

Shining Ever Brighter

MYOCHIKAI

ARIGATOU FOUNDATION

**GLOBAL NETWORK OF RELIGIONS
FOR CHILDREN**

Message from Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto



Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto, Leader of Myochikai, President of the Arigatou Foundation, Inaugurator of the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC)

It was in February 1945, very near the end of World War II, that I had the great fortune to meet Rev. Kohei Miyamoto, whom Myochikai members revere as *Daionshi*, or great spiritual leader. Not long after, I began a new life with the *Daionshi* and his wife, Rev. Mitsu Miyamoto. At that time, they were poor and unknown ordinary people, but I was deeply impressed by their passion and devotion to the Buddhist faith.

The *Daionshi* was totally selfless, free from complaints and frustrations, and constantly exuded a deep gratitude for all things. During the severe bombing of Tokyo near the end of the war, he kept a lonely vigil at the head temple of the religious organization to which he belonged. Despite suffering burns in the explosions, he stayed there, risking his life to protect the spiritual treasures in the building. This kind of unwavering faith—and putting it into practice—is the essence of the spirit of Myochikai.

After the *Daionshi* passed away, Rev. Mitsu Miyamoto founded Myochikai to continue with the devoted teaching and practice of Buddhism she had always shared with her husband. The year was 1950. Myochikai members revere her as *Kaishu*, or great spiritual master.

The *Daionshi* once wrote, “A little good deed takes a little perseverance; a great good deed takes great perseverance.” Both the *Daionshi* and *Kaishu* actually

led lives completely characterized by a tremendous perseverance for the sake of good. I am convinced that the heart of Myochikai lies in this practice of perseverance, which we call *Ninzen*. Through the practice of *Ninzen*, we can purify the heart and soul. This explains why the *Kaishu*, on her deathbed, wrote only a single word—“heart”—as her last message to us. To this day, I have given my every effort to upholding the truth of the teachings of the *Daionshi* and *Kaishu*, convinced in my heart that this is the mission of my life.

The *Kaishu* founded Myochikai with the words, “I am only a human being, a woman—but I resolve to become the base and backbone of the whole world,” and set the ultimate goal of world peace before us. It has never been easy to build world peace, because world peace is indeed a very great good. However, with the spirit of *Ninzen*, Myochikai has made constant efforts to share the teachings of Buddhism in order to build a world where all people can lead happy lives based on the principles of peace, freedom and equality. Through the practice of prayer for our ancestors, we have worked to help develop individuals, families and societies who are eager and able to serve others.

In 1990, in response to the terrible suffering of so many children around the world, I established the Arigatou Foundation and gave it the mission of creating a better environment for children everywhere. Working as a faith-based NGO in cooperation with UNICEF, UNHCR, Medecins sans Frontieres and other organizations, the Foundation has, thanks to the voluntary donations of Myochikai members, been able to provide assistance for children around the world who are in distress from natural disasters, armed conflict, and other desperate circumstances.

In 2000, realizing that we could not achieve our vision for the children of the world without the cooperation of people from all religious traditions, I inaugurated the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC). Religious leaders and grassroots faith workers from every continent and seven major religions joined together in the GNRC, dedicating themselves to making a contribution from the religious perspective to the promotion of child rights in the 21st century. That same year, I also organized the Conference of Children for the Coming Generation (CCG), bringing together children from around the world, transcending ethnic, national or religious boundaries, to discuss and envision the future for themselves.

Then, at the United Nations Special Session on Children in 2002, speaking on behalf of the GNRC, I proposed the establishment of a global-scale Interfaith Council on Ethics Education for Children.

Each one of these small efforts had its origin in my firm resolve to do all I can to realize the ideals of the *Kaishu*. After all, peace is built by human beings, and human beings are built from their hearts. Myochikai strives to nurture the human heart. With the founding spirit of the *Kaishu* deep in my heart, I pledge to further strengthen my efforts to build a world of peace through prayer and practice.

It is my hope that this booklet will help our friends around the world to better understand the story of Myochikai, the Arigatou Foundation, and the GNRC. May you be blessed by the Divine Presence!

Takeyasu Miyamoto



Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto (left) with Rev. Mitsu Miyamoto, founder of Myochikai

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Myochikai *Making the Heart Bloom*

DEVOTED TO ENLIGHTENMENT

The teachings of Buddha arrived in Japan in the 6th century A.D., having originated in India and come eastward through China and Korea. Shortly after, the Lotus Sutra, one of the primary Buddhist scriptures, was first taught in Japan, probably in the year 606 A.D.

Some 1,350 years later, Myochikai was born in Japan as a modern-day branch of Buddhism teaching the recitation of the Lotus Sutra in prayer for the sake of the souls of one's ancestors. Founded on October 12, 1950 by the late Rev. Mitsu Miyamoto, Myochikai currently has some one million members.

The establishment of Myochikai was the fruit of more than 30 years of exacting training undertaken by Rev. Mitsu Miyamoto in the Buddhist way of life. Together with her husband, Rev. Kohei Miyamoto, she practiced spiritual disciplines aimed at purifying the heart by eliminating all such things as selfishness, anger, discontentment or regret. Unfortunately, Rev. Kohei Miyamoto passed away in November 1945, at the age of 55.

Unwavering in her commitment to preserve this sacred wisdom and to serve all humanity, Rev. Mitsu Miyamoto founded Myochikai five years later with the proclamation: "The mission of Myochikai is to become a ray of light that permeates the world with unconditional love and mercy for every person. I am only a human being, a woman—but I resolve to become the base and backbone of the whole world. May the light that we shine make a contribution to world peace!"



Rev. Kohei Miyamoto and Rev. Mitsu Miyamoto practice spiritual disciplines

After Rev. Mitsu Miyamoto passed away on March 28, 1984, Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto became Leader of Myochikai, following completion of 1,000 days of ascetic disciplines. He had been an eager student of both Rev. Kohei and Mitsu Miyamoto since 1945, respecting them as parents. In 1950, he witnessed the founding of Myochikai by Rev. Mitsu Miyamoto. His training in the Buddhist way of life under Rev. Mitsu Miyamoto continued for 39 years, until the end of her life. To this day, he works with great passion and resolve to accomplish the goals she set out when founding Myochikai.

Myochikai members follow four primary teachings—which involve both prayer and practice—in pursuit



Rev. Mitsu Miyamoto, Myochikai Kaishu

The mission of Myochikai is to become a ray of light that permeates the world with unconditional love and mercy for every person, and by doing so, to contribute to world peace.

of enlightenment and peace. These are: prayer for ancestors, perseverance for the sake of good, confession and repentance, and gratitude for all things—or in Japanese, *Senzo Kuyo*, *Ninzen*, *Sange*, and *Kansha*. (Pages 5-8 of this booklet provide more details on these teachings, as well as personal testimonies by Myochikai believers who practice them.)

Through these spiritual practices, Myochikai seeks to help people to develop their hearts and thus become able to contribute to the happiness of other individuals, families and societies. In so doing, Myochikai aims to build a world of true prosperity, based on the well being of each and every person, and ultimately, to realize lasting world peace.



Rev. Kohei Miyamoto, Myochikai Daionshi

DEDICATED TO PEACE

For Myochikai, initiatives for peace are the natural fruit of sincere spiritual practice. In 1963, Myochikai sent Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto to Europe and the United States as a delegate of the Religious People's Peace Mission for the Total Abolition of Nuclear Weapons. Later, in the early 1980s, Myochikai members helped to collect 37 million signatures on a petition for peace, which was presented by Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto to the United Nations Second Special Session on Disarmament.

Benevolent activities also grow naturally from the lifestyle of “prayer and practice” advocated by Myochikai. After four decades of assisting people in need in various ways, in 1990 Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto established the Arigatou Foundation as a faith-based NGO dedicated to creating a better environment for children around the world. The activities of the Arigatou Foundation are all rooted in Myochikai's recognition that children are the treasure of humanity, the inheritors of the Earth, and the bearers of future peace. (See pages 13-22 for more details on the Arigatou Foundation.)

Myochikai is also active in the area of interreligious cooperation. It has been an active participant in the World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP) since sending a delegation to the first WCRP conference in 1970. In the year 2000—the 50th anniversary of Myochikai's founding—Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto inaugurated the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC) by inviting 294 people representing 7 major religions and 33 countries and regions to the First Forum of the GNRC in Tokyo, where they shared their spiritual commitment to working for the well being of all the world's children. (See pages 23-32 for more details on the GNRC.)

Over the first half century of its journey, Myochikai has witnessed significant growth and brought many initiatives to successful fruition. It has forged effective partnerships for peace with many other organizations—religious, international, governmental, and non-governmental. Now, bringing this rich history into the 21st century, and dedicated as always to the spirit of its founder, Myochikai is more prepared than ever to realize the mission proclaimed by Rev. Mitsu Miyamoto on a global scale.



The resting place of Rev. Kohei Miyamoto and Rev. Mitsu Miyamoto

The Four Primary Teachings of Myochikai

The teachings of Myochikai explained on these pages were first formulated and announced by Rev. Mitsu Miyamoto, who called them “the essence of the teachings of Myochikai.” These teachings guide Myochikai believers in their daily prayer and practice. The aim is to practice each teaching with purity of heart—on all occasions and in all relationships—and thus to manifest the intrinsic Buddha nature within the individual.

1 SENZO KUYO PRAYER FOR ANCESTORS

Senzo Kuyo means praying for a peaceful, happy repose for the souls of one’s ancestors, a practice which Myochikai members believe helps to bring peace to all human beings and societies. By attending in prayer to the needs of those who have gone before them, Myochikai believers realize that their own existence is deeply intertwined with that of their ancestors. The practice of *Senzo Kuyo* leads to a way of life in the present that is rooted in respect for the lives of those in the past. Without reverence for those who have gone before, *Senzo Kuyo* teaches, it is impossible to recognize the value and meaning of one’s own life or the lives of others living today.

The prayers of *Senzo Kuyo* are not only an expression of respect for one’s ancestors, however, but also an offering of compassion. *Senzo Kuyo* teaches that one’s ancestors may be suffering, for example for the misdeeds of their lifetimes. For Myochikai believers, helping one’s departed ancestors by offering them

spiritual nourishment in the form of scripture chanting and prayers is as natural as helping a living child in need. The motivation for *Senzo Kuyo* is thus pure reverence and compassion for one’s ancestors. The practice, however, yields fruit of various kinds. For example, in a very practical way, praying for unseen ancestors can help a believer to develop greater love and compassion for the neighbors he or she sees every day.

Consider this typical *Senzo Kuyo* parable of a tree. Ancestors are compared to the roots, adults living today to the trunk, their children to the branches, and their descendants, to the fruit. If the roots are wizened or injured, the trunk and branches will grow weak, and the fruit will be withered and sparse. But when the roots are healthy, the trunk and branches will be strong, and the fruit will be sweet and beautiful. Myochikai members see praying for their ancestors as watering their roots. Through *Senzo Kuyo*, they hope to comfort and please their ancestors. Prayers like these can be likened to filling the well of life with water for the children of the future.



Mr. Tomoaki Tashiro (32)
Yamagata Prefecture, 1998

I am a graphic designer, and have often had to work overtime, even all night. On the night of February 20, 1998, while at my desk, I suddenly felt dizzy and fell from my chair. My body grew stiff and I had a convulsion in my right leg, and finally I lost consciousness. At the hospital, the doctor told me the cause was extreme fatigue. So I took a short leave and then went back to work. But one month later, I had a strong convulsion all over the left half of my body, and lost consciousness again.

