

April Announcements

Japan Week Activities!

Saturday April 17 TAKE OUT ONLY CHICKEN TERIYAKI DINNER sale. \$8.50 for a half teriyaki chicken, salad and rice. This is the real thing, it takes time to make real Teriyaki Chicken. Frankly, it takes too much time and work to make it very often. You won't find this anywhere else. Tickets are available NOW at the temple. And we need help, your help, with the pre-sale work. Donations of baked goods for the bake sale will be greatly appreciated!

Japan Week Lecture

In conjunction with Japan week, we are hosting a talk by **Rev. Kodo Umezu** at the Spokane Buddhist Temple at 7 pm on April 17, 2004. Reverend Umezu has served at the Buddhist Churches of America Headquarters in San Francisco. The subject of the talk will be announced. Donations will be appreciated.

The Celebration of Buddha's

Birth (Hanamatsuri Service) April 18 Come early, our Introduction to Buddhism will be held at 9:30 am. This is a brief conceptual overview of Buddhism, Jodo Shinshu, and an explanation of our services. This is a perfect chance to visit the temple for the first time or listen in again. We welcome everyone! Please stay for our special **Hanamatsuri Service, (The Celebration of Buddha's Birth)** at 10:30 am. **Rev. Umezu will officiate.** Everyone is invited to attend. Following the service, we will meet for Lunch at King Yen Restaurant, 3004 North Monroe Street.

Sangha Services April 4th, 11th

Sangha Services (a Sanskrit word for Buddhist community) will be held on April 4th and 11th at 10:30 am. The Sangha service is a traditional service with a Dharma message and chanting led by members of the Sangha. The service requires the efforts of several members of the Sangha each week (see the calendar to see what you've signed up for). This gives those who wish to contribute, the opportunity to do so. A great deal of work goes into preparing for the service, from those who bring the snacks to those who study the Dharma to give the Dharma talk. We are a small Sangha; participation not only makes our Sangha truly unique, participation makes the temple possible. Join us.

Dharma Class

Following the Sangha Service we go downstairs for snacks and a Dharma Class. Each week we cover a Buddhist topic followed by an informal discussion. This is a beginners' class, titled: "Simply Jodo Shinshu." Each week, one of the Sangha will lead a topic discussion on the Dharma. All that is required is a willingness to read and study; there are plenty of resources available including coaches. This is held downstairs with our ever changing and delicious snacks! Curious, come and join us, share what you have discovered, be part of the Sangha. We finish around noon. See calendar for dates.

Toban (clean the temple)

April 24, 2004, 9 am to 11 am

Mindfulness training: Sweep, mop, dust, vacuum, polish, pick up and put away (See Paul Veille for your assignment.)

Ko Service, Wednesday nights now, at 6:30 pm. Co-hosted by Paul Veille and Ed Parker. The Ko service is based on our regular Sangha service with a longer meditation period. The second half of the service is devoted to a Dharma discussion group based upon the teachings of Sakyamuni. We will be working from Steve Hagen's Buddhism, Plain and Simple. This is a most down to earth book, well written and clear. Buddhism is a questioning religion, with many levels. Truthfully, Buddhism goes well beyond religion; it goes to reality and has for twenty-six hundred years. Come join us.

Ko order of service

Konsho
Oshoko
Chant: Sambujo
Three Treasurers
Sutra Chant
Meditation Reading
Meditation or "Mindfulness Exercise" (~15 minutes)
Chanting of Nembutsu (~3 minutes)
Forum - Discussion
Closing Affirmation

Temple News

The Northwest Buddhist Convention held in Ontario, Oregon was well attended by Spokane delegates this year. Some were board members; all were active members of the Sangha. We bonded and returned home with visions of hosting the 2006 convention dancing in our heads. The 2006 Convention will come up fast, Leslie Green has the committees organized, let the work begin.

The church board held a **retreat/brainstorming session** on March 10. Joyce Roskelley, who has a background in running retreats, facilitated.

She did a terrific job for us, sorting through all the ideas, helping define goals and timelines. We wish it had lasted longer...(how often do you hear that) It seemed like we just got started! That tells you what an active energized board we have working for us this year.

Some of the ideas:

- Involve the Temple in community events such as the Food Bank and Coats for Kids,
- More educational opportunities such as more visiting Reverend Services and Video series for our Dharma Classes.
- Coordinate volunteers to offer rides for older members who would like to attend services
- Host Japanese cultural classes with Nisei helping us learn Obon Dancing and Sushi making.

Pretty big wish list, but we will bring it to life this year. Joyce will join the board for follow up sessions to help us move along. Suggestions, (there is a suggestion box in the front entry) are very welcome from the Sangha. We need your ideas!

