



Spokane Buddhist Temple

SEPTEMBER 2007

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Announcements

September Sangha Services—Our Sangha Service (Sangha is the Sanskrit word for Buddhist community)



is a traditional Jodo Shinshu service with chanting

led by a Doshi. We meet after service for refreshments and discussion.

YBA Meeting, Saturday, September 15 – We will watch the movie “Kundun” which is the story of the 13th Dalai Lama and his escape from Tibet when it was invaded by China. The show-

ing will be held in the basement at the temple.

Seminar - “Static Buddha, Dynamic Buddha”, Saturday, September 22nd - see article inside for details.

Fall Higan Service – We will observe this holiday on Sunday, September 23rd with a Dharma talk by Rev. Don Castro and we will also observe Shotsuki-Hoyo. Fall Higan (Higan literally translates to the Sanskrit word “Paramita” which also “other shore”) is one of the few religious holidays which has no direct origin in Sakyamuni Buddha or a founder, it appears to be a distinct Japanese holiday. This holiday celebrates the Equinoxes when our days

are balanced with equal amount of daylight and night. The idea of balance in ones’ life does lend itself to Buddhist thought.

The Sangha Picnic Has Been Rescheduled – Due to the many activities already taking place on the weekend of September 22nd, we will be postponing the picnic. A new date has not been chosen yet and we will let everyone know as soon as it is decided.

We are sorry for any inconvenience to you and hope that your schedule will permit you to join us then. It will be at the same location and time.

Spokane Buddhist Temple Team

Supervising Minister:
Rev. Don Castro
Seattle Betsuin
Minister’s Assistant:
Paul Vielle

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Leslie Green, Vice President
Ann Heineman, Secretary
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Newsletter Editor

Leslie Green

Dues and Donations

The Spokane Buddhist Temple gratefully acknowledges the following dues and donations. Please notify Fumi Uyeji or Liat Parker of any omissions or errors. Dues are acknowledged when received and are often time for a few months or paid

July 17—Aug. 20, 2007

Dues

Tina Rodeen
Paul & Karen Vielle
Rachel Scudder
Tom Lande
Barbara Braden
Kazuko Kirihara
Pat Omine
Jeff Zahir
Koseke Imamura Family
Leo & Yuriko Kiyohiro
Jenifer Johnston

Donations

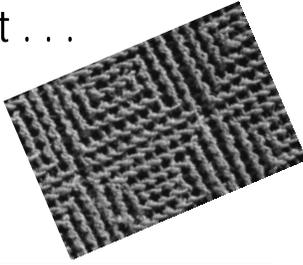
Paul & Karen Vielle
Rachel Scudder
Tom Lande
Tina Rodeen
Ann Heineman
Jim & Shirley Bennett
Stephen Hiromoto
Leo Kiyohiro

In Memory

Liat Parker in memory
of Bob Wheeler
Ann Heineman in memory
of Bob Wheeler
Rachel Scudder in memory
of Lachen Joy

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Dr. Kenji Akahoshi

Kenji asked us to consider two questions: "What is the content of this wisdom and how might this compassion manifest itself in our lives?"



Walking the Nembutsu Path with Kenji Akahoshi

In August of every year, Dr. Kenji Akahoshi from San Jose, California comes to Spokane to present a three-day Jodo Shinshu retreat. It takes place on the beautiful grounds of the Mukogawa Fort Wright Institute. This year nine people attended. Entitled "Nembutsu Journey—A Path to Wholeness", the retreat explored the many ways saying the *nembutsu* (i.e. the sacred name *Namo Amida Butsu*) functions to bring joy, clarity and freedom to our everyday lives.

It is often said that in Jodo Shinshu there is no "practice" as such—no set of prescribed activities like: meditation, alms-giving, burning incense, restricting one's diet, sutra chanting and the like—that one must perform in order to attain liberation. In fact, our founder Shinran Shonin did all these things for twenty years as a Tendai monk. After all that time, he realized he was still a creature of shallow desires, lust and greed -- an utter failure as a monk. It was then that he met his teacher Honen, who showed him a different path, the *nembutsu* path. This is the path of taking refuge in Amida Buddha.

Kenji pointed out, that in our tradition (Jodo Shinshu) meditation, chanting and so forth are neither required nor recommended as forms of "practice". But they're not prohibited either. It's fair to say however, the reciting of the *nembutsu* "Namo Amida Butsu", (which translates roughly to "I take refuge in Amida Buddha"—or—"Oneness with Wisdom and Compassion") comes the closest to anything we might call a practice.

We spent quite a bit of time discussing the notion of *nembutsu* as a practice. Kenji clarified that unlike 'practice' in other traditions, the *nembutsu* is not goal oriented; that is, it's not said with any intent or expectation of 'gaining something' --like happiness, prosperity, forgiveness or assurance of benefit-after-death. Rather, *nembutsu* is an expression of the profound gratitude felt at awakening to Wisdom and Compassion (Amida Buddha) operating in our lives.

