

# Tenrikyo

newsletter



## 140th Anniversary of Oyasama Pilgrimage to Jiba

On January 26, the 140th Anniversary of Oyasama Service was carried out both solemnly and joyfully. Despite the severe cold, more than 120,000 followers—children of the Path—gathered out of devotion to the Foundress and in order to respond to Her intention. The area surrounding the Main Sanctuary was filled with heartfelt warmth and enthusiasm that overcame even the winter chill in the air. From the Tenrikyo Mission Headquarters in America diocese as well, many church head ministers and followers returned to attend the service.

*Tenrikyo Mission Headquarters in America*

[www.TenrikyoAmericaCanada.org](http://www.TenrikyoAmericaCanada.org)

**February 2026**

# “A Work in Progress” by Bishop Fukaya

- *Regarding the Service*

*Rituals(1) -*

On January 26th, the 140th Anniversary of Oyasama was successfully and smoothly held.

Reflecting on the day that Oyasama withdrew from physical life on the lunar calendar date of January 26, 1887, I earnestly hope that we will renew our pledge to firmly walk the path from now with refreshed minds, while putting the teachings into practice each and every day.

On March 21 to 22, at Mission Headquarters, we will be offering the “Two Day Course,” a shortened version of what was previously known as our “Three Day Course.” We kindly ask you to spread the word so that as many people as possible can participate.

Now, what I’m about to write is primarily intended to deepen my own understanding, so it may not be a coherent piece of writing. Also, some of you readers may find yourselves unable to agree with the content, but I ask for your understanding and indulgence. I wanted to make this clear from the outset.

For followers of Tenrikyo, the grand services and monthly services (hereinafter

collectively referred to as the services) are vital and core practices of our faith. When we gather in the sanctuary and our solemn rituals are performed by the chief officiant and ritual attendants, we compose ourselves, reflect upon the blessings of God the Parent and the parental love of Oyasama, and express our gratitude.

However, let us take a moment to consider “Why do we perform this ritual in this particular form?” This may become the key to understanding our faith more deeply. Simply answering “Because it’s an old custom,” fails to capture the profound meaning inherent in our rituals.

The answer to this question can be clarified by examining the two aspects of our rituals: their “form (history)” and their “essence (faith).”

Our current rituals of Tenrikyo bear a strong resemblance to traditional Shinto

*(continued on page 18)*

## Coming Up

\* Spring Memorial Service

@ Mission HQ 3/14 @ 7:00 pm

\* Two Day Course

@ Mission HQ 3/21~3/22

**EDITOR:** Robert Yuge **STAFF:** Raymond Morishita, Amy Morishita, Ryo Wong

**PRINTING STAFF:** Yoshinobu Hayashi, Chikai Nakabayashi, Motoko Nakata

**COVER DESIGN:** Jun Nakagawa

**VOLUME LXVII (67)**

**February, 2026**

published by: TENRIKYO MISSION HEADQUARTERS IN AMERICA

2727 EAST FIRST STREET, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90033

Phone: (323) 261-3379 / Fax: (323) 261-8659

E-mail: ameden@tenrikyo.com / Website: www.tenrikyoamericacanada.org

# *New Year's Service Prayer*

## *January 1, 2026*

Before You, God the Parent, Tenri-O-no-Mikoto, who is enshrined in this altar, I, Hiroshi Alexander Fukaya, Bishop of the Tenrikyo Mission Headquarters in America, invoke with reverence.

Dear God the Parent, due to Your unchanging parental love and blessings, we were able to welcome in the New Year for the 189th year of Tenrikyo. I extend our New Year's greetings together with our head ministers, yoboku and those gathered here today.

Looking back on this past year, we saw great fires raged near our Mission Headquarters in January; and around the world, we were shown various problems such as disasters, wars, and conflicts. We understand these are Your parental love, urging for our spiritual growth.

Last year marked the final year of our pre-anniversary activities towards the 140th Anniversary of Oyasama; and to further our efforts towards spiritual growth, at Mission Headquarters, each of our associations held their respective conventions and we also held a scriptural study seminar in late August.