This time, the doctor warned me, “At worst, you could lose your life.” Hearing this was shocking for me, because I had always been confident in my physical strength. I realized there had to be more to it than just fatigue. I thought and thought, and suddenly I remembered how, seven years earlier, my father had been killed in a traffic accident. In the accident, the car had hit my father’s right leg first. It was the same part of my body that had convulsed the first time! Then, my father had been knocked to the ground on the left side of his body. It was exactly the same part of my body that had strongly convulsed the second time. The parallels were too obvious to ignore.

I told my mother what I had realized, and she said, “Have you lost your thankfulness toward your father? You should pray for him, reciting the Lotus Sutra, so that his soul will be comforted and find peace.” Her words went straight to my heart, and I was full of remorse that I had not been grateful to my father. That night, sitting in front of the Buddhist altar in my home, I confessed my lack of appreciation to my father in tears, and prayed, reciting the Lotus Sutra for the repose of his soul.

Since then, I have recited the sutra for my father everyday. At first, it was challenging, as my limbs were still paralyzed and I was suffering. Despite my difficulties, though, I kept praying, because I knew my ancestors were waiting for my prayer. While I was chanting, I often remembered the good old faces of not only my father but also my grandfather and grandmother, who had loved me very much. I thought, “Many of my ancestors’ souls have not been comforted and pleased. I want to make them happy.” Every morning and evening, I prayed with all my heart, reciting the sutra for them more fervently than ever.

Then everything began to change, and day-by-day, my physical condition improved. Now, every night before going to bed, I never forget to express my appreciation to my ancestors for protecting me each day. Seven months after losing consciousness for the second time, I have now completely recovered.

As Myochikai believers teach and practice *Senzo Kuyo* purely for the sake of their ancestors, they also expect that doing so will gradually but steadily contribute to peace for all the people of the world. They believe that the respect and compassion for those who have gone before which *Senzo Kuyo* teaches can help individuals to become aware of the priceless dignity of each and every human being. Where this reverence for life consumes the human heart, there is no longer room for hatred, killing or war—or any of the “smaller” evils which eventually lead to these catastrophic consequences. In a very direct sense, when Myochikai members pray for their ancestors, they are praying for lasting peace for all people.

2 NINZEN PERSEVERANCE FOR THE SAKE OF GOOD

Ninzen means cultivating the spiritual strength to endure the difficulties that arise when one strives to do good. The word “*Ninzen*” is made up of two Chinese characters. The root meaning of the character “*Nin*” is endurance, perseverance, and patience. For Myochikai, *Nin* means that one should always remain calm and content, even in the face of the unexpected. “*Zen*” stands for what is good, right and virtuous. Myochikai teaches that *Zen* signifies the good inherent in the Buddha’s teachings and the righteousness that results when human beings practice them seriously. *Ninzen* teaches a way of life that is unshaken by obstacles

in pursuit of the good. Strengthened by the spirit of *Ninzen*, Myochikai believers strive to overcome both personal trials and external challenges for the sake of bringing about good for the world.

Myochikai teaches that *Ninzen* is essential to building true world peace. On a personal level, irritation and anger create discord and conflict. This is further aggravated when, rather than remaining calm, people bemoan challenging circumstances and blame difficulties and obstacles on others. Through the practice of *Ninzen*, Myochikai members seek to overcome anger and jealousy, and to grow in tolerance. With *Ninzen*, challenges and difficulties are seen as opportunities to grow as a person.

In 1963, when Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto visited Europe and the United States as a member of the Religious People’s Peace Mission for the Total Abolition of Nuclear Weapons, he exchanged views with world religious leaders, including Pope John Paul II. Upon his return to Japan, he proclaimed that Myochikai’s uniqueness was to be found in its spirit of *Ninzen*.

Myochikai members believe that the spirit of *Ninzen* is needed more than ever in the conflict-torn world of today, and that *Ninzen* is indispensable to peace-building. Without the great calm and eternal perseverance taught by *Ninzen*, achieving a goal as lofty as world peace is but a dream. Indeed, *Ninzen* is needed to accomplish even the smallest of good deeds. For Myochikai believers, *Ninzen* offers a realistic path to peace for individuals, societies and the entire human race.



Ms. Sachiyo Fujita (48)
Gunma Prefecture, 2000

“I would like to try to convey the teachings of Myochikai to other people and make them happy.” I had this thought after I was married, had children and had been living a comfortable life for quite some time. So I rang the doorbell of a stranger’s house and said through the intercom, “I am a member of Myochikai, which teaches prayer for ancestors through recitation of the Lotus Sutra. May I have a moment of your time to share these teachings with you?” The door never opened. I went to house after house, but no one gave me a chance to share. Many days passed this way. One day, seeing that I was weakening in my faith, my sister encouraged me: “Recite the Lotus Sutra diligently, fervently asking, ‘Please give me the chance to convey these teachings,’ and you will surely succeed, with the help of an invisible power.”

Since that day, I have been reciting the sutra daily without fail and continuing with my mission work. One day, I ran into an old classmate from elementary school for the first time in 35 years. She was still suffering from having had infantile paralysis, using a wheelchair and living in a rehabilitation facility for the disabled. She had finally begun dating someone, but because couples were not allowed to live together in the facility, she said, on the verge of tears, that she would have to

give up the idea of marriage altogether. I saw how much easier my life was compared to hers, and was cut to the heart.

I too had suffered from infantile polio, but it was thanks to me having this crippling disease that my parents had come to join Myochikai. I thought, “If my parents had not dedicated themselves to practicing these teachings day and night for the sake of my health, I would not be blessed as I am today and would have lived out her fate.”

After that, I visited up to 200 houses a week, but I still could not find anyone who wanted to become a member of Myochikai. Seeing my distress, a Myochikai leader taught me, “If you have visited 200 houses, it means you have bowed in respect at least 400 times and shared the teachings of Myochikai 200 times. You are freeing yourself from your karma.” These words penetrated my heart, and I could not stop crying.

After that, I continued walking from house to house, this time without any doubt. One day, when I visited my husband’s aunt and shared the teachings of Myochikai with her, she said, “These teachings are excellent,” and she decided to join. Since that time, people who had not wanted to listen to me have begun to listen intently to my sharing, and people have been coming to me to seek advice with their problems. In just three months, 24 people have decided to join Myochikai. From this experience, I learned that only by following the teachings of Myochikai with all my heart would I be given results without fail—not through my own strength but by the invisible help of the Buddha.

3 SANGE CONFESSION AND REPENTANCE

In order to purify their hearts, Myochikai members practice confession and repentance of their sins. This is the teaching and practice of *Sange*. Through *Sange*, Myochikai believers continually strive to emancipate their souls from all evil.

Sange teaches that every human being has the original nature of the Buddha, and thus the innate potential to become Buddha. This means that even the wickedest person, deep within, possesses a heart of love and mercy. However, if this heart remains hidden inside the soul and is never manifest, the person can be compared to a mirror which never reflects the pure light of day. For Myochikai, *Sange* is not just confession of sins, but also a cleansing of the soul to allow the Buddha nature within to shine forth more and more purely.

Sange recognizes that, for most human beings, it is far easier to sin than to do good. But it also acknowledges that people naturally hope to do good and to change for the better. *Sange* offers a way to rid oneself of the inevitable stain of sin in order to reveal the heart of Buddha deep within.

In practice, Myochikai members strive to admit their own misdeeds, and to reflect on their consequences. The remorse that results is then expressed through sincere confession—a verbal articulation of the wrongs committed, either in prayer to the Buddha or to the person or persons who have been hurt as a result. In this way, *Sange* teaches, the heart of the individual is purified, clearing the way for the original light of the Buddha nature to shine forth. In cases where two persons have been at odds, one person's true *Sange* always generates repentance in the other. *Sange* is thus the process of spiritual renewal and reconciliation through the renunciation of sin.

For Myochikai, the practice of *Sange* provides insight into the original source of the conflict and injustice so prevalent in the world. Since all have sinned in some way, each believer admits to partial responsibility for the lack of peace in the world. Personal repentance and the reconciliation in human relationships that results can make a substantial contribution to world peace. Through the practice of *Sange*, Myochikai hopes to demonstrate to the world a way of humility that leads to reconciliation and peace for individuals, nations and the globe.



Ms. Yukie Yamada (28)
Tokyo, 2002

I got married in 1998 and now have two children. My husband often caused car accidents or made trouble for others by drinking too much alcohol. So we often quarreled, and I left home and stayed with my parents. Then, on November 1, 2001, the police phoned and told me that my husband had hit a college student when driving drunk, and that she had been seriously injured and was in critical condition. When I heard this, I felt great hatred for my husband and decided to divorce him because I didn't want my children to be the children of a criminal.

I hurried to the hospital to see the student and apologized to her parents on my knees. That night I told a Myochikai leader about everything. She advised me: "If you don't stop hating your husband, the student won't recover." I changed my mind at once because I did not want the student to lose her life. I desperately recited the Lotus Sutra and confessed my hatred through *Sange*. Fortunately, the student did not die.

But my husband had only been thinking about himself, and had sought the services of a private lawyer. I could not tolerate his irresponsibility in thinking that money would just get him out of trouble. I wondered why my husband was like this and began praying

fervently, seeking help from the Buddha. While reciting the Lotus Sutra, I suddenly started crying. I realized that I had been blaming my husband all along, thinking I was fine and my husband was in the wrong. I realized that my husband's wrongdoing was an expression of our ancestors calling for help, and that I had not been faithful enough to even think of this and had not prayed seriously for our ancestors. For the first time, I felt truly sorry to have been hurting my husband, who had been merely a vehicle to convey the cry of our ancestors for help.

Just after I finished reciting the Lotus Sutra, the police called and gave me some unexpected news. My husband had chosen a public defender and wanted to see me to apologize.

Since I had changed my way of thinking, it turned out that my husband had started reciting the Lotus Sutra while in custody. One day he wrote to me, letting me know he was truly sorry for his wrongdoing and begging me to trust him again, because he had changed. I couldn't stop crying.

The prosecutor had demanded one year in prison for him. However, on February 27, my husband received only four years of probation, and was released on the very same day. The victim's parents had said, "Condemn the offense and not its perpetrator; being in jail is not the only way to make up for one's sin."

Through practicing the teachings of Myochikai in this way, I have received many priceless things.

4

KANSHA

GRATITUDE FOR ALL THINGS

Kansha teaches Myochikai members to be grateful for all things. The source of spiritual abundance, for practitioners of *Kansha*, is a heart capable of gratitude for everything that supports and enriches one's life. This thankfulness is based on the realization of the complete dependence of one's life on many types of support. For instance, every human being comes into this world only with the love of his or her parents. And each person survives now only with the help and encouragement of many other people. *Kansha* teaches that the life of every human being is intimately dependent on countless people and things, on the natural environment, and on the Buddha.

This interdependence can be seen, for example, in the food chain. In one sense, human beings are nothing more than one link in the chain, consuming other plant and animal life in order to live, and even upon death, becoming food for other creatures. Truths as basic as this often go unnoticed, but through *Kansha*, Myochikai believers strive to cultivate the awareness that they have their lives only together with all other living things. Realizing this helps the believer to be grateful for all things, and to seek to help all things just as all things help him or her. In this way, *Kansha*

provides a wellspring of continuing motivation to do good for others, and to pursue further spiritual enlightenment.

