

February Announcements:

Sangha Services

Sangha Services (a Sanscrit word for Buddhist community) are held most Sundays at 10:30 am. The Sangha service is a traditional service with a Dharma message and chanting led by volunteers from 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. Participation is what makes our Sangha truly unique, join us.

Volunteer Note: The Greeter will now open and close the services. For those willing to help in the services, we offer instruction upstairs on the first Sunday of the month at noon, on such things as; how to ring the Kansho, presenting the offering, arranging flowers, and duties of the Greeter, just to name a few. Questions, call Christine Marr 747-6136 or even better, email Christi96@aol.com.

New Dharma Class for Adults
Following the Sangha Service we are starting a new class to replace the book study. Each week we will cover a Buddhist topic followed by an informal discussion. This is a beginners' class, titled: "Simply Jodo Shinshu." The first week covers the Buddha and his awaking. The following weeks take us into basic Buddhist teachings: impermanence, selflessness, interdependence, the Four Noble Truths and the Eight Fold Path. You will learn

how Shinran taught the Dharma of Shakyamuni and how Jodo Shinshu relates to our everyday experiences. Each week, one of the Sangha will volunteer to 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.

Ko Service, Thursday nights at 6:30 pm. This is an informal Sangha service and Dharma discussion group. Buddhism is a questioning religion.

Note: Due to the NW Buddhist Convention being held the weekend of Feb 13, 2004 there will be no Introduction to Buddhism or Reverend Service this month.

Looking ahead... We are honored to have Bhante speak on the Dharma: Bhante Seelawima of the Institute of Buddhist Studies has agreed to be our guest speaker on Saturday March 6. He will also conduct a service on March 7 at 10:30 am. This is a wonderful opportunity to experience the Dharma. What do you have in your life that is more important? More details in the next newsletter.

A Shin Buddhist meditation

Each moment brings 10,000 ways of being.
Each moment we choose one.
Each moment there is a new way of being.
Each moment our choices determine who we are being.
Each moment our choices form our karmic being.
Our karmic being is our blind passions.
Each of us must come to know our blind passions.
Those we cannot accept become an evil way of being
Those we cannot accept, become our burden, (attachments)
Those we cannot accept become a fog upon reality (delusions)
The light of Amida reveals our blind passions
Welcome the light of Amida Buddha
Namo Amida Buddha
Know your blind passions
Accept them, and let them go.
Namo Amida Buddha
By questioning, we see through such shadows.
We ask:
What is born in this act?
What is this action being?
What is its purpose?
Is this the Way?
Questioning focuses our choices.
Questioning defines our being.
Questioning makes us free.
In this manner we are born in the Pure Land
Namo Amida Buddha

The Mother Temple - Nishi (West) Hongwanji, (continuation of my trip to Japan) by Leslie Green

Hongwanji - quite literally: "Temple of the Primal Vow", is the headquarters of Jodo Shinshu Buddhism. It is now located in Yamashina near Kyoto, but has seen several different sites. It has been at its current location since 1483 (Warrior monks from Mt Hiei raided the Hongwanji in 1465, forcing Rennyō to flee, and later to rebuild the temple). The entire compound consists of several buildings, but the primary buildings (or "halls") consist of the Founder's Hall and the Hall of Amida Buddha. The Founder's Hall (Goeido) was built in 1636, and is currently undergoing a major restoration. A canopy has been built surrounding it while workers replace the roof. As part of our tour, we climbed the many steps up to the roof and got a first-hand look of the new roof tiles as they are being installed.

As the tour continues, our group moved to the Mombo Kaikan (a hotel for visitors) located at the Hongwanji complex. The Mombo Kaikan has traditional Japanese style rooms (tatami mats and futons) and a bathhouse. Our seminar begins with an opening ceremony and a welcome address from Governor General Itoku Takeno. Reverend Gene Sekiya is our M.C. and organizer of the seminar, and he also conducts the tour of the Hongwanji complex. Rev. Sekiya is an excellent speaker with extensive knowledge of Jodo Shinshu, as well as the history of the Hongwanji.