We enjoyed Bhante's visit to our temple. We had a full house for his talk with donations to cover many of the costs. The service Sunday was also well attended. He is such a warm and interesting person. When anyone doubts the teaching of the Buddha, I want to introduce that person to Bhante.

Looking forward to a busy spring with our Japan Week activities and services. Come join us.

With Gassho,
Christine Marr
SBT President

A visit with Bhante Seelawimala, by Ed Parker

The sound of Bhante's chanting is like the sound of a small child running across a hard wood floor, quick, light, and joyful. There is dance in the sound of his voice, light, rhythmic; his blessings flow out as from a celestial well, row on row. "May you be well, may you be happy." His words flow out to encompass all beings. "May they be well, may they be happy."

He chants the words of the Buddha, a sutra as old as the language in which it is half sung, half spoken. The sound of his voice gently rising and falling, changes somehow as he starts the next sutra without a pause, still it is different, less rhythmic, the joyful power animating him has lessened. It's a curious feeling.

One benefit of being involved in the temple operations is that from time to time a unique opportunity comes your way. In this case, it was being invited by Christine Marr to a potluck at her house to honor Bhante. This was around noon Saturday, that evening he would give his lecture on Mindfulness for Peace of Mind at the temple. Frankly, I had been deeply depressed of late and had questions I wanted to ask him, questions about Jodo Shinshu, about Buddhism, about whether or not I could continue being a Jodo Shinshu Buddhist. It was this question of the Nembutsu. I know Shinran had been a disciple of Sakyamuni, as had Honen, neither could have said one word to contradict Sakyamuni. It is simply not possible. Still, when reading Shinran, when reading the sutras containing the wisdom of Sakyamuni's teachings, one hardly looks like the other. They seem so different and the difference had been troubling me.

The first step to the Eight Fold path is right view, right perspective, holding no fixed perspective. This too, troubled me. How then, can there be so many different schools of Buddhism? How could Shinran, referring to the "Chapter on Great Beneficence," scroll two, in the Sutra of the Lotus of Compassion state: [ON SAYING THE NAME] "These passages reveal that saying the Name breaks through all the ignorance of sentient beings and fulfills their aspirations. Saying the Name is the right act, supreme, true, and excellent. The right act is the nembutsu. The nembutsu is Namu-amida-butsu. Namu-amida-butsu is right-mindedness. Let this be known."

Yet, how can I rely on saying the nembutsu alone? There is so much I value in the teachings of Shinran, yet I rely on the words of Sakyamuni as much or more.

Sakyamuni spoke of the Four Noble Truths, the Eight Fold Path. Shinran spoke of simply saying the nembutsu. The difficult practice of Sakyamuni verses the easy path of Shinran.

Honen and Shinran lived in the mappo world of twelfth century Japan and were concerned for the spiritual needs of the poor, the illiterate. We live in the mappo world of this century. Like the people of Japan today, most of us are literate, however spiritually ignorant. Still, our needs have changed. The strong ties of tradition are weak in America. We say the nembutsu and meditate on the teachings of the Buddha. We mix the easy path with the difficult, other power with self-power, with little understanding of what we are doing.

I am no different and it troubles me. I say the nembutsu and saying the nembutsu is an important part of my faith. I say it with sincere gratitude and humility for the place of Amida in my life. I also

believe in questioning my actions, looking inside what I do and how I do it, of being Mindful. I am a foolish and ignorant man, full of blind passions. It is a full time job keeping an eye on my blind passions, trying to look through my delusions. I say I am Buddhist, Jodo Shinshu Buddhist, and wonder if this one more delusion? I read a great deal, filling my head with words. Truthfully, I have a poor opinion of what passes for wisdom in this world. It seems to me that wisdom simply defines the sense of self, and there is no self, nothing you could put your finger on anyway. Such wisdom does not help me answer what I am, or if this is how I want to be. It is rare being a human being and I am not getting any younger. Like I said, I was feeling troubled. I knew that there are those who enable spirituality in others with the depth of their being. Real people, people who think and look deeply into themselves, people who delight in questions more than answers. I tried not to look ahead to meeting Bhante. Such was my state of mind driving to see Bhante at Christine's house.

My first impression of Bhante was of having met him before, no idea really of where or when. I thought at the time that it was simply having seen him the last time he came to Spokane, but I doubt that I had. No, it was more like having met another me, one who had prospered spiritually. I suppose there is a name for such a feeling, perhaps one sounding ominously of Latin, though I am hoping there is something gentler sounding, perhaps something in Pali.

As Bhante chanted my depression lifted, becoming lost in the rise and fall of his voice. The string I was holding stretched around the circle of the sangha to Bante and his blessing bound us together. Listening to Bhante chant the blessings of the Buddha reminded me again of my

infinite ignorance. It made me realize my delusions of wisdom stems from simply not having asked myself the right question. How can I judge others when I don't even know myself? Truthfully, on the best of days, I am only a swirling stream of consciousness in a porcelain bowl. What can I know of what is, or is not? My ignorance is infinite and what little I know only limits my reality? After the blessing, after the feeling had returned to my legs, I asked him the questions that had been troubling me.