The Buddha taught that the three poisons of greed, anger and ignorance had to be eliminated to attain peace of mind and true happiness. Through *Kansha*, Myochikai members strive to rid themselves of the heart of discontent that comes from ignorance, and to rejoice in gratitude for all things.

For Myochikai, the practice of *Kansha* is essential in building harmony between people and societies. The gratitude for "all things" taught by *Kansha* includes being thankful even for so-called "enemies." Replacing fear and hatred of "the other"—the root of discrimination and war—*Kansha* encourages thankfulness for all people, no matter how their views or situation may differ from one's own. For Myochikai, *Kansha* is the native state of all existence, and its practice restores human beings to their original position of harmony with all things.



Mr. Kazunari Tone (24)
Tokyo, 2000

When my mother and I first joined Myochikai, I was a 2nd grader. My parents were separated at the time and my mother and I had to live off of the child support from my father and her salary from a part-time job. We were poor. Every day, we ate meatball soup and rock-hard dinner rolls that my mother brought home from work.

My mother and I prayed for our ancestors a lot, reciting the Lotus Sutra. It was mysterious that, as we prayed, my mother received a bonus and her work environment improved. As for me, I was able to make more friends. Having friends made it more fun to go to school. I also became very active in the Myochikai Youth Group. After I graduated from high school, I trained to become a chef of Japanese cuisine. After five years, I passed a difficult exam and became a licensed globefish cook. This license is said to be the most difficult to get in all of Japanese cuisine, and I was the youngest person to pass in the history of the exam.

Now, putting my mother's salary and mine together, we can live an average life. One day, my mother said, "We were so poor at that time

that I didn't want to keep living. I seriously thought about giving up and ending our lives." It was then that we encountered Myochikai. In this sense, Myochikai literally saved our lives.

From now on, I want to enable my mother to live in comfort, because I have given her so much trouble already. I will not deny that I had a grudge against my father: I thought it was all because of him that my mother and I were so poor. However, now I can say with pride that being poor was a treasure for my life. While living in poverty, I learned the importance of perseverance and endurance. I could only have gained this priceless treasure through being poor. After I realized this, I let go of the negative feelings toward my father. Now, I am even grateful to him for giving me the opportunity to learn these precious lessons. I will keep following the teachings of Myochikai, always thankful for this treasure in my heart.

I want to thank the *Daionshi*, the *Kaishu*, Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto, Leader of Myochikai, my friends in the Youth Group, my colleagues at work, and most importantly, my mother who has spent her life bringing me up. I'll try with all my heart and soul to make my mother happy.

On the Path to World Peace

Since its founding, Myochikai has consistently endeavored to realize the vision of its founder—contributing to lasting world peace. For Myochikai, Rev. Mitsu Miyamoto's founding proclamation (see page 3) expresses the essence of Buddhist teaching and practice for building peace. Myochikai members seek to follow her dedicated example of selfless service and her practice of mercy and unconditional love. To this end, they follow the four primary teachings, which spring intrinsically from the heart of the founding proclamation. For Myochikai members, the practice of each one of the primary teachings, in its own way, directly contributes to peace for individuals, families, societies and the world.

EXCERPT FROM SPEECH ON BUILDING PEACE THROUGH GASSHO BY REV. TAKEYASU MIYAMOTO

OCTOBER 12, 2001

"Today, I want to share with you a story about a Buddhist saint described in the Lotus Sutra, named Jofukuyou. Every time this enlightened being met a person, without exception, he expressed respect by placing his palms together in a gesture of prayer, which we call Gassho. But people spoke ill of Jofukuyou, and became angry with him. Once, they even threw stones at him. But he responded with palms together in Gassho, saying, 'You have the nature of the Buddha, and thus I respect you; you are a wonderful person.' And he continued even more passionately to greet each person with palms together in prayer, worshipping the Buddha within his attackers.

The source of Myochikai teachings is this Gassho—in other words, in all our actions, enduring the difficulties that arise when striving to do good.

Listen, everyone. Do you see this fist? It is the image of attack, the shape of anger. Can you pick anything up with a clenched fist? No, you can't. Can you sense the warmth of a person with your fist? No. Rather, the first time you feel warmth is when you place your palms together in prayer, like this.

Hands together in prayer are the image of non-resistance, a shape rejecting violence, and an expression of reverence for peace. This Gassho is the image of Ninzen, which overcomes any trial, no matter what happens.

I have cried out for the creation of a world of Gassho for the last 51 years. However, my efforts have not yet been sufficient. All of us are responsible for the suffering in the world. If we all had love, if we all had mercy, would problems like the recent tragedies ever even occur?

It's not someone else's fault. It's the selfish nature inside each one of us. Let's change our hearts, if even just a little. Then, let's build a truly bright and wonderful world."

GASSHO—Prayer for Peace

Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto, Leader of Myochikai, once said, "If I were asked to name the most beautiful thing in the world, I would answer without hesitation—the shape of two palms placed together in prayer." This gesture is called *Gassho*, and it is deeply significant for Myochikai as an act of worship directed toward the Buddha nature inherent in all people and things. Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto has long advocated "*Gassho* in everything" and "building a world of *Gassho*," and often speaks about it as the path to peace. In essence, all of Myochikai's efforts to build peace can be seen as an expression of the spirit of reverence embodied in *Gassho*.

CONTRIBUTIONS FOR PEACE— Reaching Out

The compassion that starts with the practice of *Gassho*—hands together in prayer—naturally extends, for Myochikai, to reaching out a helping hand to those who are in need. Since its founding, Myochikai has been active in assisting victims of disasters, disease and conflict. In 1953, just three years after Myochikai began, it made its first major offer of emergency financial assistance, to help survivors of the severe flooding in Kyushu, Japan that occurred that year. Ever since, Myochikai has provided help both in Japan and overseas—assisting victims of earthquakes, fires, typhoons, floods, and mud slides, as well as diseases such as leprosy. Its first overseas project was cooperation with the "Heal Leprosy Fundraising Campaign" in India, in 1965.

In 1990, on its 40th anniversary, Myochikai founded the Arigatou Foundation, and in the years since, the Foundation has extended Myochikai's helping hand more specifically to children around the world. Through the Arigatou Foundation, Myochikai assistance has broadened to include help for children affected by violence and armed conflict in many countries. The Arigatou Foundation also provides continuous financial assistance for projects in fields such as water and sanitation, as well as education. (See pages 13-22 for more details on the Arigatou Foundation.)

Arigatou Foundation programs are entirely funded by the voluntary contributions of Myochikai members, who offer donations as a means of putting into practice their prayers for world peace. These offerings are a fundamental part of their Buddhist spiritual practice.

APPEALING FOR PEACE— Hands Outstretched

On the strength of members' personal commitment to giving and compassion, Myochikai has also had an active voice in peace advocacy since it began. Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto has traveled in Europe, North America, Asia and the Middle East as part of various missions to plead for peace, such as the Religious People's Peace Mission for the Total Abolition of Nuclear Weapons (1963). In 1964, both Rev. Mitsu Miyamoto and Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto were asked to serve on the committees which planned the building of the Flame of Peace at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park, now known the world over as a poignant reminder that atomic warfare should never be allowed to occur again.

Most notably, in 1987, at the Religious Summit Meeting on Mt. Hiei, Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto made an historic proposal on building world peace, speaking on behalf of Japan's religious people to the religious leaders assembled from around the world.

Myochikai's efforts to build peace have led to active participation in secular fora such as United Nations Special Sessions on Disarmament (1982 and 1988). In May 2002, Rev. Miyamoto addressed the United Nations General Assembly during the Special Session on Children, speaking on behalf of religious people from around the world. Myochikai's appeals for peace continue to gather the support and understanding of an ever-wider spectrum of people and organizations.



At the Religious Summit Meeting on Mt. Hiei

INTERRELIGIOUS COOPERATION— *Joining Hands*

Myochikai's longstanding commitment to interreligious cooperation for peace began as early as 1953, when it joined the Federation of New Religious Organization of Japan, or *Shinsburen*. Myochikai has also been active in the World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP) since it began in 1970. In 1981, in recognition of Myochikai's contributions in this area, Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto was invited by H.H. Pope John Paul II to attend an Interreligious Conference at the Holy See. Later, in 1997, Myochikai hosted its own Interreligious Prayer for Peace, which was attended by religious dignitaries from various faiths.



Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto meets H.H. Pope John Paul II

A major fruit of the first five decades of these efforts was the launch of the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC) in May 2000. Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto explained it this way: "When I inaugurated the GNRC, I hoped for two things. One was to create a place where many people of various faiths engaged in activities for children could engage in dialogue, experience mutual enlightenment, and enhance cooperation. The other was to expand the circle of prayer and practice. The GNRC could not have been launched successfully without the cooperation of distinguished religious people from around the world." Since that time, the GNRC has grown through the voluntary initiatives of its members, and regional networks have been formed in South Asia, Africa, Central Asia and the Caucasus, the Middle East, Europe, and Latin America. (See pages 23-32 for more information on the GNRC.)



Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto with participants of the First Forum of the GNRC

CHILDREN FOR PEACE— *Passing the Torch*

Myochikai seeks to build world peace by assisting the children of today, in the faith that if they grow up safe and sound, they will make a strong contribution to peace—both now and after becoming adults. As early as 1961, it sent youth delegates to the *Shinsburen* Religious Youth Conference. Myochikai youth have often participated in events like the global gathering of the Youth Wing of the World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP) in 1979. In July 2000, the Arigatou Foundation held the Conference of Children for the Coming Generation (CCG), in Chiba, Japan, bringing together 213 youth from 40 countries and regions and many religious backgrounds. Following up on the CCG in May 2002, the Foundation held the Children's Conference in New York as a side event during the United Nations Special Session on Children. In May 2004, some 40 children from every continent are to take part in the Second Forum of the GNRC held in Geneva, Switzerland.



Conference of Children for the Coming Generation, held at Myochikai's Sacred Land in Chiba, Japan

MISSION— *Staying on the Road to Peace*

A great deal has been accomplished in Myochikai's first half century, but there is much left to do to realize a world of true peace. Inspired by the ever-passionate commitment of Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto, Myochikai members continue to strive to build world peace by putting the four primary teachings of Myochikai into practice in their personal lives. This is what it means to make the heart bloom.