As today marks the first day of Oyasama's 140th Anniversary year, we would like to express our gratitude for Your many blessings and for Your parental love of the past year. Please continued to bless us in this new year.

Receiving the truth of Jiba, from now, we service performers will unite our minds as we joyously perform the seated service and the Teodori service dance for our New Year's Day service.

In Your presence, many yoboku and followers have gathered to open our New Year's day prayer with unified minds, and we will spiritedly sing the service songs. In witnessing this, we ask that You, God, become spirited as well.

In performing the New Year's Day service, we renew our pledge to help realize the Joyous Life world. As this year marks Oyasama's 140th Anniversary, we will work toward bringing joy and peace of mind to Oyasama, by advancing our spiritual growth. Even after the anniversary date, aiming for the advancement of our path, we hope to unite the hearts of all followers in our diocese and to nurture the next generation.

Dear God the Parent, we humbly ask You to accept our sincerity, to continue to bless us with your warm parental love, and to guide and nurture us, throughout this entire year. In unison with the whole congregation, I humbly pray that You bless us so.

# *Prayer to Oyasama on the Occasion of the 140th Anniversary*

*January 18, 2026*

Before You, the Everliving Oyasama, I, Hiroshi Alexander Fukaya, Bishop of the Tenrikyo Mission Headquarters in America, invoke with reverence.

Dear Oyasama, by virtue of the causality of Your soul, You became the Shrine of Tsukihi and, for many long years, You spiritedly walked on a path of indescribable hardships, leaving us the path of Your Divine Model.

In addition, out of Your single-hearted parental love for all Your children, You shortened Your natural term of physical life; and even now, ever-living, You continue to guide us toward spiritual growth. We are deeply indebted for Your boundless parental love, and words alone cannot fully express our gratitude.

In our desire to respond to Your blessings, we have continually relied upon the path of the Divine Model and have united our minds toward Your 140th Anniversary. Guided by Your warm parental heart, we have received countless blessings in our efforts for universal salvation; and we have been blessed to welcome this year of Your anniversary without mishap. For this, we are truly grateful.

On this fine day of our spring grand service, receiving the truth of Jiba, we Yoboku and followers have gathered here, before You, at Mission Headquarters, to reflect upon Your hardships. At the same time, we renew our resolve to unite our minds, ever more firmly, and to devote ourselves to single-heartedly help others be saved.

Dear Oyasama, please accept our spiritual resolutions, show us a path of new growth, and continue to guide us day by day along the path of spiritual growth. In unison with the whole congregation, I humbly pray that You bless us so.

# *Spring Grand Service Prayer*

## *January 18, 2026*

Before You, God the Parent, Tenri-O-no-Mikoto, who is enshrined in this altar, I, Hiroshi Alexander Fukaya, Bishop of the Tenrikyo Mission Headquarters in America, invoke with reverence.

Dear God the Parent, from Your desire to see us lead the Joyous Life and to share in that joy, You created this world and human beings where there was no form. At the arrival of the promised time, You received Oyasama, who has the soul of our original mother, as Your living shrine, and You opened the path to Single-Hearted Salvation.

Since that time, this Teaching has spread to the world, including America and Canada. We have been blessed with those who dedicate themselves to world salvation, and we are truly grateful. As such, we are dedicating ourselves to the expansion of this path.

This is the meaningful month in which Oyasama, out of Her love for Her dear children, shortened Her natural term of physical life by 25 years, in order to level the ground of the world and to “step out to save the world from now.”

Further, as this is the month of Oyasama’s 140th Anniversary, from now, receiving the truth of Jiba, we service performers will unite our minds, and with the spirit to help others be saved, we shall joyously perform the seated service and service dance for our spring grand service.

Looking forward to this day, Yoboku and followers have gathered here to give thanks for Your daily blessings. In witnessing our spirited singing of the service songs, dear God the Parent, please become spirited as well.