After lunch we board the bus and make our way to the Otani Hombyo (Mausoleum); the site where Shinran Shonin is interred. The Otani compound has several buildings, all of which hold a significant purpose on the journey of Shinran and Jodo Shinshu. Of all the places I visited in Kyoto, the Otani Mausoleum was my favorite. I experienced a distinct feeling of spirituality there. The mausoleum complex consists of the Butsuden (Hondo), Meichodo Hall, Muryojudo (columbariums), and a monument of Kakushinni. The original Butsuden was built in 1661 but burned down in 1867. It was then rebuilt in 1870 at its present location and has enshrined within the central alter, a statue of Amida Buddha which is said to have been carved by Jakunyo Shonin, the fourteenth Monshu. The Meichodo Hall is the present site of Shinran Shonin's grave. Shinran's grave was moved in 1661 to this location and Jakunyo Shonin had a small, hexagonal, roofed enclosure erected on the grave. Then in 1709 a worship hall (Meichodo Hall) was build in front of the grave. The hall is 60' x 30' and has no supporting pillars in the interior. I had the wonderful opportunity to do O-shoko here, what an awesome experience! The next two buildings are the Muryojudo (1 and 2), which house niches representing Jodo-Shinshu districts from all over the world. Each niche has it's own naijin complete with incense burner and Amida Buddha figure. As Shin Buddhists, and upon our passing, our name can be entered into our district niche, so that we can in a sense, be interred near Shinran

Shonin. While we were there, we performed a brief ceremony to deliver the names of deceased members from California. It was very touching. The last item is a lovely monument for Kakushinni, the youngest daughter of Shinran, who cared for her father during the last years of his life. In 1272, she had a small temple erected on her property, which marked the beginning of the Otani Mausoleum and the Hongwanji. This monument to Kakushinni is for her contribution in the benefit of Jodo Shinshu teachings.

Enough sightseeing, on to the seminar! The lay leadership began with general information about the organizational structure and operation of the Hongwanji. Such as...did you know that there are four overseas districts and that they are: America, Canada, Hawaii, and South America. And that the title "Betsuin" is an honorary title given to a temple which is the first residence church in that district; for instance the Seattle Betsuin was the first Jodo Shinshu church in the northwest. The highlight of the seminar however was on the second day when we had open discussion regarding the shortage of ministers, the propagation of Jodo Shinshu, and the training of ministers. There are currently 65 temples in the United States, 17 of which have no resident ministers (I think we can all relate!) Apparently, the main issue is that currently the training is in Japan, so right away there is the language barrier. We have Japanese trainees who have no problem with the coursework taught in Japanese, but

they are reluctant to leave Japan once they are trained. Then there are the westerners who have great difficulty with the language, but of course have no problem coming to the U.S. to oversee a temple. A viable solution is the construction of the new Institute for Buddhist Studies in Berkley. This is where we can train American ministers, in English, and then they can complete their training in Japan. I completely agree that there is a part of the training that should be done in Japan; I feel there is great significance in experiencing the entire history of Shinran Shonin and the origins of Jodo Shinshu. The BCA has put together a campaign to raise funds for this building. They are calling it Campaign BCA - 21st Century. It is in all our interests to support this worthwhile project. A parting thought on propagating the Buddha Dharma, I heard it said at the seminar, "The Buddha Dharma walks by itself, the path we are living is Amida's life, even dying is part of living."

With that, I will close this month's addition of my travel notes. I still have more to share, for those who are interested. Next month I continue the journey to Kanazawa, and Niigata.