Chronology of Key Myochikai Events

- Religious Cooperation
- ◆ Financial Assistance
- ▲ Major Myochikai Event
- ♣ Peace Activity
- ♥ Concern for Children
- Major Prayer Event
- ★ United Nations Participation

| | | |
|---------|-------------------------|---|
| ▲ | Oct. 12, 1950 | Myochikai founded by Rev. Mitsu Miyamoto. |
| ■ | May 19, 1953 | Myochikai joins the Federation of New Religious Organizations of Japan (<i>Shinshuren</i>). |
| ◆ | Jul. 1953 | Myochikai provides emergency assistance for the first time to help victims of a natural disaster in Japan. |
| ■ | Aug. 8, 1953 | Rev. Mitsu Miyamoto, Great Spiritual Master of Myochikai, becomes an Executive Director of <i>Shinshuren</i> . |
| ♣ ■ | Sep. 14 - Oct. 24, 1963 | Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto visits Europe and the United States as a member of the Religious People's Peace Mission for the Total Abolition of Nuclear Weapons. |
| ♣ | Mar. 9, 1964 | Preparing for the installation of the Flame of Peace at Hiroshima Peace Park, Rev. Mitsu Miyamoto and Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto serve on the construction and executive committees, respectively. |
| ♣ ■ | Feb. 3-21, 1965 | Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto visits the Middle East as a member of the Japanese Religious People's Peace Mission. |
| ◆ | Jul. 30, 1965 | Myochikai cooperates with the "Heal Leprosy Fundraising Campaign" in India. |
| ♣ | Jul. 28, 1966 | Rev. Mitsu Miyamoto and Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto participate in the Asian Conference against Nuclear Weapons. |
| ■ | Oct. 19, 1967 | Rev. Mitsu Miyamoto becomes a Vice President of the Board of <i>Shinshuren</i> . |
| ♣ ■ | Aug. 21, 1969 | Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto participates in the first Conference for Peace of the World Federation of Religious People. |
| ♣ ■ | Oct. 16, 1970 | Rev. Mitsu Miyamoto participates in the first General Assembly of the World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP) as an honorary advisor. Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto participates as a Japanese delegate. |
| ♣ ■ | Jun. 12, 1976 | Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto participates in the 8th Conference for Peace of the World Federation of Religious People. |
| ♣ ■ | Nov. 25-30, 1976 | Representatives of Myochikai participate in the first meeting of the Asian Conference on Religion and Peace (ACRP), in Singapore. |
| ◆ | Nov. 10, 1978 | Myochikai makes a financial contribution to institutions for children with cerebral palsy and severe physical/mental disabilities (again on May 14, 1987). |
| ■ | Feb. 24, 1981 | Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto participates in the Meeting with Representatives of Non-Christian Religions at the invitation of H.H. Pope John Paul II, during his visit to Japan. |
| ■ | Apr. 23, 1982 | Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto talks with Mother Theresa. |
| ♣ | May 23, 1982 | Myochikai finishes collecting 7.8 million of the 37 million signatures on the Petition for Disarmament and the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons. |
| ● ▲ ♣ | May 28, 1982 | Myochikai holds the Gathering of Prayer for World Peace and the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons. |
| ★ ♣ ■ | Jun. 22 - Jul. 1, 1982 | In New York, Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto presents 37 million signatures to the United Nations Second Special Session on Disarmament, as the Honorary Leader of the <i>Shinshuren</i> Special Peace Mission from Japan. |
| ■ | May 24, 1984 | Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto becomes a Vice Chairman of the Board of <i>Shinshuren</i> . |
| ◆ | Dec. 15, 1984 | Myochikai leads the "Send Blankets to Africa" campaign, collecting and dispatching 36,000 blankets. |
| ■ | Aug. 29, 1986 | Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto joins the Japan Conference of Religious Representatives' standing committee on preparation for the Religious Summit Meeting on Mt. Hiei. |
| ♣ ■ ● | Aug. 3, 1987 | Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto makes a proposal for building peace at the Religious Summit Meeting on Mt. Hiei. |
| ★ ♣ | Jun. 4-13, 1988 | Representatives of Myochikai go on a peace mission to the United Nations Third Special Session on Disarmament, in New York. |
| ■ | Jan. 26, 1990 | Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto becomes an Executive Director of the WCRP Japan Committee. |
| ★ ■ ♥ | Jul. 25-31, 1990 | Representatives of Myochikai participate in the "World's Religions for the World's Children" conference, held in Princeton in the United States. |
| ♥ ★ | Sep. 10-17, 1990 | In the year of Myochikai's 40th anniversary, representatives of Myochikai participate in the 43rd Annual DPI/NGO Conference and visit UNICEF headquarters in New York. |
| ▲ ◆ ♥ ● | Oct. 13-14, 1990 | The Arigatou Foundation established on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of Myochikai, as a faith-based NGO working to build a better environment for the world's children. |
| ■ ♥ ★ | Aug. 30 - Sep. 6, 1993 | Representatives of Myochikai participate in the Conference of Religious Leaders for Children organized by UNICEF and WCRP, held in Melbourne, Australia. |

| | | |
|---------|------------------------|---|
| ♣ ■ | Oct. 19, 1996 | Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto becomes a member of the ACRP Executive Committee. |
| ■ | Feb. 4, 1997 | Representatives of Myochikai participate in the Japan Conference of Religious Representatives' mission to Europe. |
| ♣ ■ ● | Aug. 4, 1997 | Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto participates in the Interreligious Prayer Ceremony for World Peace on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the Religious Summit Meeting on Mt. Hiei. |
| ■ ♣ ● | Aug. 6, 1997 | Myochikai hosts an Interreligious Prayer for Peace, attended by H.E. Francis Cardinal Arinze, President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue of the Holy See. |
| ■ | Feb. 9, 1999 | A Korean Buddhist mission visits Myochikai for a Korea-Japan Religious Cultural Exchange. |
| ● ■ | Oct. 25-28, 1999 | Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto visits Rome to attend the Interreligious Assembly held by the Pontifical Council of Interreligious Dialogue, accompanied by 25 representatives of Myochikai. |
| ♣ ■ | Nov. 23 - Dec. 3, 1999 | Representatives of Myochikai join the <i>Shinshuren</i> Peace Mission to the Middle East. |
| ♣ ■ ♥ | Nov. 25-29, 1999 | Representatives of Myochikai visit Amman, Jordan to participate in the 7th WCRP General Assembly. |
| ♣ ♥ ■ ● | May 16-18, 2000 | First Forum of the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC) held in Tokyo, attended by 294 participants representing 7 major religions, from 33 countries and regions. On May 18, Myochikai hosts an Interreligious Assembly for Prayer, where representatives of 11 religions pray for peace. |
| ♣ ♥ ■ ● | Jul. 25-28, 2000 | Conference of Children for the Coming Generation (CCG) held in Chiba, Japan, bringing together 213 youth from 40 countries and regions to discuss their own future. The CCG Message is created and sent to world leaders. |
| ★ ♣ | Aug. 28-31, 2000 | Representatives of Myochikai attend the UN Millennium Peace Summit held in New York. |
| ♣ ♥ ■ ★ | May 10, 2002 | Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto addresses the United Nations General Assembly on the final day of the Special Session on Children, speaking on behalf of the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC). |
| ★ | Feb. 2004 | Myochikai (Arigatou Foundation) granted special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. |
| ♣ ♥ ■ ● | May 17-19, 2004 | Second Forum of the GNRC to be held in Geneva, Switzerland, with some 300 participants representing every major world religion, including 40 children. Interfaith Prayer for Peace to be held on May 19. |
| ♥ ■ ★ | May 2004 | Establishment of the Interfaith Council on Ethics Education for Children to be formally announced. |



Arigatou Foundation

Faith for Children, Faith in Children

Prayer and Practice for Children



*Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto, President of
the Arigatou Foundation*

When I think of the merciful heart of Rev. Mitsu Miyamoto, founder of Myochikai, and consider the desperate state of so many children around the world, I feel certain her heart is filled with pain over their plight. Indeed, it was her heart that led me to establish the Arigatou Foundation on the 40th anniversary of Myochikai in 1990.

In doing so, I had twin hopes. One was to protect children—the inheritors of the Earth and the precious treasure of humanity—from armed conflict, deteriorating natural environments and other dangers. The other was to promote their safe and sound physical, psychosocial, and spiritual development.

For the members of Myochikai, the Arigatou Foundation provides an opportunity to practice the Buddhist teaching called *Fuse*, which refers to a spirit of grateful giving. Donations represent not only financial gifts, but also a spiritual practice for peace.

Everyone who gives funds to support the work of the Arigatou Foundation does so with a prayer for world peace, and this is the true purpose of the Arigatou Foundation—prayer and practice.

As a simple person of faith, cooperating with people of good will from all around the world, I vow to continue my prayer and practice for a bright future filled with peace for all.

Let us pray for the children of the world, and then put our prayers into practice.

Overview of the Arigatou Foundation

The Arigatou Foundation was established in response to the tragic situation facing children in the contemporary world on October 12, 1990 by Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto, leader of the Japanese Buddhist organization Myochikai. The Arigatou Foundation is an international faith-based NGO dedicated to creating a better environment for children around the world, an endeavor which Myochikai members believe is essential to the realization of world peace. Myochikai members continue to commemorate October 12 each year by observing a day of prayer for all the children in the world.

The Arigatou Foundation holds that children should be recognized as the treasure of humanity, the inheritors of the Earth and the bearers of future peace, and deplors the miserable conditions that affront so many children around the globe. Children suffer or die from easily preventable diseases or in armed conflicts. Children's rights are violated in countless ways every day, in both developed and developing countries.

The Japanese word, "*Arigatou*," literally means "thank you." The very name of the Foundation expresses the gratitude which donors feel for the opportunity to help children around the world. In a spirit of thankfulness for the many blessings of life, Myochikai members gladly give of their finances to the work of the Foundation as a part of their Buddhist spiritual practice. Using these heartfelt donations, the Arigatou Foundation engages in a wide variety of activities to create a better environment for children.

Since its establishment, the Foundation has provided support for children suffering from natural disasters, armed conflict, and other desperate circumstances in 24 countries and regions around the world, often working in cooperation with United Nations agencies or NGOs such as Medecins Sans Frontieres. The Foundation offers financial assistance and sends volunteers.

In the aftermath of earthquakes and other natural disasters, the Foundation has provided emergency assistance in Turkey, Taiwan, Bangladesh, El Salvador, India, and Iran through UNICEF or the Japanese Red Cross Society.

In response to the plight of children caught up in armed conflicts, the Foundation made a significant donation to the UNICEF Gulf Crisis Aid Fund in 1991, another to UNICEF for Rwandan refugees in 1994, and another to the UNHCR in 1999 to provide emergency aid

in Kosovo. In 2001, the Arigatou Foundation made donations to the UNHCR to help Afghan refugees and to the Families of Freedom Scholarship Fund to help provide education for the family members of individuals killed in the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States. The Foundation also contributed to UNICEF relief efforts after the 2003 Iraq war.

In the area of improving the environment for children in difficult circumstances, the Foundation supported water and sanitation projects in Nepal and Bangladesh from 1990 to 1998 and provided continuous assistance from 1998 to 2001 to UNICEF projects in Bhutan, Mozambique, Peru, and the West Bank and Gaza. Also active in the field of education, it built and supported the operations of the Salyansthana Primary School in Nepal, which aims to be self-sufficient by spring 2004.

These are but a few examples of the Foundation's programs in the area of Assistance.

The Foundation also has programs in three other areas. Its Enlightenment and Awareness programs include lecture events and study tours aimed at broadening appreciation for the challenges faced by the world's children. In the area of Art & Culture and Information Sharing, the Foundation holds charity concerts and produces a newsletter and other publications. The Foundation's largest initiative in the area of Interreligious Cooperation is the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC). (See pages 23-32 for more information on the GNRC.)

In 2003, the Arigatou Foundation Office in Geneva, Switzerland was established to represent the Arigatou Foundation in international affairs and facilitate the work of the GNRC. In February 2004, Myochikai (Arigatou Foundation) was granted special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, in recognition of its global contributions to the welfare of children and the importance of its partnership with UNICEF and other international agencies.