This month, our church head ministers, Yoboku, and followers will be returning to Jiba for the 140th Anniversary to bring joy to Oyasama. Please nurture us to be able to receive the truth of Jiba and return safely to our respective locales to further spiritedly engage ourselves in missionary and salvation work.

Next month, on the 14th, we plan to hold a seminar for our church, fellowship and mission station heads and their spouses. May this seminar serve as a catalyst for the further spiritual growth of our leaders in this land.

Even after Oyasama’s 140th Anniversary, we pledge that we shall continue to strive for further spiritual growth and to work for the expansion of this path.

Dear God the Parent, please accept our sincerity and bestow us blessing so that this world will be transformed, even one day sooner, into a spirited Joyous Life world, where all people join hands together. In unison with the whole congregation, I humbly pray, that You bless us so.

# Spring Grand Service Sermon

## by Bishop Hiroshi Alexander Fukaya

~ *Observing Oyasama's  
140th Anniversary* ~

**I** am truly grateful to have joyously and spiritedly completed the Spring Grand Service with all of you today.

I appreciate all your work for our Mission Headquarters and for your work toward the realization of the Joyous Life. Thank you.

Looking back, last year was the third year of our pre-anniversary activities toward the 140th Anniversary of Oyasama. With the end of this third year, as I mentioned in my prayer to Oyasama today, this is now the year to observe Her 140th Anniversary.

As we conclude our spring grand service, I would like to share some of my thoughts for today's sermon. Also, let us make one final, strong push in our pre-anniversary activities. I ask for your kind attention.

The 140th Anniversary of Oyasama will be held on January 26th at Jiba. We do not observe Oyasama's anniversaries to merely recall the day that She shortened Her natural term of life by twenty-five years and withdrew from physical life.

At the Autumn Grand Service last year, the Shinbashira stated:

An anniversary of Oyasama represents a knot, or a crucial juncture, where we children are urged by parental love to be decisive. As we prepare to observe the upcoming anniversary, we would do well to—just as our predecessors strove to—respond to the intention of the Parent, who has been nurturing and guiding us through this knot with boundless parental love. Such is the significance of observing an anniversary of Oyasama.

(Michinotomo, December 2025, p. 8)  
[https://kaigai.tenrikyo.or.jp/  
newsletter/#English](https://kaigai.tenrikyo.or.jp/newsletter/#English)

On January 26, 1887, Oyasama shortened Her natural term of life by 25 years, withdrawing from physical life, in order to encourage the spiritual growth of us human beings. Even now, She continues to work at the forefront of world salvation, just as when She was still physically present. When we observe Oyasama's anniversary, we must respond to Her parental love by showing Her how much we have grown spiritually—by presenting Oyasama with our more spiritually mature self.

The true significance of Oyasama's anniversaries lies in the progress each



Bishop Hiroshi Alexander Fukaya

of the Tenrikyo Mission Headquarters in America

of us make in furthering our spiritual growth. Taking this anniversary as an opportunity, we are being called to set a firm direction in our daily lives of faith and to put that into practice.

Further, now is the time for us to reflect upon the words spoken immediately after Oyasama withdrew from physical life—that the Parent will:

*Step out and save the world from now.*

(The Life of Oyasama, p. 240)

It is also the time for us renew our pledge to practice the teachings in accordance with Oyasama's intention.

The dialogue between Oyasama and the first Shinbashira, in January of 1887, is described in great detail in Chapter 10 of *The Life of Oyasama*. I believe that this exchange can be seen as Oyasama's

final and most important instruction to us, through which She taught us the most essential attitude in our lives of faith.

On the evening of January 1st, 1887, as Oyasama came out of Her bath, She staggered momentarily. Later She said:

It is a sign that the world is going to move.

(The Life of Oyasama, p. 220)

The following day, Oyasama did not feel well, and those around Her became worried. However, before long, She recovered.