Kenji asked us to consider two questions: What is the content of this wisdom and how might this compassion manifest itself in our lives? What follows is my recollection of the group's attempts to answer these questions.

The first component of Amida, the 'wisdom' part, has to do with the Buddha's discovery of the Truth of Impermanence. His insights into the human condition: *interdependence, no-self, emptiness, attachment, suffering, compassion* all follow from this single Truth of Impermanence. In Jodo Shinshu, understanding Impermanence means recognizing ourselves as foolish, ignorant, deluded beings, full of greed and blind passions. We don't "see" this because we're so attached to the delusion of the self as something permanent, real and good. The *content* of wisdom is the insight, that we are helpless to see ourselves as we truly are. Because of this, we are

utterly incapable of liberating ourselves (from our endless cycles of grasping, attainment and frustration)—through any kind intentional, calculating 'practice'.

The second component of Amida, the 'compassion' part, refers to the universal flow of life ...beyond all notions of morality, justice or entitlement. It has nothing to do with the good-bad or right-wrong of a thing. Compassion is what sustains all life on this planet. It's the result of innumerable and ever-changing causes and conditions which allows us to live moment to moment. Compassion sustains everything in the universe: the sun, planets, people, animals, trees, birds, rivers and rocks. This is another way of saying that everything is interdependent or part of 'Oneness'. Amida *is* wisdom and compassion. It's all around us at all times, like gravity or air. We don't ask for it. We're not entitled to it. But it comes to us anyway.

Awakening to Amida's presence (i.e. Wisdom & Compassion in our life) is a totally subjective experience; not something to be described or explained by the intellect. The best one can do is catch glimpses of it, rather like a fleeting intuition, --a knowing beyond words. And what is it that one catches-a-glimpse-of? What is this realization that moves us to proclaim in gratitude, *Namo Amida Butsu*?

Put clumsily, I think it's that brief moment, wherein I behold my true nature, namely, that I am an ignorant, foolish, deluded being with no hope of thinking or "practicing" my way to liberation. Every thought I have is delusion and falsehood. That being the case, I have no choice but to entrust myself completely to wisdom and compassion (Amida Buddha). When I can do this, *really do this*, I become truly free, that is, one *with* Amida, one with the universal flow of life. I am able to live my life naturally and spontaneously, just as I am—without the constant grasping at the world. There is great joy in this realization. One cannot help but exclaim in gratitude and humility, *Namo Amida Butsu!* Understood this way, it makes perfect sense to think of *nembutsu* as our 'practice' in Jodo Shinshu.

Throughout the retreat, Kenji led us through several exercises to help us "catch a glimpse" of *nembutsu* practice in our ordinary lives. In one exercise we each took a turn sitting in the "hot seat" for two minutes and silently looked at the group, while they silently looked back. Speaking for myself, I found this a powerful and deeply moving experience. During that exercise, nothing else in the world mattered to me. I felt intimately connected to everyone in the group and for a brief time I forgot myself. It was a wonderful moment.

All in all, the weekend retreat with Kenji was a most satisfying experience. I've come away with a deeper appreciation of what it means to walk the *nembutsu* path with my sangha friends. *Namo Amida Butsu!*

Paul Vielle—Minister's Assistant

Seminar - "Static Buddha, Dynamic Buddha"

Saturday, September 22nd (10:00 am – 3:30 pm). Join Rev. Don Castro and Chaplain Shuri Saigusa for a one day seminar at the temple. From 10 am until 12:30, Rev. Castro will present a series of guided meditations and discussions to motivate us toward a more dynamic spiritual life. Then following a lunch break, and beginning at 1:30 and lasting until 3:30, Chaplain Shuri Saigusa will present "Engaged Ministry", tools for embracing the ministry within each of us; a Bud-

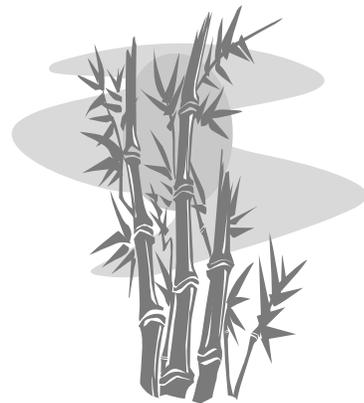
dhist perspective. The cost is \$10 donation for the day, and lunch is on your own. You can bring a sack lunch or visit the diner for lunch, (Perry Street Café) across the street. Hope to see you there. No pre-registration is required.

Our seminar leaders:

Rev. Don Castro is a minister at the Seattle Betsuin and is also the supervising minister for our temple. He has been a BCA Minister for 30 years; in Seattle for 21 of those years. He holds

an M.A. in Buddhist Studies from the Institute of Buddhist Studies.