The Arigatou Foundation is committed to further advancing its initiatives to build a better future for every child, working in cooperation with international institutions, governments, religious communities, NGOs, businesses, and people of good will everywhere.

Program Areas

ASSISTANCE

- Continuous assistance for the survival and development of children
- Emergency aid for victims of natural disasters, refugees and children in zones of armed conflict or other violence
- Continuous assistance for educational programs



Left: Assistance for victims of the earthquake in Gujrat in West India (January 2001)
© UNICEF

Right: Assistance for curriculum development program at Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam, where Palestinian and Israeli children learn together about each other's religious heritages

ENLIGHTENMENT AND AWARENESS

- Research into the conditions of the world's children
- Enhancing awareness of children's issues among donors



Left: Dr. Han Seung-Soo, President of the 56th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, speaks at Arigatou Foundation lecture event (May 2003)

Right: Workshop for youth on solutions to poverty (July 2001)

ART & CULTURE AND INFORMATION SHARING

- Cultivation and development of love, sympathy and appreciation for the world's children through artistic and cultural activities and information exchange



Left: Charity concert to benefit victims of drought, civil war and hunger in Somali (November 1992)

Right: Charity bazaar and information sharing event organized by the Arigatou Foundation (October 1998)

INTERRELIGIOUS COOPERATION

- Initiatives for children undertaken with the cooperation of religious people from various faith traditions, such as the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC) and the Interfaith Council on Ethics Education for Children



Left: Second preparatory meeting for the establishment of the Interfaith Council on Ethics Education for Children (June 2003)
Right: Participants of the First Forum of the GNRC (May 2000)



Ms. Yuka Amamiya (23)
Arigatou Foundation volunteer

How I Learned the Real Meaning of “Assistance”

I was an Arigatou Foundation volunteer at the South Asia Workshop on Children at Risk from Poverty and Other Deprivations, which was held in Sri Lanka in 2001.

Before going to Sri Lanka, our volunteer team met together several times to study the history and environment of Sri Lanka. But after actually setting foot on the ground in Sri Lanka after a ten-hour flight from Japan, I could hardly get to sleep that night. I was so excited about the new experience I was about to have.

We spent the next day busily preparing documents for the meeting and setting up the meeting place along with the local volunteers from the Sarvodaya Shramadana movement, doing our best to communicate in English.

From the opening message of the conference by Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto to the plenary session the next day, I felt like something wonderful was beginning to bloom. I was struck by the earnestness of the Workshop participants from seven South Asian countries, as they spoke about the challenging situations the children of their countries were facing.

Often, when we hear that children need education or that children are suffering from sickness, we think we should help by building schools or sending medicine. Actions like these are our usual definition of “assistance.” However, while I was listening to the participants speak, I realized that every problem has deep roots, and that nothing can be solved unless the local people can get to the root of the problem and overcome it.

After the Workshop ended, we were able to visit village schools, public health centers, finance cooperatives and other institutions supported by the Sarvodaya Shramadana movement, which works among the local people in various places in Sri Lanka.

When we visited a remote village toward the end of our stay in Sri Lanka, the cars and buses could not get through the mountain pass. The whole village came out to help open up the pass. The Sarvodaya volunteers were working side-by-side with the people of that village and other nearby villages. When I saw all these people come running to offer a helping hand, and saw the way they were working so hard in complete unity, I realized that the true meaning of “assistance” is when all people, both those who support and those who are being supported, come together as one to help one another.

During my trip as a volunteer to Sri Lanka, I realized various new things and learned a lot. I hope I can share my precious experiences with as many people as possible and put into practice what I have learned.

Special Feature: Representative Projects

SALYANSTHAN PRIMARY SCHOOL *Nepal*

The Salyansthana Primary School in Kitipur Municipality, Nepal was built in 1999 using grant assistance from the Arigatou Foundation. Before the school was built, the nearest access to education was a 2km walk, and most children in the community, where many families are engaged in subsistence farming, were not able to make the journey to attend. The new school, with its mission to provide equal access to high-quality education to all the school-age children of Salyansthana village regardless of their social or economic status, has changed the situation dramatically.

Legally recognized by the government of the Kingdom of Nepal as a nonprofit educational facility, the school opened in March 1999, and has welcomed 30-40 new students each year since then. As of March 2003, there were 159 students, 77 boys and 82 girls, in eight grades ranging from preschool through elementary school to the first year of junior high school. There were nine teachers and four other staff members. The school is operated by a local management committee, whose chair is Prof. Krishna P. Khanal.

In addition to the grant for constructing the school, the Arigatou Foundation has provided the funds to support the first five years of operation of the school. With the cooperation of parents and the wider community, the school aims to become self-sufficient in spring 2004. It plans to add one new grade each year until there are ten grades, which will enable it to offer a complete high school education under Nepal's formal educational system. With these successes, the school is demonstrating the potential for replication of projects like this in other places.



Opening ceremony of the Salyansthana Primary School in Nepal



Teacher and students interact in the classroom

INTERFAITH AND PEACE EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Israel, Iraq, Tanzania

The Arigatou Foundation concentrates significant energy on the field of education, in recognition of its potential to help children grow up to be builders of a peaceful world. The Foundation is particularly active in supporting educational programs that emphasize peace in areas of armed conflict and harmony among different religions.

In Israel, the Arigatou Foundation has provided support since 2002 for curriculum development in the Primary School at Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam, a remarkable progressive village where Jews and Arabs live together in a peaceful community. The curriculum being developed by the school staff focuses on the children's study of Christianity, Islam and Judaism. The Foundation strongly supports the goal of the binational and bilingual educational system at the village: "finding ways to advance understanding between Jews and Arabs at the earliest stages of their education."

Another project supported by the Foundation since 2001 is the religious tolerance education program operated by Defence for Children International. This program is conducted for 10-year old children in three different schools in Haifa, Israel: one Christian school, one Islamic school, and one Jewish school. The goal of the program is to allow Christian, Jewish and Muslim children to learn about one another's religious traditions, and other faiths as well, in order to contribute to mutual respect and a spirit of peace.

In Iraq, the Foundation provided humanitarian reconstruction assistance for UNICEF education programs in 2003. The goal of the program was to enable children to return to school after two months of no attendance due to the influence of the armed conflict. Repairs were made to school



*Former street child participating in
Peace Education Project in Tanzania*

buildings, mental health care and psychosocial assistance were offered, and teacher training and study materials were provided.

The Arigatou Foundation also supports the Education for Peace Project of the African Network of Religions for Children. Beginning in Tanzania, the project involves children as educators for peace and works to sensitize parents to the need for children to grow up with a strong ethical foundation. The project objectives include: building a culture of peace and understanding among children and youth by seeking guidance from elders; sustaining peace and education for peace as a poverty reduction strategy at the grassroots level; promoting religious, ethical and all other forms of a culture of tolerance among children; and establishing avenues/spaces in which children from different backgrounds can meet and interact to build a culture of peace.

ASSISTANCE FOR CHILDREN SUFFERING FROM ARMED CONFLICT AND OTHER VIOLENCE *United States, Afghanistan*

The Arigatou Foundation provided assistance for the families and children of those suffering in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks that took place in the United States on September 11, 2001, in both the United States and Afghanistan. For the United States, a contribution was made to assist the children of those who perished in the attacks to the Families of Freedom Scholarship Fund, newly established by the Citizen's Scholarship Foundation of America. This Fund will provide educational scholarships for family members of victims of the attacks. For Afghanistan, a contribution was made to the UNHCR to assist the refugees and internally displaced persons who fled from their homes due to ongoing drought and conflict and fear of military reprisals after the terrorist incidents. The funds for these contributions were donated by Myochikai members, along with prayers for the peaceful repose of those who lost their lives and for the earliest possible recovery of both countries.



Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto presents Arigatou Foundation donation for Afghan refugees and displaced persons to Mr. Shunichiro Asaba, Deputy Regional Representative for Japan and the Republic of Korea, UNHCR

COOPERATION WITH THE UNITED NATIONS

China, East Timor, West Bank and Gaza

The Arigatou Foundation often cooperates with UNICEF and other United Nations agencies in delivering assistance to children. For instance, in 2003, the Foundation made contributions to support UNICEF projects in China and East Timor.

In China, the program focused on enhancing education for children and women in marginalized regions of China. Arigatou Foundation contributions supported: research on local children's and women's issues; planning for problem solving in cooperation with the local government; and provision of education in basic living skills, literacy, knowledge of nurturing techniques, maternal and children's health care, care for the disabled, and prevention of diseases including HIV/AIDS to a target of 21,000 people. Foundation funds also supported small loans to 3,800 women and scholarships for 450 girls. The project was successful in increasing the number of girls graduating from elementary school.

In East Timor, the program rebuilt the local elementary school education system, which had nearly collapsed due to the prolonged armed conflict. Arigatou Foundation donations supported the provision of materials for students and teachers; on-site teacher training; assistance in curriculum design; development of educational tools in reading, writing and mathematics; and programs to enhance the health and nutrition of elementary school students. The program also featured development and implementation of the "Infant Care and Education" program. Thirty teachers from five regions attended a workshop to develop literacy aids and select books for purchase for a mobile library serving 300 schools and about 15,000 students.



Children go back to school in East Timor

© UNICEF



Children in China studying through a UNICEF program supported by the Arigatou Foundation

© UNICEF

For the three years from 1998 to 2000, the Arigatou Foundation provided substantial ongoing support for the UNICEF project, "Peace Education for Child-friendly Cities and Communities," in the West Bank and Gaza. The project targeted 50,000 children and youth, as well as community educators and teachers in six major Palestinian regions, and included the delivery of training workshops, educational materials and supplies, advocacy and social mobilization services and technical assistance.

