. Your tears of sadness will subside into the depths of your abdomen.

When bitterly disappointed, chant Namu Myoho Renge Kyo as though venting your disappointment. Your emotional pain will be purified. When happy, chant Namu Myoho Renge Kyo of gratitude of thank you very much. Don't we feel in these words the joy of being protected in the Buddha's thoughts of great loving kindness? This is great religious joy. It is the moment when our mind is the most purified. The way to live this great religious joy is the path of the Buddha Mind.

Isn't it true that our human life does not consist of only good things alone? It is probably the case that there are more difficulties. In particular, we are told that the age of global climate change has arrived. There is no way of knowing when a natural disaster will occur.

Yet no matter what troubles may come to us, we continue to chant Namu Myoho Renge Kyo and join in oneness with the Eternal Buddha, don't we? That is because, at any time, great religious joy can be brought forth from within us.

During his difficult days when banished to Sado, St. Nichiren shed tears of great religious joy. He wrote: "The birds and insects cry but they do not shed tears. While Nichiren does not cry, his tears flow on and on."

Wasn't he the finest teacher and guide that lived the path of the Buddha Mind?

Sentient Beings Are Innumerable, I Vow to Save Them All—Work for the Sake of Others

At Jorinji a hungry spirits memorial service is being held each month. The names of the spirits that one wishes to memorialize are written on a toba and memorialized. This March 11 is the eighth year since the Great Eastern Japan Earthquake. More than twenty thousand people had lost their precious lives. At the March service of Jorinji, a toba was made for the spirits and the trueheartedness of the memorial service was offered to them. Rev. Kunugi's son, Rev. Teigyō Kunugi, had the followers of Mt. Shichimen write paper toba for those who died in the earthquake. As many as thirty-thousand tobas were written. These paper tobas were memorialized for one year, they were burned, the ash was burned and a large wooden toba was erected as a memorial tower. I believe that the many people, who perished in the earthquake, must be extremely grateful for this.

Sentient Beings Are Innumerable, I Vow to Save Them All

At the end of a service or training the Four Great Vows are always recited. This is a vow of a follower of Buddhism and all sects of Buddhism recite this and make this vow. The first of these infinitely great vows is “sentient beings are innumerable, I vow to save them all.” Among the four vows, this first vow is the practice of benefiting others and the training to work for the sake of another.

The sentient beings are not only people. They are all living beings. This is not only those who are alive on earth. Those who are deceased have lost their physical body but their soul is alive. Since both the living and the dead are sentient beings, those who have died in natural disasters, wars, terroristic attacks and so on are also sentient beings. This extraordinarily great vow of saving countless and infinite sentient beings is the first vow that we Buddhists are assigned. What does “save” mean? To “save” means to have them become the Buddha.

Since the realm of the Buddha is a happy realm of rejoicing, to have people become happy is to save them.

The people that died in the Great Eastern Japan Earthquake, for whom the hungry spirits memorial service was held, must surely be accepting our memorial service with feelings of joy. This is truly the practice of the great vow “sentient beings are innumerable, I vow to save them all.” Since this is also our joy, we have also accumulated great merit.

The Buddha Causes the Minds of the Sentient Beings to Rejoice

When the famous Zen Master Mumon Yamada Roshi was lecturing, a young man asked: “Roshi, while you often speak about the real self, what kind of self is the real self?” The Zen Master answered: “Try to work with your whole heart for the sake of another. Then if you feel a sense of satisfaction from the bottom of your heart for having done so, that satisfaction is your real self.”

I was moved by this reply of the Zen Master. I felt that what he said is indeed true. I was impressed by how he explained the difficult concept of the real self in simple and easy to understand words. If we are of service to people and society with heart and soul, the person we have served will say thank you and worship us. I felt that the person who is worshiped is truly the real self.

In the Expedient chapter of the Lotus Sutra, it is taught that the Buddha causes the minds of the sentient beings to rejoice. To become one with the Buddha is the real self and that is what saves the sentient beings.

Merits of Memorial Services

K lost her husband seven years ago and since then she earnestly continued to hold memorial services for him, and she memorialized him at the monthly hungry spirits service at Jorinji.

The year before last when she collapsed from heart illness and was being hospitalized, her late husband appeared in her dream.

“Thank you for always holding a memorial service for me. You will be alright because I made a request to St. Nichiren of Jorinji.” He clearly said this to her in her dream.

After her dream, K’s condition improved by the day.

She spoke about her precious experience saying: “It was a blessing to know that a memorial service truly reaches the deceased person.”

When the Ancestors Suffer, the Descendants Suffer

I believe that there are many causes for illness—the weakening of the body from age, a physical defect, the effect of bad bacteria or perhaps an illness that is caused by an accident. I believe that these can be solved by the advanced modern medicine of today. Yet from my long life experience, I believe that there is also probably illness where the descendants suffer because the ancestors are suffering.

Our blood is blood that is carried on from and joined with our ancestors. Therefore when our ancestors are happy, our blood is also happy, and when our ancestors suffer, our blood also becomes ill.

Why can I say this? A family that is totally uninterested in memorial services lacks brightness. This is perhaps the lack of the light of gratitude for the favors received from those they have a karmic relationship with beginning

with their ancestors. Since this is a matter of what we call religious faith, we could probably say that the only way is for the individuals to open their eyes to the unseen world.

