

New year's message from Milton Keynes Peace Pagoda, 2024.

Na Mu Myo Ho Ren Ge Kyo.

To Our Respected
Spiritual Friends,
Praying for
your good
health

Rissho-Ankoku
国安正立
"Working to establish the
Righteous Law
to secure the peace
of nations"

Reverently
welcoming
the
New Year

Year of the Dragon
Oranautan Gassho
Drawing by
Most Venerable Nichidatsu Fujii

From
Nipponzan Myohoji

Milton Keynes Dojo
2024

As war, violence and hate are spiralling and cause untold suffering in Gaza, Ukraine and many other places in the world, we pray. St Nichiren, walking through lands where disaster had struck, said: 'I Nichiren do not cry, but my tears flow incessantly. These tears, embodied in my voice, become Na Mu Myo Ho Ren Ge Kyo'.

Our teacher, Fujii Guruji, became a Buddhist monk in 1903. He widely studied and practiced the Buddha's teaching "hatred never ceases by hatred, violence never ceases by violence", admonishing political and military leaders to follow a righteous path away from militarism, and creating deep spiritual ties with Mahatma Gandhi.

Immediately after the end of the 2nd world war, Fujii Guruji came back to Japan. He devoted himself to prayer and thought on what he could do to help rebuild his country-seeking peace first.

Guruji writes: "I had made up my mind in my boyhood to walk around the whole country beating the drum, praying for peace as a response to the militarism. But there

was a natural limit to what I could do in this way. I was already old, and although I had a will to walk, my legs were not quite as strong as they had been. If I walked, my footsteps would lead others, but it did not seem sufficient. What principle should I take, what next step, to lead my country into a righteous, peaceful way? "

Guruji found an answer in the Lotus Sutra. When the Buddha taught about life and people paid respect and prayed together, a Stupa appeared and the land was transformed into a beautiful place, like heaven.

Guruji writes: "I started a fast on December 1st of that year, and on December 8th, the day commemorating Shakyamuni's attainment of Buddhahood, I made up my mind to erect a Stupa on Hanaokayama, as a symbol and beacon of the peace-seeking Japan. When people were at a loss what to do in the face of the food shortage and general destruction and disorder, it seemed like a crazy idea to build a stupa.

Everywhere around me, people were only concerned about how to rebuild their homes or where to find food. But before the end of that year I had moved there, and for the next 8 years worked physically on building a Peace Pagoda. I started with only a rough plan, from virtually nothing, with 4 or 5 followers and helpers. We found some second hand tools at a junk yard. Every day we would wield a pick-axe, dig out stones and level the ground.

In those immediate post-war times, food was rationed severely, streets and railway stations abounded with orphans, stealing or acting as pawns of black market merchants. Some of these children came to us. They would wet the bed at night, be mischievous and had to be watched all the time; sometimes racketeers would come and threaten us and them, but many stayed and gradually were influenced by our devotion and became helpful. At first I provided wooden clogs for them, but they kept breaking soon and eventually all of us including myself chose to be bare-feet, both in the cold and the hot season.

There was a law providing extra rations of rice for those who were bringing up juvenile vagrants. However, it was against my principles to receive government assistance, so I shared the regular rations with the children. When the locals saw us make gruel consisting mostly of grass leaves and rice, they started to help. As the work continued, so grew the vision of the shape of the Stupa. Initially I imagined something simple and small, but gradually the vision grew into something more like the Stupas seen in India and Sri Lanka. A local architect was very interested in the shape of the container for the Buddha's relics which had been offered to me in Sri Lanka, and he designed the final shape of the Peace Pagoda.

People used to come to Hanaokayama during the cherry blossom season, to see the *flowers and drink sake*. *Previously, the drunk flower-viewers would always scuffle with each other, and the police would have to settle the quarrels. But since the Peace Pagoda took shape, they would sit, drink and gaze at the Stupa, the fighting stopped and soon the police was only needed to direct and help the old people up to the site. More and more visitors and support started coming.*

At last, in 1954, we were able to celebrate the completion of the Stupa. It was now commonly viewed as symbolising the prayer for peace not only in Japan but all the world. Therefore it was decided to hold a World Conference of Pacifists at Hanaokayama to mark the completion of the Stupa”.

From this place, over time, Peace Pagodas have arisen in many parts of the world - they are a focus for people to unite, embodying our wish for peace and dedication to non-violence.

Sister Maruta hopes to join all monks and nuns in Japan in May for a 3 day walk and gathering at Hanaokayama Peace Pagoda, 70 years old in 2024.