Chronology of Key Arigatou Foundation Events

■ Religious Cooperation
◆ Financial Assistance
★ United Nations Participation

▲ Major Arigatou Foundation Event
♣ Peace Activity

♥ Overseas Mission
● Major Prayer Event

| | | |
|-----------|-------------------------|---|
| ▲ | Oct. 12, 1990 | Arigatou Foundation established by Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto, Leader of Myochikai, on Myochikai's 40th anniversary. Rev. Miyamoto becomes President of the Arigatou Foundation. |
| ♥ | Nov. 4-10, 1990 | First study mission on continuous support project for water and sanitation program dispatched to Nepal. |
| ◆ ★ | Feb. 28, 1991 | 100 million yen donated to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Gulf Crisis Aid Fund. |
| ♥ | Oct. 28 – Nov. 2, 1991 | Second study mission dispatched to Nepal. Arigatou Foundation participates in the 4th Asian Conference on Religion and Peace (ACRP). |
| ♥ ★ | Mar. 25 – Apr. 4, 1992 | In cooperation with the UNICEF Nepal Campaign, two Arigatou Foundation youth volunteers sent to Nepal as UNICEF Child Goodwill Ambassadors. |
| ◆ | Aug. 28, 1993 | 5 million yen contributed to the reconstruction fund for the victims of heavy rain in Nepal through the Royal Nepalese Embassy. |
| ◆ ★ | Aug. 7, 1994 | Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto participates in the opening ceremony of the UNICEF Global Village on the 40th anniversary of the Japan Committee for UNICEF. 30 million yen donated to UNICEF to assist Rwandan refugees. |
| ◆ | Jan. 19, 1995 | 40,000 nail clippers sent to Bangladesh so that each of 8,000 elementary schools could receive five nail clippers. |
| ◆ ★ | May 14, 1995 | Mr. Rolf Carriere, Representative of UNICEF Bangladesh Office, visits the Arigatou Foundation. 3 million yen donated to purchase vermifuge for the households of 420,000 people in Bangladesh. |
| ◆ | Aug. 14 – Nov. 30, 1996 | 500,000 yen contributed to the movement to "Send Shoes to Children in the Former Yugoslavia" organized by the Federation of New Religious Organizations of Japan. |
| ◆ | Mar. 31 – Apr. 18, 1998 | Cooperation provided for the Chernobyl 12th Anniversary Concert organized by the Chernobyl Children's Fund, Japan. |
| ◆ | Apr. 14, 1998 | Children from Chernobyl visit the Arigatou Foundation and receive a donation. |
| ◆ | Sep. 24, 1998 | Two million yen donated for the purchase of materials needed by flood victims in Bangladesh through the Bangladesh Prime Minister's Fund. |
| ◆ ★ | Oct. 12, 1998 | Continuous financial support begins for UNICEF projects in Bhutan, Mozambique, Peru, and the West Bank of the Jordan River and Gaza District. 32 million yen given annually through 2001. |
| ◆ ♥ | Mar. 3, 1999 | Inaugural ceremony of the Salyansthan Primary School, built in Nepal by the Arigatou Foundation. |
| ♣ ◆ ★ | Apr. 14, 1999 | 300 million yen donated for use by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Kosovo. |
| ◆ | May 21, 1999 | Donation made to the Cooperative Emergency Fund of the Medecins Sans Frontieres Japan to enable smooth and efficient response to emergencies. |
| ◆ | Jun. 28, 1999 | Donation made for the reconstruction of historical buildings and cultural properties in Assisi that were severely damaged in an earthquake. |
| ♣ | Jul. 19, 1999 | Arigatou Foundation becomes a special member of the Japan Center for Preventive Diplomacy upon its establishment, making a donation to the Center. |
| ◆ | Aug. 20, 1999 | Emergency assistance provided through the Japanese Red Cross Society to assist the victims of the severe earthquake which battered western Turkey. |
| ◆ | Sep. 20, 1999 | Donation made to the Sarvodaya Peace Fund. |
| ◆ | Sep. 24, 1999 | Emergency assistance provided through the Japanese Red Cross Society to assist the victims of the severe earthquake which struck the middle of Taiwan. |
| ♥ ★ | Nov. 21-24, 1999 | Delegation sent to the "Conference on Children's Rights and Religion at a Crossroads" held in Nazareth, Israel to commemorate the 10th anniversary of adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. |
| ♥ ■ | Dec. 2-4, 1999 | Rev. Keishi Miyamoto, Representative of the Arigatou Foundation, visits Italy to participate in a conference organized by the Pontifical Council for the Family of the Holy See. |
| ♣ ▲ ■ ★ ● | May 16-18, 2000 | First Forum of the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC) held in Tokyo, attended by 294 participants representing 7 major religions, from 33 countries and regions. On May 18, Interreligious Assembly for Prayer held, where representatives of 11 religions pray for peace. |
| ♣ ▲ ■ ● | Jul. 25-28, 2000 | Conference of Children for the Coming Generation (CCG) held in Chiba, Japan, bringing together 213 children from 40 countries and regions to discuss their own future. The CCG Message is created and sent to world leaders. |

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| ◆ Aug. 10, 2000 | Donation made for the Aid Program for Street Children in China of the Medecins Sans Frontieres Japon. |
| ◆★ Jan. 19, 2001 | Emergency assistance provided to the victims of the earthquake in El Salvador through the Japan Committee for UNICEF. |
| ◆★ Feb. 3, 2001 | Emergency assistance provided to the victims of the earthquake in West India through the Japan Committee for UNICEF. |
| ♥★ Apr. 24-26, 2001 | Rev. Keishi Miyamoto attends the UNICEF-WCRP Interreligious Consultation. |
| ♣◆★ Oct. 14, 2001 | 10 million yen contributed to the UNHCR to assist the refugees and internally displaced persons who fled their homes due to ongoing drought, conflict, and fear of military reprisals after the terrorist incidents. |
| ◆★ Oct. 14, 2001 | Continuous support for UNICEF projects in Afghanistan, East Timor, Mauritania, and the western area of China begins. US\$15,000 provided to each of the four projects annually through 2003. |
| ♣◆ Oct. 22, 2001 | 10 million yen contributed for the families and children of those suffering in the aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attacks to the Families of Freedom Scholarship Fund established by the Citizen's Scholarship Foundation of America. |
| ◆ Oct. 31, 2001 | Donation made for the Asian Children's Cultural Festival to the Shanti Volunteer Association. |
| ♥ Dec. 18-20, 2001 | Rev. Keishi Miyamoto attends 2nd World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children held in Yokohama, Japan. |
| ♥■ Jan. 23-25, 2002 | Rev. Keishi Miyamoto attends a forum under the theme of the "Contribution of Religions to Peace" organized by the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue of the Holy See, as well as the interreligious "Prayer for Peace" in Assisi, Italy. |
| ♥■★ May 10, 2002 | Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto, President of the Arigatou Foundation, makes a statement to the United Nations General Assembly during the Special Session on Children in New York, speaking on behalf of the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC). |
| ♥★ Jul. 25-26, 2002 | Rev. Keishi Miyamoto attends the consultative meeting of senior NGO representatives held at UNICEF headquarters in New York in follow-up to the United Nations Special Session on Children. |
| ♥ Sep. 24, 2002 | The Arigatou Foundation dispatches representatives to Sri Lanka to attend the inauguration ceremony commemorating the establishment of the GNRC South Asian Network Secretariat. |
| ▲ Feb. 1, 2003 | The Arigatou Foundation Office in Geneva established to facilitate the work of the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC) and represent the Foundation in international affairs. Ms. Agneta Ucko appointed Director. |
| ♣★ May 14, 2003 | Dr. Han Seung-soo, member of the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea, Former Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Republic of Korea, and Former President of the United Nations General Assembly, gives a lecture for the Arigatou Foundation in Tokyo under the title "The Future of the United Nations: Where do we go from here?" |
| ♥■ May 27-28, 2003 | Rev. Keishi Miyamoto attends the conference on "Rejecting Violence and Promoting Peace with Justice" organized by the International Executive Committee of the World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP) in Amman, Jordan. |
| ♥■ Jul. 20-23, 2003 | Arigatou Foundation representatives dispatched to attend the Conference of the International Network for Engaged Buddhism 2003 in Seoul. |
| ★ Sep. 19, 2003 | Arigatou Foundation Office in Geneva participates in the discussion day on the Rights of Indigenous Children organized by the UNHCR. |
| ★ Nov. 20-21, 2003 | Arigatou Foundation formally receives membership in the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child at its General Assembly held in Geneva. |
| ★ Feb. 2004 | Myochikai (Arigatou Foundation) granted special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. |
| ♣▲■★ May 17-19, 2004 | Second Forum of the GNRC to be held in Geneva, Switzerland, with some 300 participants representing every major world religion, including 40 children. Interfaith Prayer for Peace to be held on May 19. |
| ♣■★ May 2004 | Establishment of the Interfaith Council on Ethics Education for Children to be formally announced. |



Global Network of Religions for Children

Interfaith Action for the Children of the World

Joining Hands for Children



Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto prays at the Interreligious Assembly for Prayer held immediately following the First Forum of the GNRC (May 2000)

Today, our children, who are the precious treasure of humanity and the inheritors of the Earth, are still living in deplorable conditions all over the world.

After almost ten years working through the Arigatou Foundation to create a world where children could grow up safe and sound, I was convinced that promoting dialogue and cooperation among people of all faiths in order to create a better environment for the world's children was of the utmost urgency. Believing that it is the responsibility of religious people to create a better world for children, I advocated the establishment of the GNRC for that purpose. I was encouraged by the enthusiasm and solidarity with which the people of every major world religion shared my concern, coming together to take action for the future of the children of the world at the First Forum of the GNRC, which the Arigatou Foundation organized in May 2000 in Tokyo.

I am deeply grateful for the dedication of GNRC members since then to making significant progress for children in various world regions. It is their devotion that is responsible for the remarkably quick and far-reaching development of the GNRC since the First Forum.

As people of faith, we see the Divine Presence in every person and consider it our obligation to encourage each person to realize the highest potential of the human heart. I strongly believe that ethics education, which I proposed on the occasion of the United Nations Special Session on Children in May 2002, is urgently needed by children in today's world and is an essential path to realizing a world of peace, justice and human dignity in the 21st century.

Please join hands with me in further efforts to guarantee a bright future for every child.

Prospectus for Establishment of the GNRC

May 16, 2000

As we enter the 21st century, our children, the inheritors of the Earth and the precious treasure of humanity, are living in deplorable conditions all over the world. Countless children find themselves surrounded by harsh circumstances. Some lose their lives to easily preventable diseases or malnutrition, and others are killed in armed conflicts. We simply cannot overlook such clear violations of the rights of the child. We are also painfully aware of the increase in the number of children suffering from such social or psychological problems as loneliness and alienation, triggered by poverty or discrimination.

In recognition of the above circumstances, many international organizations, including UNICEF, other UN agencies, government agencies, and NGOs, are engaging in a broad range of activities to alleviate children's difficulties. Among these efforts, we witnessed the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child at the United Nations General Assembly in 1989, followed by the World Summit for Children in 1990.

It is imperative that we, the men and women of the world's religions, face the enormous challenge of children's issues. Children, the most vulnerable members of society, are being exposed to the peril of death, or, despairing of their future, find themselves in severe pain and distress. We, as religious people, must address children's issues with compassion and commit ourselves to relief activities in order to protect children's fundamental human rights and guarantee their future.

The Arigatou Foundation, founded by Myochikai, hereby advocates the establishment of the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC) to provide a venue for individuals or organizations working for the good of children to unite and cooperate with one another with the aim of realizing a world where children can grow up in health and freedom. This advocacy has its origin in the view that the most valuable asset we can create and pass on to future generations is an environment in which all children can grow up safely, filled with confidence, love and joy.

The first step for religious people who share the same view of children's issues and are willing to share responsibility is to come together in a forum to learn from one another regardless of religious, ethnic, or national identity or other affiliation. The GNRC will also utilize the latest technology to facilitate communication in order to improve information exchange, cooperation and coordination among its members. It is also envisaged that the GNRC will cooperate with UN agencies, governments, NGOs and other private organizations, so that it may contribute to various ongoing projects.

We believe that the Global Network of Religions for Children will take significant steps toward carrying out a major mission of the people of the world's religions—to liberate children from a life shackled by fear and violence and ensure their growth in a peaceful environment. We pray that the GNRC will grow to become an ongoing movement that forges a path toward true peace in the 21st century, through its activities in support of the safe and sound development of children, who will shoulder the future of humanity.

Arigatou Foundation
Myochikai

Overview of the GNRC



Hands joined in prayer at the First Forum of the GNRC

The Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC) had its genesis in the conviction that it is the responsibility of people of all religions to join hands and take action to secure a better future for children. In 1997, Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto, Leader of Myochikai and President of the Arigatou Foundation, proposed the formation of the GNRC. His vision was realized in May 2000 at the First Forum of the GNRC, thanks to the enthusiastic cooperation of individuals and organizations from every major world religion and various other spiritual heritages.