Chaplain Shuri Saigusa is ordained in the Jodo Shinshu tradition and holds an M.A. in theological Studies from the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley. She has also completed 5 units of Clinical Pastoral Education. Shuri has been employed for the past 18 months at Swedish Hospital in Seattle in the Spiritual Care Department as a Buddhist Chaplain.



Heart Shrine Relics Tour

Sravasti Abbey and Coeur d'Alene Dharma Friends will present the Heart Shrine Relic Tour over the weekend of September 21 - 23 at Spokane Unity Church, 2900 S. Bernard. An opening ceremony that includes participation from the regional Buddhist community will kick off the event on Friday night at 7:00. The relics will be on display Saturday and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The weekend's activities will also include two public talks, an interfaith discussion on the role of kindness and forgiveness in various religious traditions, and a pet blessing ceremony.

The Heart Shrine Relic Tour is a collection of more than 1,000

sacred relics of the Buddha and other Buddhist Masters that is now touring the world. These relics will be permanently enshrined inside the heart of a magnificent Maitreya Buddha statue being built in Kushinagar, India due for completion in 2010. Sravasti Abbey in Newport, a monastic community in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, is primary host of the relics.

What's the significance of relics in the Buddhist sense? When the bodies of spiritual masters are cremated, beautiful, pearl-like crystals are found among their ashes. Tibetans call these Ringsel. These Ringsel hold the essence of the qualities of the spiritual master, whose inner purity appears in the form of relics. Some of the relics now on

tour were salvaged from statues in Tibet where they had been enshrined for thousands of years before the Communist occupation in 1959. Others came as donations from museums and monasteries. Most of these relics are of the historical Shakyamuni Buddha who was born in 563 BCE, and there are Relics of other holy masters.

The Heart Shrine Relic Tour exhibitions are open to the public free of charge, thereby giving everyone the rare opportunity to be in the presence of such priceless holy objects.

"The Heart Shrine Relic Tour is a collection of more than 1,000 sacred relics of the Buddha and other Buddhist Masters that is now touring the world."



Looking A head . . .



Shotsuki-Hoyo

September -2007

Shotsuki-Hoyo (the remembrance service for deceased loved ones) will be held Sunday, September 23, 2007. According to temple records and other sources, a total of 7 passed away during the month of September. They are:

Dat Nguyen
George Nomura
Harry Uchida
Harry Yamauchi
Hazel Sanders
Kenji Sugiyama
(Mrs) Mary Sueko 'Sue'
Shimizu



Moses Lake Sangha
(Oct 2005)

*Spokane and Moses Lake**Sangha's Gather for Joint Service*

The Spokane Buddhist Temple will be closed over the Labor Day Weekend. But on that Sunday, September 2nd, a group of twelve members from the Spokane Sangha will be traveling to Moses Lake to participate in their Sangha service. Our Minister's Assistant Paul Vielle will be conducting the service. As far as anyone knows, this is the first joint meeting of our two Sanghas. We'll be leaving Spokane about 8:15 AM and returning about 2:30 PM. After the service we'll have a dharma exchange on the book we're reading, *Dharma Breeze* by Dr. Haneda. Following that, we'll have a no-host buffet lunch at the Best Western Travel Lodge. To save on gas, we'll be traveling in car pools. If you'd like to come, please e-mail or call Paul.

We're looking forward to meeting our dharma friends in Moses Lake.

November

On Saturday evening, November 17th, Dr. Haneda will conduct a public lecture at the Spokane Buddhist Temple. He will also deliver the Dharma talk on Sunday, November 18th during our regular service. Next month we will announce the subject and title of the talk.

Why the Jodo Shinshu Center is Important

What was only a dream a couple of years ago is now a reality. The JSC supports BCA ministers, laypersons, and Shin Buddhist organizations here and abroad. It has the potential to become the resource center for Shin Buddhist teaching and outreach for the English-speaking world. The Jodo Shinshu Center and its programs deserve our continuing support.

Completing the JSC was an essential first step in meeting our challenges for the future. We are also already progressing with the following programs:

- Training new *kyoshi* ministers right here in the United States
- Enriching the continuing education opportunities for current ministers right here in the United States
- Training 40 Ministers Assistants in their own temples and at the Jodo Shinshu Center.

Two years ago, we sent out a mailing to all our Spokane members explaining *Campaign BCA – The 21st Century* with a request for temple members to donate to this worthwhile program. There

are several different options on donating such as, one lump sum or breaking it up into installments over three years just to name a few.

Your entire board of directors have contributed to the program as well as few members. Spokane Buddhist Temple has benefited greatly from these programs. We have taken full advantage of the minister's assistant program with ongoing education and we have been able to send temple leaders to various workshops that provide guidelines on building our temple, it has helped us grow our temple to what it is today.

We will be conducting another mailing in the next few months and are asking those who have not made a pledge to do so at this time. It is our goal in Spokane to reach 100% participation and we know that our Sangha will help us meet that challenge!