Then, on January 4th, when Oyasama's health took a critical turn, the followers made an inquiry through Izō Ihuri—who would later become the Honseki—in regards to God's intention. The Divine Direction said:

*Sah, if the words of God were false, this path would not have continued for forty-nine years until now. What I have told you until now has been shown. With this in mind, reflect. Sah, shall I withdraw? Shall I end it all?*

(The Life of Oyasama, p. 220 - 221)

These were not rhetorical questions. They were the strict yet deeply compassionate words from Oyasama, meant to prove the truth of Her teachings and to challenge the followers' faith to its very core. If the teachings were truly

genuine, then no matter what difficulties may arise, the path is sure to expand.

However, if the followers could not resolve themselves to put the teachings into practice, then Oyasama was even prepared to withdraw from physical life. Immediately after these words, Oyasama stopped breathing, and Her body suddenly became cold.

Our pioneers were so shocked, that from the very next day—January 5th—they performed the Service that Oyasama had urgently been requesting; even though it was done without all the service instruments.

Day after day, they performed the Service as an act of apology. However, out of fear of the police, these Services were conducted secretly, late at night, with the gates closed.

From our perspective today, these actions may feel insufficient, and we might wonder why they didn't just perform the Service openly and confidently. Yet, when we consider the severe persecution of that time, we can see that for our pioneers, this was the best spiritual resolution that they could make—an act of faith, carried out at the risk of their own lives.

On January 9th, Oyasama said:

*Sah, sah, do you think that I have become feeble with age or that I am having difficulty because of illness? I am not ill, nor am I feeble. I have taught you completely, step by step.*

*Ponder over it well.*

(The Life of Oyasama, p. 222)

With these words, Oyasama taught that Her physical condition was not due to any sickness nor weakening. Rather, it was a divine urging from God the Parent—an urgent call to hasten the performance of the Service and, ultimately, to encourage the spiritual growth of humankind. Even so, despite Oyasama's instructions, the followers still hesitated to perform the Service, blocked by legal restrictions.

At around 3:00 a.m. on January 13th, the first Shinbashira went directly to Oyasama to seek Her guidance. There were many exchanges, and among them, the first Shinbashira asked for more time, hoping to avoid violating the law by the performance of the Service. In response, Oyasama said:

*Sah, sah, because Tsukihi exists, the world exists. Because the world exists, things exist. Because things exist, your bodies exist. Because your bodies exist, law exists. Although the law exists, to resolve your minds is primary.*

(The Life of Oyasama, pp. 231)

Here, Oyasama carefully taught that, above all else, what matters most is to resolve one's mind.

Even in our daily lives today, we may struggle between the teachings of God the Parent and the customs or laws of

society. Through this Divine Direction, Oyasama clearly showed us where we should place the standard of our faith. Our faith does not rely on worldly common sense. Rather, it relies on firmly resolving our mind and entrusting ourself to God the Parent.

Later, when the first Shinbashira asked,

Will You grant us Your divine protection?

Oyasama replied:

*Sah, sah, you are to purchase My sincerity. Purchase My sincerity with your own sincerity.*

(The Life of Oyasama, p. 233)

With these words, Oyasama taught that in order for us to receive divine protection, we human beings must first do everything we can with sincere minds. In other words, resolving one's mind firmly is primary. God the Parent's blessings are not something given just because we pray or wish for it. It is only received when a worthy "price" is paid—that is, our unshakable spiritual resolutions.

On January 26, 1887, Oyasama accepted the spiritual resolution of our pioneers, who courageously performed the Service without fearing the police. Oyasama listened with great satisfaction to the sounds of the service instruments.

Then, after the final verse of Song Twelve was completed, She withdrew from physical life.

Our pioneers performed the Service at the risk of their lives, praying earnestly for Oyasama's recovery. Yet contrary to their hopes, Oyasama withdrew from physical life. We can only imagine the sorrow they must have felt.

Why did Oyasama withdraw from physical life? I believe the answer can be found in this Divine Direction:

*the parent will... step out and save the world from now.*

(The Life of Oyasama, p. 240)

By casting aside the human form of "Miki Nakayama," Oyasama was no longer subject to repeated arrests nor interference by the authorities. Thus, She created an environment in which we human beings could freely perform the Service for world salvation without fear. Even without Her human form, Oyasama remains everliving today, watching over us and continuing to work at the forefront of world salvation.