The First Forum, held by the Arigatou Foundation in Tokyo, Japan, from May 16 to 18, 2000, brought together a total of 294 participants from around the world—a unique group of religious leaders and grassroots faith workers engaged in activities for children, representing 7 major religious traditions and 33 countries and regions, as well as representatives of international organizations and NGOs.



At the plenary session of the First Forum of the GNRC

The First Forum adopted the GNRC Statement, a landmark document affirming the sacred dignity of the child and calling for universal responsibility for the well being of children, starting with religious people (see pages 27-28).

GNRC initiatives since the First Forum have advanced rapidly with the efforts of various GNRC members, and regional interfaith networks for children have already been formed in South Asia, Central Asia and the Caucasus, Africa, the Middle East, Europe, and Latin America. Regional GNRC initiatives focus on the eradication of poverty, which is at the root of so much of the suffering of children, as well as the ethical and spiritual development of children. The full participation of children in all of these efforts is also a key guiding principle for the GNRC (see page 31 for more information on children's participation).

The GNRC's initiatives have been warmly received by the international community. As a result, at the May 2002 United Nations Special Session on Children, Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto was invited to make a statement to the General Assembly on behalf of the GNRC (see pages 29-30). In his statement, he proposed the formation of an interfaith council to promote ethics education for children globally, expressed the GNRC's further commitment to work for the eradication of poverty, and pledged the devotion of GNRC members to the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.



Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto speaks on behalf of the GNRC at the United Nations Special Session on Children (May 2002)

GNRC members and the Arigatou Foundation have followed-up on these proposals, with one major milestone being the announcement of the establishment of the Interfaith Council on Ethics Education for Children on the occasion of the Second Forum of the GNRC in May 2004 in Geneva, Switzerland.

Continuing to build on the spirit of cooperation among religious people devoted to the welfare of children, the GNRC aims to work closely with the United Nations, governments, NGOs, and people from all walks of life to create the best possible environment for children in the 21st century.



Children read their message at the GNRC Latin America Conference in Buenos Aires, Argentina.



Participants of the GNRC Child Rights Workshop in Lebanon visit an archaeological site.



Young people share insights at the GNRC Peace Education Workshop in Tanzania

www.gnrc.ne.jp

INTERFAITH COUNCIL ON ETHICS EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN

VISION STATEMENT

We envision a world in which all children are empowered to develop their spirituality—embracing ethical values, learning to live in solidarity with people of different religions and civilizations, and building faith in the Divine Presence. We believe that ethics education will enhance children's innate ability to make positive contributions to the well being of their peers, families, and communities, and that this in turn will help the entire human family to thrive in an environment of greater justice, peace, compassion, hope and dignity.

A Statement of the First Forum of the Global Network of Religions for Children

May 18, 2000 – Tokyo, Japan

Every child born comes with a message that God has not yet despaired of humankind, observes the poet Rabindranath Tagore. The ultimate and inviolable dignity of the child is understood to be rooted in reality by each religion in its own terms. Thus, the reality of the child expresses for each religion in its own way the mystery and meaning of human existence. Together, people of religious conviction agree that every child is promise, sacred gift, and pledge of the future. Our diverse religious visions shape our approaches to the child; they call us to repentance, hope, and commitment.

Moved by the plight of children and compelled by our religious commitments, we, women and men, coming from all continents and belonging to many of the world's religions, have come to Tokyo, Japan, to inaugurate the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC) at the invitation of the Arigatou Foundation. We are already actively engaged as individuals and in organizations dedicated to the rights, dignity, and well being of children. We are convinced that we need to cooperate with one another in our concerns for children.

Our hearts cry out! Today our children are under siege.

- They are the often-targeted victims of armed conflict, coerced to kill as child soldiers, and are disproportionately killed or maimed by anti-personnel land mines. They make up more than half of the swelling refugee and internally displaced populations. As the most vulnerable, they perish and suffer grievously from economic sanctions. With grotesque distortion, violence is pervasively portrayed to youth as attractive and exciting in television, film and other forms of entertainment.
- 30,500 children die each day—11 million each year—from largely preventable diseases. 200 million children are malnourished. Another 1.2 million are living with HIV, and over 11 million have been orphaned by AIDS, most of them in sub-Saharan Africa.
- Despite unprecedented economic prosperity, mostly in Northern industrialized countries and related to rapid globalization, more children are being born into poverty than ever before. 1.2 billion people in developing countries, half of them children, live in absolute poverty, surviving on less than a dollar a day. Because of crippling economic conditions, families often lack the resources essential for the care and development of their own children. While 60 million children are trapped in abusive and hazardous forms of labor, countless others are homeless and forced to live in the street, and often vulnerable to victimization by authorities.
- 130 million school-age children, more than two thirds of them girls, are growing up in the developing world deprived of the right to education, which thereby limits their possibilities to assume their chosen roles in society. Authoritarian standards or other forms of coercive social pressure can also be detrimental to children's development. Children are often denied religious rights, and the lack of religious education can lead to spiritual impoverishment. We recognize spiritual poverty as a form of deprivation for children with far reaching consequences.
- Children fall prey to sexual abuse and exploitation in both domestic and commercial settings, including 2 million who become victims to the sex industry every year. Increasingly, children around the world are being exposed to shallow, distorted, and exploitative interpretations of sexuality, including child pornography, through film, television and internet.
- Children are increasingly subjected to deteriorating environmental factors including polluted air and water, the poisoning of the food and land, the dangers of radiation, deforestation, and desertification. They are inheriting a world out of balance that has resulted from the often-reckless use of non-renewable natural resources.

We recognize that all of the deplorable conditions noted above are often interrelated.

These grim realities can be changed, and this is the measure of our moral obligation to act. Our religious traditions, cultures, economies, governments, societies, communities, and families are responsible for the well being of our children. We must acknowledge where they have failed, and as religious persons we acknowledge in particular and repent for when our religious traditions have not put into practice their own deepest insights into the dignity of the child. Children are not objects. They have not only the right to protection and care; they also are entitled to recognition as subjects of their own destiny. All of our social institutions must be transformed and empowered to protect and care for, as well as nurture, our children as builders of society. We rejoice in the many signs of children taking constructive actions for the benefit of all.

Even as we prepare to form Working Groups to take concrete next steps (see Group Reports), we call upon:

Women and men of goodwill

To refuse to tolerate the abuse of children, work to protect those within their reach, and promote their full inclusion in strong, healthy, and nurturing families and other forms of society.

The Media

To take up the positive role of educating the public, including children, on the dignity and plight of children, and to exercise self-restraint regarding degrading and exploitative materials on violence and sexuality.

Governments

To enact national legislation designed to protect children in conformity with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and to accept it as a framework for action for children. To re-allocate national resources, with attention to reducing expenditures on armaments, to ensure the protection, education, and well being of children and their families. To develop procedures and standards that link the remission of the debt of the poorest countries to their child-friendly practices.

Intergovernmental organizations and in particular the United Nations and its agency, UNICEF

To uphold the UN Charter impartially, to exercise their mandates to monitor and encourage States' compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and to engage in pro-active educational and service programs on behalf of children. To continue to develop partnerships with religious leaders and organizations, with particular attention to the Special Session of the UN General Assembly in 2001, which will review the achievements of the World Summit for Children and shape a new global agenda for them.

Religions

To engage their deepest religious and moral teachings for the advocacy of children and the defense of their rights among their own believers and in the public at large. To mobilize their social institutions in the service of children. To engage in multireligious action programs on behalf of children, including peace education.

Ourselves

To recognize our respective religious experiences and traditions as major resources in our commitment to working for children. To mobilize our commitment in the building of relevant coalitions and partnerships among our organizations, and across our religious boundaries, so as to enhance our abilities to respond effectively to the plight of our children and to learn from them.

The Arigatou Foundation

To assist religious individuals and communities to sustain the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC), as a child-focused network dedicated to the sharing of information and the building of action coalitions.

Children are for us a source of hope, they bear promise, and they confirm for us the sacredness of reality. We draw strength from them and from one another's commitments to them. In this context, we acknowledge with gratitude the Arigatou Foundation for initiating, convening, and facilitating the GNRC.

**Statement to the Special Session on Children of
the United Nations General Assembly**

*Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto
President of Arigatou Foundation
Leader of Myochikai*

May 10, 2002

Let me begin by expressing my gratitude to all those who have given me this opportunity to speak to you today. It is a great privilege and pleasure for me to address the General Assembly on behalf of people from all the world's great religions.

I would like to say a word about the role of people of faith—religious people—in our united efforts to build a world that is truly fit for children.

I speak today for the Global Network of Religions for Children, or GNRC, which was inaugurated two years ago by the Arigatou Foundation to promote cooperation among religious people working for the well-being of children.

Some 300 religious leaders and grassroots workers from every major world religion and 33 countries attended the First Forum of the GNRC in May 2000. The GNRC Statement we adopted began with the words of the poet, Rabindranath Tagore—"Every child born comes with a message that God has not yet despaired of humankind."

Transcending the differences among our various religions, we affirmed in the Statement our common conviction that each child bears in her or his very being the hope and promise of the future of the Earth. We also acknowledged with remorse that religious people have often failed to put into practice the deepest insights of their own religious traditions into the dignity of the child. Finally, we offered concrete proposals for action by people of faith and others—cooperative action to build a better environment for children in the 21st century.

Mr. President... It is particularly important for those of us gathered here today to recognize that, just as the child has his or her being in the local contexts of the family, the community, and the nation—the being of the child also has a global dimension.

Locally, adults pass on values, traditions and culture to children; but in the global dimension, it is the child who sustains our hopes and keeps the potential for peace alive.

But the horrors that occurred here last September, and the events that have followed, would reject the precious future of the child—indeed, they have threatened the very foundation of human dignity.

This deterioration of the environment surrounding our children must be taken as a warning to all the Earth.

With grave and heartfelt concern, we—people from all the world's great religions and so many of its nations—commit to you, in solidarity, that we shall pursue three vital courses of action:

One – we will establish a "Council on Global Ethics Education for Children" consisting of people of faith, educators and others. Its mandate will be to work in cooperation with the United Nations to make the development of spirituality in children—including ethical

values, esteem for people of different religions and civilizations, and faith in the Divine—an essential part of the “quality education” pledged in the Special Session Outcome Document, “A World Fit for Children.” Our efforts will focus on the critically important primary school years.

Two – We will further strengthen our efforts to eradicate poverty, the root cause of the deteriorating environment that children face, giving attention not only to external causes but also to those that stem from the human heart, thus realizing fundamental solutions. Our plans for specific action will be formulated at the three-day GNRC Conference to be held immediately following this Special Session.

Three – As we join the worldwide effort to realize the goals of the outcome document, we will do our utmost to exercise our leadership and set an example among the people, seeking to generate a universal moral force that will propel implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child—in both developed and developing countries—and mobilizing people from all walks of life to contribute to the Global Movement for Children.

Mr. President... As people of faith, we see the Divine Presence in every person, and thus it is our obligation to encourage each person, with patience and compassion, to realize the highest potential of the human heart. It is this Divine Presence—and this great potential—which are the eternal wellspring of the dignity of every child—indeed, of every one of us.

