

The Newsletter of Ekoji Buddhist Temple

Kalavinka

Fairfax Station, Virginia – Established 1981

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March 2015

84,000 Thoughts - Buddha Nature

By Rev. Kurt Rye

*Since Shinjin arises from the Vow,
We attain Buddhahood through the nembutsu by
the [Vow's]
Spontaneous working.
The spontaneous working is itself the fulfilled
land;
Our realization of supreme nirvana is beyond
doubt.*

--Hymns of the Pure land Masters #82
Master Shan-ao

We all wonder what the future might hold for us. At such times, many of us turn to the Buddhist teachings for guidance and security. Indeed, the teachings are there for us in our hour of questioning. The teachings are important; but equally important is how we approach the Buddha and the teachings. Do we rush through the readings to analyze what it has to say? Or do we not rush but, rather, give ourselves time to reflect on the teachings and benefit from a deeper understanding of meaning of the teachings? I have found the most benefit from the latter.

One aspect of the Buddhist teaching that has had an important impact on me is the concept of Buddha Nature. This concept posits the idea that everyone has within them the potential

for enlightenment. My early understanding was that Buddha Nature is like a gem covered with the mud of human attachments, and Buddhist practice was the method to polish away the defilement of this samsara world from the beautiful gem. In doing so, the individual could realize their true potential and then be able to reach enlightenment. For me, personally, it seemed an impossible task to make this self-discovery of my own Buddha nature. I was fortunate. I discovered the Jodo Shin Shu teachings and writings of Shinran. Shinran teaches another

perspective. In the wasan that prefaces this article, Shinran states, "We attain Buddhahood through the nembutsu by the vow's spontaneous working. The spontaneous working is itself the fulfilled land; our realization of Supreme nirvana is beyond doubt."

For me the word spontaneous holds the key to the meaning of this wasan. The word spontaneous is a translation of the Japanese word Jinen that can also be translated as naturalness. Shinran is saying that the essence of realizing nirvana is spontaneous or natural from the viewpoint of Amida or the Dharma. Rather than trying to understand what nirvana is and attempting to achieve nirvana in a detached manner

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Sangha News and Events

March and Future Events

March 7:

- 10:00 AM: Outreach Committee (Board Room)
- 5:45 PM: YBA Meeting (Sangha Hall)

March 8:

- 9:00 AM: Religious Committee (Board Room)
- 10:00 AM: Dharma School Service
- 11:00 AM: Dharma School Classes
- 11:00 AM: Regular Service
- 12:00 PM: Vietnamese TET Celebration Luncheon (Sangha Hall)

March 14: 10:00 AM: MAP Session (Set-Up O-Naijin for Special Service and Chanting Practice)

March 15:

- 9:00 AM: YBA Hawaiian Breakfast (Sangha Hall)
- 10:00 AM: Buddhism 201 (Hondo)
- 10:00 AM: Dharma School Classes
- 11:00 AM: Spring O-Higan Joint Service
- 12:30 PM: Board Meeting (Board Room)

March 16: 10:00 AM: Oasaji Service

March 18: 7:30 PM: Takoma Park Dharma Exchange

March 22:

- 8:30 AM: Virtual Outreach Subcommittee Meeting (Board Room)
- 10:00 AM: Dharma School Service
- 11:00 AM: Dharma School Classes
- 11:00 AM: Regular Service
- 12:30 PM: Board Meeting (Board Room) (Tentative)

March 29:

- 9:30 AM: Dharma School Clean-Up of Tsuji Center
- 10:00 AM: Dharma School Service
- 11:00 AM: Dharma School Classes
- 11:00 AM: Regular Service

April 4:

- 9:30 AM: Special All Sangha Clean-Up of Hondo
- 10:00 AM: MAP Session (Set-Up O-Naijin for Hana Matsuri Service)
- 5:00 PM: Dharma School Family Night

April 5: 10:30 AM: Hana Matsuri Joint Service

April 12: 8:00 AM: Vietnamese Pilgrimage to Ekoji

In-kind Donations and Thanks

Thank you to the following individuals who donated their time and skills to help out the temple:

- Kalavinka Editor: Andrea Walter
- Office Management: Jane Blechman
- Wisteria Lane, Library and Three Treasures Gar-

den: Heidi Forrest

- Temple Supplies: Nora Nagatani
- Onaijin Set-Up and Clean-Up: Minister's Assistants and Heidi Forrest under the leadership of Erick Ishii and Rob Fike
- Dharma Talk Recordings: Michael Galvin and Frank Swithers
- Hondo Clean-Up: All of our Sangha Members and Dharma School Students who showed up to clean!
- After-service refreshments: Thank you to all who contributed refreshments, prepared coffee and tea and cleaned up afterward! Our sign-up sheet is in the foyer.
- Thank you to those who volunteered to be service leaders, rang the kansho, played the piano, and helped collect dana.