If you can support her or the Temple to make this possible, she would be very grateful.

With very best wishes, and bowing with palms together in respect.

Nipponzan Myohoji,
Milton Keynes



IMPORTANT DATES FOR YOUR DIARY 2024

Nipponzan Myohoji Buddhist Temple, Brickhill Street, Willen Lake, Milton Keynes, MK15 0BG
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Mon 1st Jan	8.00 am, Peace Pagoda	Sunrise welcome ceremony
Sun 7 th Jan	2.00 pm, Temple	40 th Death Anniversary of Most Ven. Nichidatsu Fujii Guruji
Sun. 4 th Feb	6.00 pm, Temple	Bean Throwing Festival to welcome the Spring
Wed 20 th March	3.00 pm, Temple	Spring equinox, offering prayers for ancestors
Sun 7 th April	3.00 pm; Temple	Buddha's Birthday (Flower Festival)
Sun 14 th April	1.30 pm, in front of Temple	Raising of the Tibetan flag. Details to be announced-help needed
Sun 28 th April	Sunrise; Peace Pagoda	Anniversary of the First Chanting of Na Mu Myo Ho Ren Ge Kyo
6 th -12 th May	Hanaokayama, Japan	Peacewalk and 70 th anniversary of 1 st Peace Pagoda
Sat 15 th June	2.00 pm, Battersea Park, London	Anniversary Ceremony at London Peace Pagoda
Sun 16 th June	12.00 -4.00 p.m.; Peace Pagoda 11.00 am Dana for Theravadan Monks, Temple	44 th Peace Pagoda Anniversary Ceremony
Tues 6 th Aug	8.15 am; MK Rose, Campbell Park 7.30 pm; Peace Pagoda	Reflection on Hiroshima Day Hiroshima Day Lantern Floating Ceremony
Sun 18 th Aug	10.00 am; Temple	18 th Death Anniversary of Revd. Handa Shonin
Sun 22 nd Sept	5.00 pm, Temple	Autumn equinox; prayers for ancestors
Sat 12 th Oct	5.00 pm; Temple	St. Nichiren's 743 rd death anniversary
Sun 1st - 8th Dec	6 am – 6 pm; Temple	Fasting and non-stop chanting, culminating in the anniversary of Buddha's enlightenment
Tues 31 st Dec	11 pm - midnight; Temple	New Year's Eve chanting

N.B. If you have an e-mail address but still receive correspondence from us by post, please let us know by e-mailing mkpeacepagoda@gmail.com as this will greatly help us to reduce costs.



InterFaith MK

Promoting Faith, Unity & Understanding

January 2024 Newsletter

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Dear Members and Friends of Interfaith MK,

The New (admittedly only Gregorian) Year is upon us now, and the light of hope may shine if we illuminate the darkness and pain of the past with our own personal resolution to build a better future.

I do think, that without too much sweetness or sentimentality, that the social harmony between our various religious communities in Milton Keynes is pretty good, but we need to redouble our efforts to understand and empathise with people of seemingly different cultures, which is one of the primary purposes of the Interfaith journey.

Let us pray for Christian, Dharmic and Abrahamic unity with the support of all people of good will as we are occupants and stewards of one rather fragile world which needs all our concerted efforts to maintain peace and the very structure of life.

Please do come to our January meeting in the new and expanding Murugan Temple, especially if you have not visited before. You are assured of a warm welcome.

We will pray, in a circle, stating our promise for 2024. Please prepare a scriptural reading, a holy song or a written or spontaneous prayer representing the tradition or practice we represent.

Looking forward to a great start to a great year,

yours sincerely, *David Rennie*, Administrator IFMK, p.p. the Co-Convenors.

January Interfaith Meeting

'My - Spiritual - New Year Resolution'

Please join us for prayers, readings, poems or devotional songs from your tradition representing a new spiritual start for a new year.

Thursday 4th January 2024 • 7:15 for 7:30pm till 9pm

The Milton Keynes Murugan Temple

Glazier Drive, Neath Hill, Milton Keynes, Bucks, MK14 6HG

Teas, soft drinks and refreshments will be shared at the end of the meeting.

From the December IFMK Social at the MK Quaker Centre.

We wish many thanks to Sinan, Neşe and Güney for their amazing Turkish music, Christa and all preparers of the delicious shared food, Joan for her singing and Fazle for his "*Islamic humour*", which is never in doubt! We are glad to report that we again collected a large donation of provisions for the MK Food Bank.