In closing, I would like to express once more, on behalf of the Global Network of Religions for Children, our most profound commitment—we shall devote ourselves to bringing about, through prayer and practice, this global, “silent spiritual revolution” for the future of children.

Thank you very much for your attention.



Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto speaks on behalf of the GNRC at the United Nations Special Session on Children (May 2002)

Children's Contributions to the GNRC

Since its inauguration at the First Forum, the GNRC has emphasized the vital role that children play in building a future in which their own rights and well being can be assured. Six children addressed the plenary session of the First Forum, challenging the adults present to put their faith into practice to create a better environment for children. The statement adopted by Forum participants acknowledged that their religious traditions had not always put into practice their own deepest insights into the dignity of the child and affirmed that children are subjects and actors in their own right (see pages 27-28).



Ms. Patricia Munoz (18) of Peru addresses the plenary session of the First Forum of the GNRC

Shortly following the First Forum, in July 2000, the Arigatou Foundation took action to facilitate children's participation by hosting, in cooperation with the Focolare Movement and UNICEF, the Conference of Children for the Coming Generation (CCG) at Myochikai facilities in Chiba, Japan. Visiting Japan to attend the CCG were 134 boys and girls aged 10-15 from 40 countries around the world, for a total of 213 participants, including those from Japan. The prospectus for the event explained: "The CCG is intended to provide an ideal venue for children from around the world to come together to consider their own future, and in doing so, to build strong friendships that transcend all national, ethnic and religious boundaries."

At the close of the CCG, a message conceived by the children themselves was adopted, and subsequently sent to the leaders of all the countries of the world. In the CCG Message, they declared their intention:

"To love everyone, forgetting ourselves and thinking about others, without discriminating against those who have ideas that are different from our own or who belong to another race or ethnic group; to be the first to love, without expecting others to take the first step; to love our enemies as well, forgetting

past offenses, learning to forgive, telling one another with compassion what we can change and improve in ourselves.

In these few days we have experienced that love can change every relationship if we look for what unites us rather than what divides us. Why cannot this happen among nations as well?"

The CCG Message by the children helped to shape ensuing GNRC initiatives. Many of the regional GNRC conferences have benefited from the full participation of local children. In the Middle East, a one-week GNRC workshop on child rights was held exclusively for children.

In May 2002, the Arigatou Foundation hosted the Children's Conference in New York as a side event of the UN Special Session on Children. Under the theme of "For Our Future," the conference brought together 44 children from 17 countries. They discussed how they could realize the promises of the CCG in their daily lives, and presented a copy of the CCG Message with 50,000 signatures (out of a total number gathered of 320,000) to the Special Advisor to the Executive Director of UNICEF. They also agreed on a "List of Actions" they would take and proposed the formation of a network of youth with faith.

In May 2004 at the Second Forum of the GNRC, about 40 children of faith from around the world will take part in sessions exclusively for children and combined sessions with adult GNRC members. Children will play an equally vital role in the Interfaith Council on Ethics Education for Children.

Through their efforts to build a better future for all, the children of the GNRC continue to demonstrate the truth of Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto's words: "Children are the inheritors of the Earth and the precious treasure of humanity."



Participants of the Conference of Children for the Coming Generation (CCG)

Chronology of Key GNRC Events

- Global GNRC Event
- ♥ Children's Participation
- Prayer Event
- ▲ Regional GNRC Event
- ★ UNICEF or Other United Nations Participation
- ◆ National GNRC Event
- ♣ Ethics Education for Children

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| ♥ ■ ★ ● | May 16-18, 2000 | First Forum of the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC) held in Tokyo, Japan, bringing together 294 people of faith from 7 major religions and 33 countries and regions. |
| ♥ ■ ● | Jul. 25-28, 2000 | Conference of Children for the Coming Generation (CCG) held in Chiba, Japan, bringing together 213 children from 40 countries and regions to discuss their own future. The CCG Message is created and sent to world leaders. |
| ▲ ★ ● | Feb. 26 - Mar. 3, 2001 | GNRC Workshop held at Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement headquarters in Moratuwa, Sri Lanka, with 43 participants from 7 countries. GNRC South Asian Network inaugurated. |
| ▲ ● | May 20-21, 2001 | GNRC Meeting held in New Delhi, India with 40 participants from international and national organizations. |
| ▲ ♥ ★ ● | Jun. 15-18, 2001 | East and Southern African Network of Religions for Children (ESANRC) inaugurated at conference in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, with 49 participants from 15 countries. ESANRC Regional Secretariat opens in April 2001, later becoming GNRC Africa Regional Secretariat. |
| ▲ ♥ ● | Jun. 29-30, 2001 | GNRC Meeting held in Baku, Azerbaijan, bringing together 50 participants from various religions, scholars and school children. |
| ▲ ● | Jan. 21, 2002 | GNRC India National Working Group Meeting held in Hyderabad, India with 35 participants. |
| ▲ ★ | Feb. 1-3, 2002 | GNRC Training Workshop on the Convention on the Rights of the Child held in Beirut, Lebanon with 32 participants from Lebanon, Palestine and Jordan. |
| ■ ★ | May 10, 2002 | Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto, Leader of Myochikai and President of the Arigatou Foundation, makes a statement to the United Nations Special Session on Children (UNSSC) on behalf of the GNRC. |
| ♥ ■ ★ ● | May 10, 2002 | Children's Conference in New York held as official side event of the UNSSC, with 44 children from 17 countries. |
| ♥ ■ ★ ● | May 12-14, 2002 | GNRC Conference held at Maryknoll facilities in New York, with 95 participants from 33 countries, including 11 children. |
| ▲ ♥ ★ ● | Aug. 7-11, 2002 | GNRC Europe Meeting held in Lisbon, Portugal, with 47 attendees from 10 European countries, including 11 children. |
| ▲ | Sep. 24, 2002 | GNRC South Asia Regional Secretariat opens in Sri Lanka. |
| ♣ ■ ★ | Nov. 11-12, 2002 | First Preparatory Meeting for the Interfaith Council on Ethics Education for Children held in Tokyo with 30 participants, including eminent Japanese academics, political leaders and GNRC regional coordinators. |
| ♣ ▲ ★ ♥ ● | Dec. 2-4, 2002 | GNRC Latin America Conference held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, with 118 participants from 23 countries throughout Latin America, including 10 children. |
| ■ | Feb. 1, 2003 | Arigatou Foundation Office in Geneva established, with Ms. Agneta Ucko as director. |
| ♣ ▲ ★ ♥ ● | Apr. 1-2, 2003 | Regional Consultative Seminar on Spiritual and Ethical Values as Basic Principles of Child Education and Development held in Amman, Jordan, with 61 participants from Jordan, Palestine, and Lebanon. |
| ♣ ▲ | Apr. 11-12, 2003 | GNRC Europe Core Group Meeting held in Geneva, Switzerland, with nine participants from five European countries (plus Israel) and four major religions. |
| ▲ ★ | Jun. 5-7, 2003 | GNRC Training Workshop on the Convention on the Rights of the Child held in Beirut, Lebanon, bringing together 25 participants from religious schools and NGOs. |
| ♣ ■ ★ | Jun. 12-13, 2003 | Second Preparatory Meeting for the Interfaith Council on Ethics Education for Children held in Geneva, Switzerland, with 25 participants, including representatives from UNICEF, UNESCO, experts in ethics and education, and GNRC regional coordinators. |
| ▲ ♥ ★ | Jul. 12, 2003 | First workshop of the ESANRC Education for Peace Project held in Tanzania, bringing together 35 young people from 16 to 23 years of age. |
| ▲ ♥ ★ | Jul. 15-23, 2003 | GNRC Child Rights Workshop held in Lebanon, bringing together 38 children from 15 to 18 years of age from Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Palestine. |
| ▲ ♥ ★ ● | Aug. 26-Sep. 1, 2003 | First Core Group Meeting for GNRC Central Asia and the Caucasus held in Bishkek, Kyrgyz, with 19 participants including representatives of UNICEF, UNESCO, and NGOs. |
| ♣ ■ ★ | Dec. 16-17, 2003 | Third Preparatory Meeting for the Interfaith Council on Ethics Education for Children held in Rome, Italy. |
| ▲ | Feb. 25-26, 2004 | GNRC Conference held at Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam in Israel, with 100 participants from Christian, Islamic, Druze and Jewish backgrounds. |
| ♣ ♥ ■ ★ ● | May 17-19, 2004 | Second Forum of the GNRC to be held in Geneva, Switzerland, with some 300 participants representing every major world religion, including 40 children. Interfaith Prayer for Peace to be held on May 19. |
| ♣ ♥ ■ ★ | May 2004 | Establishment of the Interfaith Council on Ethics Education for Children to be formally announced. |

The Path to a Future of Peace

Message from Rev. Keishi Miyamoto



Rev. Keishi Miyamoto, Chairman of the Board of Myochikai, Representative of the Arigatou Foundation

World peace may sometimes seem like a distant goal, but we find no reason to let this discourage us. For Myochikai, and for those who have found themselves in accord with Myochikai's initiatives through the Arigatou Foundation and the Global Network of Religions for Children, faith provides an indomitable spirit of hope and perseverance.

There is a story in one of the Sutras preached by the Buddha, *Zappozokyou*, which goes like this:

“Once upon a time, there was a forest at the foot of a mountain in the Himalayas. One day a forest fire broke out. The lions and tigers living in the forest made every effort to extinguish it, but all was in vain. Finally, sensing the danger, they hid themselves behind a large rock. At just that moment, a little bird tried to extinguish the blazing fire with the little water it could carry on its wings. Seeing this, the lions and tigers cried, “Stop it, stop it! It is no use for you to bring those few drops of water. Even the big animals like us cannot put out the fire.” The little bird replied, “I know very well that I am not able to do it. But I cannot just stand by and watch the fire burn down our forest. I cannot help but carry some water and try. I do not think about whether I can succeed or not.”

This story reveals to us the spirit of Buddhism through the figure of the little bird, which, without thinking about whether it will succeed or not, cannot help but take action. I believe that a truly wise human being is one who tries to continue to do what he or she should do without stopping to consider whether he or she will succeed or not.

The story of Myochikai, the Arigatou Foundation, and the GNRC continues to unfold, transcending national, ethnic, and religious boundaries in an ever-expanding circle of common concern for the well being of the entire human family. Rev. Mitsu Miyamoto, Myochikai founder and *Kaishu* (great spiritual master), taught about the path to realizing this goal: “Every person has his or her own mission. What is important is for each person to accomplish his or her mission.”

Everything in existence carries a mission or meaning. None is more important than another. If we are aware of this mission, believe in it, and carry it out, our lives will be abundant and fruitful. The mission and dignity of each being should never be taken lightly.

Myochikai has taught the effort to cultivate the individual heart to help people develop themselves as human beings through “prayer and practice” of the four primary teachings. This leads us to become ourselves in the truest sense. When we become ourselves, we find our happiness and pleasure in serving the people around us, our families, communities, the world, our environment, our ancestors, and the Divine Presence. Myochikai will continue to advocate the importance of cultivating the human heart, and seek to increase the number of people who share this heart. I believe this is the shortest way to the realization of the precious blessing of peace for the world.

We will keep striving to build world peace by putting the four primary teachings of Myochikai into practice in our personal lives and cooperating with all people of good will around the world. For Myochikai, there is no more direct route to peace.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Keishi Miyamoto". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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