He said: Right is right because it is harmonious. The right view, the right perspective is to hold no fixed perspective, for reality is impermanence alone. The right view is one harmonious with reality. There are many levels to Buddhism, many levels to religion, and levels beyond religion. Everyone is simply where they are. Where they need to be, now. Buddhism goes well beyond religion; it goes to reality and has for twenty-six hundred years. And the reason there are so many seemingly different forms of Buddhism is because people want it that way. Look past the differences to what is just there. Be mindful of what you do. Be awake. This is what Bhante taught me Saturday afternoon at Christine Marr's house.

As I recall, he said so much in so few words, and he was very clear, I didn't feel overwhelmed until I started to write this. Now, of course, I wish I could talk with him again. Everything made sense at the time. Now, I am no longer concerned with changing Jodo Shinshu, it was meant to change. It was changing long before I came along. Shinran was a disciple of Sakyamuni. This must never be forgotten. Shinran taught in a time of great disruption in Japan, when monks fought with monks, when the Buddhist clergy were often corrupt, and the people illiterate. All he

could give them was Nomu Amida Butsu. This great teaching fit the time, the place, and the peoples' needs, but Shinran never excluded the teachings of Sakyamuni. How could he, and still call himself a disciple of Sakyamuni? This Right View, has lifted a great weight from my shoulders. Thank you for allowing me to share my thoughts. Ed

This text is from the "Chrysanthemum and the Sword" by Ruth Benedict published in 1946. From Mary Nabor

“In the English language we used to talk about being 'heirs of the ages.' Two wars and a vast economic crisis have diminished somewhat the self-confidence it used to bespeak but this shift has certainly not increased our sense of indebtedness to the past. Oriental nations turn the coin to the other side” they are debtors to the ages. Much of what Westerners name ancestor worship is not truly worship and not wholly directed toward ancestors: it is a ritual avowal of man's great indebtedness to all that has gone before. Moreover, he is indebted not only to the past; every day-by-day contact with other people increases his indebtedness in the present. From this debt his daily decisions and actions must spring. It is the fundamental starting point. Because Westerners pay such extremely slight attention to their debt to the world and what it has given them in care, education, well-being or even in the mere fact of their ever having been born at all, the Japanese feel that our motivations are inadequate. Virtuous men do not say, as they do in America, that they owe nothing to any man. They do not discount the past. Righteousness in Japan depends upon recognition of one's place in the great network of mutual indebtedness that embraces both one's forebears and one's contemporaries.” Think about it! Mary

From the Greatest Happiness Sutra

Thus have I heard:
The Exalted One was asked,
“Please tell me the greatest happiness?”

Not associating with the unwise,
associating with the wise,
honoring those worthy of honor;
this is the greatest happiness

Living in the proper environment,
having done meritorious deeds in the past,
setting oneself in the right direction;
this is the greatest happiness.

Becoming learned and knowledgeable,
being well-trained and disciplined,
speaking in a meaningful way;
this is the greatest happiness.

Serving one’s father and mother,
providing for ones spouse and children,
being orderly in one’s occupation;
this is the greatest happiness.

Sharing and being righteous,
helping relatives,
avoiding harmful actions;
this is the greatest happiness.

Ceasing and abstaining from evil,
refraining from intoxicants,
being diligent in virtue;
this is the greatest happiness.

Showing respect and being humble,
content, and grateful,
hearing the dhamma at the proper time;
this is the greatest happiness.

Exercising discipline, living a
spiritual life, perceiving the Noble
Truths, and realizing nibbana;
this is the greatest happiness.

If when experiencing worldly conditions
one’s mind is not shaken, but remains
fearless, free from sorrow and passion;
this is the greatest happiness.

Those who follow this path
will remain undefeated and
will prosper in every way;
this is the greatest happiness.

February Donations

\$100 Marie Kanegae – in memory of
husband, John Kanegae
\$50 Lynda Peterson – in memory of
mother, Matsue Kayano
\$40 Anonymous – newsletter
\$500 Anonymous - Dana
\$20 Anonymous – Dana
\$10 Anonymous - Dana
\$25 Paul and Karen Vielle - Dana
\$20 Ann Heineman – Dana
\$20 Dave Weibel – Dana
\$25 Jim Bennett – Dana
\$20 Samuel B Gordon – Dana

February Dues

Paul and Karen Vielle, Ann Heineman,
Leslie Green, Kelly Clothier, Chris Marr,
K. Uyeji, James Lea, Ed & Liat Parker,
Ken Yorioka, Marceline