From Mary in Japan

So here's a bit of trivia about New Year's here in Japan. There is a traditional box of food eaten here that has loads of meaning. It's called "ossechi" sorry about the spelling; I'm doing the best I can. I remember eating this at the Spokane temple years ago when we had a traditional Japanese minister. I'm not sure that it's so popular here anymore but still many people still eat this on New Year's Eve. It has some of the following foods that have much significance for

the New Year. Mame or black beans are eaten for good health. Seaweed called Kombu signifies joy. Herring eggs are, of course, to ensure lots of babies in the future (I'll skip those - thank you very much). Long soba noodles for - you guessed it - long life. Little tiny fish (I forget the name) but it has something to do with prosperous rice fields - which I take to mean lots of healthy food for the coming year. I'm not sure about the shrimp. I was told that because it curves around it symbolizes the curving of the back as we get old and so stands for a long and healthy life - I don't want to be curved over like a shrimp when I get old but pass them my way - I love these guys. Mary

Then there was Mochi: Few experiences bring back New Years' past more than the taste of Mochi. When Jim Tamura speaks of it, you can hear the pounding of the sweet rice, smell it steaming. It has gotten easier with the electric mochi maker Jim and Janet brought to the temple New Years Eve. I owe my first taste of the sweet chewy mochi to them. Thank you both, I will always remember New Year's with mochi, Ed Parker.

A glossary of Shin Terms (from Shinran's Collected Works)

Nembutsu: This term has several meanings in the history of Buddhism, based on the various connotations of *nen* (meditating, thinking, pronouncing): meditating on the special features of the Buddha image, holding to the thought of the Buddha, and pronouncing the name of a Buddha. In Pure Land Buddhism from Shan-tao on, nembutsu has been considered to mean the saying of the Name. Honen

emphasizes nembutsu as utterance of the Name to be the core of the Pure Land way. Thus, nembutsu signifies the Name (*myogo*) as the manifestation of great compassion and the saying of this Name, Namu-amida-butsu. Shinran further teaches that the saying of the Name is none other than the Name (the call of Amida) working in persons and awakening shinjin in them. When they realize shinjin, it is expressed spontaneously as the nembutsu. Thus, The practice of the nembutsu is to say it perhaps once, perhaps ten times, on hearing and realizing that birth into the Pure Land is attained by saying the Name fulfilled in the Primal Vow...There is no shinjin separate from nembutsu...There can be no nembutsu separate from shinjin. (*Lamp for the Latter Ages*) "Saying the nembutsu" (*shomyo*) has in the past been rendered reciting, pronouncing, or uttering the nembutsu. "Saying the nembutsu," however, sounds most natural and ordinary, and thus is suited to the religious life of a Shin Buddhist. While there is nothing extraordinary about saying the nembutsu, the realization attached to it, involving one's whole being, evokes an entirely new universe of meaning.

Nirvana [metsudo] Nirvana is the goal of Buddhist life - the blowing out of blind passions and the extinction of the ignorant self that leads to the birth of an awakened being of wisdom and compassion. Shinran states: Nirvana is called extinction of passions, the uncreated, peaceful happiness, eternal bliss, true reality, dharma-body, dharma-nature, suchness, oneness, and Buddha-nature. (Notes on 'Essentials of Faith Alone')

Shinran teaches that one attains the stage of nonretrogression the moment one realizes shinjin, and thus is unfailingly brought to the attainment of nirvana. This is set forth in Amida's Eleventh Vow. Through Amida's working, then, we will unfailingly reach the Pure Land of happiness, whereupon we will be brought to realize the same enlightenment of great nirvana as Amida Tathagata, being born in the flower of that perfect enlightenment. (Notes on Once-calling and Many-calling)

No-birth [musho] A term used to describe the nature of nirvana. In Mahayana Buddhism generally, "no-birth" signifies the extinction of the discursive thinking by which we conceive of things as arising and perishing, forming attachments to them. In Shin Buddhism, one realizes "no-birth" upon birth into the Pure Land.

December Donations

\$20	Anonymous
\$20	Anonymous
\$150	Anonymous
\$25	Jim Bennett
\$20	Ann Heineman
\$25	Paul/Karen Vielle
\$200	Frank Tsuchhida - One-year memorial for Asayo Heyamoto
\$10	Anonymous
\$10	Anonymous
\$10	Anonymous
\$100	Anonymous
\$20	Karen Kessler
\$50	Fumi Heyamoto - One-year memorial for Asayo Heyamoto
\$10	Marilyn Stedman - Newsletter Postage
\$1500	Jundokan International