This parental love overlaps with the teaching of the Truth of Origin found in Chapter 3 of the Doctrine of Tenrikyo. In this story, human beings were born from the womb of Izanami-no-Mikoto and grew step by step. When human beings were born for the third time, and had grown to four inches in height, Izanami-no-Mikoto said:

*Now that they have grown so tall,  
in time they will reach the height of  
human beings five feet tall...*

(Tenrikyo Doctrine, p. 22)

and with a smile, She withdrew from physical life.

The instructions Oyasama left for us are connected to this Truth of Origin. I believe that Oyasama “listened with contentment to the cheerful sound of the service instruments” because She had accepted the sincerity of our pioneers, who had overcome their fear of the authorities and who resolved to perform the Service. Oyasama may have judged that even if She withdrew from physical life, we would be able to stand on our own and continue walking the path toward the realization of the Joyous Life.

Each time we observe an anniversary of Oyasama, we need to show Oyasama that our spiritual growth—“step by step”—has progressed further than it was for the previous anniversary. I believe that our spiritual growth is the clearest proof that we are responding to Oyasama’s parental love and will bring Her joy and peace of mind more than anything else.

In order to honor Oyasama for Her hardships and to bring Her joy and peace of mind, we must unite our hearts as one as we approach the anniversary.

The Shinbashira concluded Instruction Four by saying:



I hope that all of us followers... will... take firm steps forward on the path of world salvation in unity of mind, thereby bringing joy and peace of mind to Oyasama, who is working by virtue of Her eternal life.

(Instruction Four, p. 7)

It is through our efforts toward world salvation that our spiritual growth is cultivated. I believe that this is the finest gift that we can offer to Oyasama—and this will become the greatest source of Her joy.

At the Autumn Grand Service last year, the Shinbashira stated:

I trust that all of you are now working tirelessly in order to achieve the goals you set for the “three years, one thousand days” period. The more efforts you make, the more blessings will be shown to you. Moreover, the

efforts you are making now will be the seeds for your future journey and will therefore never be wasted.

(Michinotomo, December 2025, p. 8)

With these words engraved in our hearts, let us devote ourselves with all our strength during these last few days to complete our pre-anniversary activities for Oyasama's 140th Anniversary.

Just as parents eagerly await the return of their children back home, Oyasama—the mother of all humankind—is also waiting with great anticipation for our return to Jiba. I hope that as many people as possible from our diocese will return to Jiba for the anniversary, so that Oyasama may see, in each of us, our more spiritually mature self, compared to previous anniversaries.

However, for those of us who are unable to attend the anniversary service day, please keep in mind the Shinbashira's message at last year's Autumn Grand Service:

I would like to ask you all to continue to earnestly engage in your activities during the remaining months of the pre-anniversary period in the hope that you will be able to observe the anniversary with joy and satisfaction...

(Michinotomo, December 2025, p. 8)

With these words in our hearts, on the day of the anniversary, I hope that we will

welcome it “with joy and satisfaction, knowing that we have exerted our utmost” towards our pre-anniversary activities.

And if possible, I sincerely hope that—during this year—you will return to Jiba and that you will directly present yourself before Oyasama, at the Foundress' Sanctuary, as a yoboku who has grown spiritually.

Lastly, let us settle in our minds, the Shinbashira's New Year's greeting:

It is my hope that each and every one of us, after having done our best during this three-year, one-thousand-day period, will be able to welcome the day of the anniversary with a mind filled with joy

(Tenri Jiho, New Year's Day Issue,  
Tenrikyo Year 189, p. 1)  
Translated for this article

With these words firmly in mind, let us welcome the 140th Anniversary of Oyasama. I would now like to conclude my talk for today.

Thank you for your kind attention.