I believe that the people of today must not forget the merit of offering memorial services for all spirits in the universe beginning with one's deceased parents, one's ancestors as well as those who have died in wars, natural disasters and accidents.

Not My Child but a Good Friend

Among the disciples of St. Nichiren there was one by the name of Horen Shonin.

After the passing of his father, Horen Shonin continued to memorialize his father by reading the verse section of chapter sixteen for him each day. When the thirteenth anniversary of his passing came, Horen Shonin requested a memorial service from St. Nichiren on Mt. Minobu.

St. Nichiren was struck with admiration when he heard that Horen Shonin had conducted a memorial service for his father for as long as thirteen years by daily reading the verse section of chapter sixteen and “what is more” on the thirteenth anniversary he read the entire Lotus Sutra five times. He wrote a letter to Horen Shonin.

“Buddhist monk Horen daily manifested golden words from his mouth for his father’s memorial service. Each of the words changed into the sun and the sun transformed into Shakyamuni Buddha, whom became a great light that penetrated the earth, illuminated the world of hell, even illuminated the worlds of the ten directions and searched for your father’s whereabouts. That light turned to your father’s spirit and said: ‘Who do you think that I am? I am the words of the verse section of chapter sixteen of the Lotus Sutra that your son, the Buddhist monk Horen, chanted for your sake. For your sake, I now become your eyes, ears, legs and hands, and make you free to accept your son’s trueheartedness.’ When this happened, your father’s soul rejoiced, and he faced this

world with his hands in prayer and surely worshiped you saying: 'My son Horen is not my child by my good friend.' Isn't this wonderful?" This is what St. Nichiren wrote in his letter.

A "good friend" is a person with a mind of the Lotus Sutra that leads one to the Buddha's path so that one may find happiness. That person is an honored teacher.

Isn't there no greater happiness than being worshiped by another? The person that worships and the person that is worshiped are people of the merit of both being saved.

Afterword—A Journey

Over these past several years I have had the good fortune of translating and sharing with you the writings of Rev. Teinyo Kunugi. We were blessed by his presence at the celebration of the 85th anniversary of our temple's founding in May 2015. At that time Rev. Kunugi was the vice head of the delegation of ministers, which was led by the former Chief Administrator of the Nichiren Shu Headquarters, and one of its highest ranking ministers, Bishop Tsumyo Ito.

While I did not have the opportunity to speak at length with Rev. Kunugi, I was impressed by his presence. He obviously seemed attuned with the energies of our temple and its place in the religious world of Hawaii. These impressions were confirmed when Rev. Yamamura showed me the August 2015 issue of Rev. Kunugi's magazine, *Hoju*, which included "A Prayer for the Honolulu Myohoji Temple." That prayer appears as the opening article for our booklet, *The Path to True Happiness*, which was published in 2016. Since then, Rev. Kunugi's writings have been pivotal to the English publications of our temple.

This booklet is the tenth publication of our temple. Our publications began in May 2015 with *The Reality of Myohoji*, which was published to commemorate our 85th anniversary. The New Year's supplements to Rev. Kunugi's magazine, *Hoju*, have been central to our publication work. They are the core of two booklets and the special 100th newsletter issue of our temple. Moreover, the booklet, *Enlightenment*, was a transcript of a commemorative lecture, which appeared as a serial in the *Hoju* magazine. Our temple has been greatly blessed by the treasure gems (hoju) of wisdom that Rev. Kunugi has kindly provided us. The preface by Rev. Yamamura in *The Path to True Happiness* contains a wonderful description of the person and work of Rev. Kunugi in the ministry of Nichiren Shu. I encourage our readers to again revisit the Preface and also Rev. Kunugi's prayer for our temple.

Some of you may have noticed that each New Year's Supplement by Rev. Kunugi, which we have translated, use the word 道 do or michi in its title. The original title for *The Path to True Happiness* is "Jinsei no Shinjitsu Do" (Path of the True Way of Life). The original title for

Fulfillment is “Jinsei no Jujitsu Do” (Path of a Life of Fulfillment). His article, which we ran in the 100th newsletter is “Jinsei no Tenmei Matto Michi” (Path to Fulfill Life’s Destiny). And the original title of the present work is “Jinsei no Busshin Do” (Path of the Buddha Mind). Rev. Kunugi does seem to have an affinity for the word 道do. His frequent use of this word, and the humility and grace in his writing, indicates that he is a genuine practitioner and teacher of the path.

I have called this afterword by the translator “A Journey” to acknowledge the positive steps forward that our temple has made since our 85th anniversary, which we have nicknamed “New Beginnings.” In addition to efforts to bring more stability and transparency to our temple’s management, great steps have been taken to bring relevance to our faith and to give it a clear presence in the English language. I am especially grateful to the guidance and devoted efforts of our Head Minister, Rev. Takamasa Yamamura, and our President, Dan Liu.

This booklet is the fourth writing by Rev. Kunugi to grace our temple. As with the other booklets it provides insights and gems of wisdom for those who wish to deepen their practice and learning. I am sure that if you would take the time to read and practice even one of the lessons contained, you will experience a positive upliftment in faith and sense a deep satisfaction from knowing the beauty of your life's journey in this world.

Thank you to our Head Minister, Rev. Yamamura, our President, Dan Liu, our officers and followers and friends. May we all succeed in our journey, and may we continue to meet the Lotus Sutra birth after birth and world after world.

Dean Makinodan

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