**1) FEBRUARY MONTHLY SERVICE (2/15)**

Officiant: Bishop

Assistants: Yoichi Fukui, Raymond Morishita

Director: Tomoyoshi Tanaka

Attendants: Brian Kojima, Hamilton Niwa

Offerings Officiant: Koji Uesugi

Sermon: Kazumi Kawakami (J)

**2) DIVINE SANCTION**

- San Francisco Church: Request for Altar & Upper Dais Rearrangement along with Church Extension & Repair of the Church Roof, Temporary Transfer of the Medo, Request for Special Service

Divine Sanction: January 26, 2026

Ceremony for Temporary Relocation: March 7, 2026

Enshrinement Ceremony: August 28, 2027

Enshrinement Service: August 29, 2027

**3) FELLOWSHIP AFFAIRS**

- Joyous Fellowship: Temporary address change due to fellowship construction work

**4) SPRING MEMORIAL SERVICE**

The spring memorial service will be held at the Mission Headquarters on March 14 (Sat.), from 7 PM. On this occasion, we will be enshrining the spirit of the late Wakie Onishi, wife of the fourth head minister of the California Church.

**5) TWO DAY COURSE**

The Two Day Course will be held from March 21~22, 2026, at both the Mission Headquarters and at the New York Center. Registration will open from November. At least four applicants are needed to hold this course. The deadline for applications is March 1, 2026.

**6) SHUYOKA SPANISH CLASS**

This year, the Shuyoka (three-month Spiritual Development Course in Jiba) Spanish Class will be held from September 1 to November 27. Applicants without Japanese citizenship must apply for a visa to enter Japan, so please contact the Mission Headquarters as soon as possible.

**7) HEAD MINISTERS QUALIFICATION COURSE**

The Head Ministers Qualification Course English Class, usually held from September 27 upon fulfilling the minimum of five participants, has been rescheduled this year to begin from October 27.

**8) 86TH AMERICA SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT COURSE (SHUYOKAI)**

The 86th America Spiritual Development Course at the Mission Headquarters is currently scheduled to be held from June 21 (Sun.) to July 18 (Sat.). These courses will be held if there are at least two applicants for the English or Japanese course, or five applicants for the Spanish course, as of one month prior (May 17).

**9) REGARDING BESSEKI LECTURES DURING THE MONTH OF APRIL, 2026**

- As the amount of expected Besseki Lecture attendees is anticipated to greatly increase during these months before and after the 140th Anniversary of Oyasama, the days when live lectures are offered will be determined in advance. You may view this schedule by visiting the Church Headquarters homepage, as well as via the Overseas Department homepage. The QR Codes for

both pages can be found below:

Church HQ Calendar



Overseas Department Calendar



## COMMITTEE & ASSOCIATION REPORTS

### MISSIONARY COMMITTEE

- Thank you for your monthly service duty at the Mission Headquarters for church, fellowship, and mission center heads. The duty calendar up to April is as follows.

**February: Yoichi Fukui, Eddie Takemoto**

**March: Jun'ichi Hamada, Brian Kojima, Hiroaki Takagaki**

**April: Zen Yukimoto, Mitsuharu Ito**

- We will hold Corridor-Cleaning Hinokishin on April 17 (Fri.). For those returning to Jiba at that time, please assemble 45 minutes before the morning service (5 AM) in the Rear East area of the South Worship Hall.

### PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE

- We have incorporated an ongoing section in the Ichiretsu/Newsletter to highlight local activities and events. Therefore, we would like to request churches, fellowships, districts, and individuals to submit your activity information & pictures to us (Kawakami: kamishuyo@hotmail.com or Hayashi: takhayashi@gmail.com).
- We have created and are continuously updating the Mission HQ Homepage so that our congregation members may make use of it. Please visit our homepage, and let those around you know as well. Homepage: [TenrikyoAmericaCanada.org](http://TenrikyoAmericaCanada.org) .

### WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION

- 2026 TWA Activity Guidelines
  - 1.Let's learn the importance of the service and perform the service with sincerity.
  - 2.Let's implement the teachings each day and increase the number of those who perform the service
- 108th TWA Convention:
  - April 19, 2026 (Sun), 9:30 AM @ Church HQ Inner Courtyard, Front of South & East Worship Halls, West Church HQ Precincts
  - Commemorative Activity: Branch Association Gathering following the convention Lecture (Dining Hall #2, East Lecture Hall, Oyasato-yakata East Right Wing No. 1 Fourth Floor Lecture Hall, East Left Wing No. 5 Fourth Floor Lecture Hall) District Leaders

Gathering January 17, 2026 (Sat) @ 2 PM ZOOM

- TWA America Convention  
May 16, 2026 (Sat) @ 10AM Commemorative Activity: Family BBQ

### **BOYS & GIRLS ASSOCIATION**

- The 2026 BGA Practice Service Convention will be held on June 20 (Sat) at the Mission Headquarters, and the Youth Conference will be held the day before, June 19 (Fri). The service roster will be announced this month, so please practice the service at your churches and homes. Please use the following Google Form link to register if you have not yet done so.
- Google Form: <https://forms.gle/dQDgYAm1tjRC2Krh8>
- A new Theme Song for the Children's Pilgrimage to Jiba has been announced. The title is, "Sparkling Children of the Path." Koteki members are asked to begin practicing the new song. You can find the music and the video here: <https://tenrikyo-shonenkai.org/kogsong/> We are also recruiting new koteki members. We would love to have you join us.
- Let's share stories about Oyasama with BGA members! Visit your churches as a family and engage in hinokishin together.
- Please send an email to [moto1884@icloud.com] if there are any new BGA members, newborn or new to the North America congregation.

### **TYMANA**

- The International Hinokishin Corps will be held from July 18 ~ 24, 2026. Information will be distributed this month. Please let TYMANA members know, and contact us if you are interested in participating (email: [seinenkainorthamerica@gmail.com](mailto:seinenkainorthamerica@gmail.com))

### **NY CENTER**

- March 21-22: Two Day Course
- March 28-29: BGA Sleepover

### **TYMANA**

- The International Hinokishin Corps will be held from July 18 ~ 24, 2026. Information will be distributed this month. Please let TYMANA members know, and contact us if you are interested in participating (email: [seinenkainorthamerica@gmail.com](mailto:seinenkainorthamerica@gmail.com))



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rituals and this is deeply connected to the harsh historical realities when Oyasama was physically present. In other words, this appears to be the result of the historical necessity to adopt these rituals in order to continue spreading the teachings to many people.

From the late Edo period (1603 ~ 1868) to the Meiji era (1868 ~ 1912) when Oyasama began conveying the teachings, and particularly after 1874, Tenrikyo faced severe persecution from government authorities. To preserve the teachings and to continue spreading the faith, it became necessary to secure a place within the religious system of the government at that time.

Tenrikyo began by submitting an application to the Yoshida Shinto Authority in Kyoto in 1867. Upon entering the Meiji era, Tenrikyo became a church directly supervised by the Shinto Headquarters. Until it achieved independence as a separate religion in 1908, Tenrikyo had no choice but to operate as an officially recognized Shinto-based religious organization.

To receive this official recognition, it became necessary to conduct ceremonies according to Shinto regulations, leading to the establishment of our rituals incorporating these Shinto elements. Examples include the "Tenrikyo Ritual Code," one of the documents submitted when petitioning for independence as a separate sect, and subsequent regulations like the "Ritual Procedures." I believe these were formulated to conform to the social norms and laws of the time, while preserving the essence of God the Parent's teachings.

The current practices of our rituals

today have evolved through these historical changes, culminating in our present "rituals and services." This represents a culmination of the efforts and wisdom that our pioneers had invested to preserve the teachings, and I believe it demonstrates the formal rationale behind our current rituals.

However, I believe that form is merely a vessel, and the "essence" poured into that vessel is the greatest reason we can see the meaning in our rituals. That essence lies in the materialization of our feeling of respect, our highest respect and gratitude, toward God the Parent and Oyasama.

Our rituals are not performed to be seen by others, nor are they merely to uphold custom. I believe they are an expression of our minds, deepening our awareness of standing before God the Parent and Oyasama, and offering our sincere gratitude.

The movements that consciously distinguish between "the upper" and "the lower" sides, seen in the etiquette practiced on the upper dais of the sanctuary, express our courtesy and reverence toward the God the Parent, who created this world and watches over all things; and toward Oyasama, who walked the path of the Divine Model. This attitude of respect serves to put our minds in order and suppress any arrogance. I believe it is crucial to be mindful that looking down on the ritual etiquettes could lead us to unknowingly look down upon God the Parent and Oyasama.

The service prayer recited at the main part of our rituals contains our pledge to work toward world salvation, expressing sentiments such as, "We will perform the

service wholeheartedly so that the world will be transformed into the world of joyous life even one day sooner.” This ritual of offering this very pledge may be our most important practice, coming spontaneously from our minds of reverence toward God the Parent.

The ritual ceremony is not a ceremony that concerns only a limited few, such as the chief officiant and ritual attendants. I believe it is a vital practice where all those present—that is, we worshippers—unite our hearts as one.

Furthermore, our rituals include not only the chief officiant offering prayers to the three worship halls until exiting from the upper dais, but also the entire service—from the opening of the portals to putting up the food offerings, and even the service performers entering and exiting the upper dais. I believe that every action done during the service should be performed according to our ritual form that is rooted in our spirit of reverence, but what are your thoughts on this?

Since our services (grand services and monthly services) are performed with gratitude and prayers to God the Parent and Oyasama, I believe that all ritual participants should have an attitude of perfect unity, adhere to our ritual procedures, and perform their duties with sincerity. I believe that this very “unity of mind” demonstrates the collective reverence of all us followers through our actions, and that this is the greatest impact we can deliver to the heart of God the Parent.

Sincerely performing the service not only deepens our faith, but also promotes our “spiritual growth” and helps foster an awareness of our mission to help save all humankind.

In our daily lives, we sometimes forget about the blessings we receive from God the Parent, leading to our minds becoming cloudy. Monthly services provide us with opportunities to take a moment to reflect upon the core of our faith.

Through our rituals (services), we can reaffirm that our daily lives are filled with the blessings of God the Parent and renew our sense of gratitude.

Oyasama strongly desired for us to grow “spiritually.” Attending the services and actively practicing our solemn rituals may be crucial opportunities for us to train, discipline, and cultivate our own minds.

Our core ritual, the “service,” is the most vital means for transforming this world into the “Joyous Life world” desired by God the Parent. When we perform this service with heartfelt sincerity, it is nothing less than pledging to God the Parent our mission to realize, with our own hands, a world where all humanity can live together in harmony and joy.

In this way, our rituals in Tenrikyo are not merely an inheritance of historical customs. Rather, they are grounded in our reverence to God the Parent. As such, I believe that they serve as an occasion for us followers to unite our minds, renew our pledges, and resolve ourselves to fulfill the grand mission of human salvation, leading to the “Joyous Life.” By cherishing and safeguarding our rituals and by understanding their essence, let us advance even more toward a deeper faith.

(To be continued)

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# TOWARD THE JOYOUS LIFE

**TENRIKYO** came into existence on October 26, 1838, when God the Parent, Tenri-O-no-Mikoto, became revealed through Oyasama, Miki Nakayama, to save all humankind. God the Parent is God of Origin and God in Truth who created this world and has nurtured and protected us ever since.



God the Parent created human beings so that by seeing us lead the Joyous Life, God could share in our joy. Leading the Joyous Life is, therefore, the purpose of our existence. Since God is our Parent, we are all God's children; thus, we should realize that we are all brothers and sisters.

“With human beings : the body is a thing lent by God, a thing borrowed. The mind alone is yours.”  
Osashizu : June 1, 1889

We are taught that we borrow our bodies from God the Parent and only our minds truly belong to us; further, through the proper use of our minds, we will be able to lead the Joyous Life.