My apologies if we missed any names. We are, indeed, fortunate to have so many volunteers assisting with Temple activities. Laverne Imori

Sangha Member News

Please submit news such as special honors or awards, weddings, births, graduations, etc., to Laverne Imori at limori@comcast.net, so we can share with the Sangha.

Ekoji Needs You!

As we discussed in our Annual Sangha Meeting last November, each of us must be an active stakeholder – not only in Ekoji, but in our desire to share and spread the Dharma. Towards that end, we have many opportunities but we need you to become actively involved. Here are some ways we need your help.

- Join a Standing Committee: Currently we need people to help with Hospitality, Membership, Facilities, and Outreach. If you have experience and expertise with facilities or grounds maintenance, public relations, marketing, publishing, technology, or like interacting with people, please contact Laverne Imori or any of Ekoji's Board Members.
- Join the O-Bon Committee: This year we have joint co-chairs: Ed Sams, Greg and Lisa Nakamura, and Laverne Imori. We're getting a late start, but need people to help with set-up and clean-up, food, vendors, programs and advertising. Please contact one of the co-chairs if you're interested. We will schedule a kick-off meeting shortly.
- Sign Up to Bring Refreshments: We have a sign-up sheet in the foyer. This includes cleaning up afterwards.

BCA Voices - Cultural Differences

By Rev. Gerald Sakamoto

The ministers of the Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) have important lessons to share with us. Through this column, we would like to share many of those lessons with the readers of the Kalavinka. The following article appeared in the October 2014 San Jose Buddhist Church Betsuin newsletter, The Dharma, and was written by Rev. Gerald Sakamoto.

In the postscript of the Tannisho, Yuien recalls the words of Shinran. *"In truth, myself and others discuss only good and evil, leaving Amida's benevolence out of consideration. Among Master Shinran's words were: 'I know nothing at all of good or evil. For if I could know thoroughly, as Amida Tathagata knows that an act was good, then I would know good. If I could know thoroughly, as the Tathagata knows, that an act was evil, then I would know evil. But with a foolish being full of blind passions, in this fleeting world – this burning house – all matters without exception are empty and false, totally without truth and sincerity. The Nembutsu alone is true and real.'"*

We make decisions all the time. The choice we make is influenced by our perception of the circumstances. Our perception is shaped by our experience. Our experience is limited, we cannot know the full consequences of our decision. Yet, we do make de-

isions. We choose to go left rather than right. We choose others over ourselves. Usually, we choose life rather than death.

When I was young, I was terrified of the dark. I tried not to show how scared I was. Even as I became an adult this fear continued. One of the earliest terrifying experiences I remember was at a science fair. My father was with us so I must have been eight or nine. Walking up and down the exhibit aisles I suddenly saw peering over the divider walls a skeleton. It was at the end of the aisle we were walking down. As we walked down the aisle I paid no attention to the science projects we passed. We were getting closer to the skeleton standing menacing, waiting for me. I'm sure there were other projects on display. Projects that demonstrated keen observations and sound conclusions. But of all the projects we walked by and looked at that evening, the fear of that skeleton looking over the dividers lingered in my memory. That feeling stayed with me for a very long time.

Growing up in Hawai'i is not the best place to carry these fears. Everyone has a ghost story. Newspapers carried reports of sightings. At the old Waiialae Drive-in people reported seeing a faceless woman in the

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Board Election Results

Ekochi's Board of Directors is comprised of nine members, and there are two Trustees. Each person is elected to a term of two years. At the annual meeting on November 23, 2014, five persons were elected to the Board of Directors, and one person was elected Trustee. Of the five persons elected to the Board, four were elected to serve two-year terms, and one person was elected for one year to fill a vacancy.

Congratulations to the newly elected Board members and Trustee; they are:

- Andrew Barden-elected to the Board for two years
- Michael Galvin-elected to the Board for two years
- Heidi Forrest-elected to the Board for one year
- Art Politano-elected to the Board for two years
- Bob Shimokaji-elected to the Board for two years

- Norman Kondo-elected as Trustee for two years
- The other members of the Board and Trustee are:

- Jane Blechman-Board member
- Laverne Imori-Board member
- Ed Sams-Board member
- Kennon Nakamura-Trustee

Following the annual meeting, another seat on the Board became vacant. The Board has decided to leave the position vacant at this time.

My special thanks to Mrs. Maya Horio and Mr. John Ishikawa for agreeing to serve on the Nominating Committee, and for all their time and hard work in securing candidates for the Board and Trustee positions. Their participation in the process was most valuable and greatly appreciated.

In gassho, Joy Aso, Chair, Nominating Committee

Nen Daiko: One of Ekoji's Public Faces

By Maya Horio

Nen Daiko, Ekoji's taiko ensemble, has been busy preparing for our upcoming performances during the National Cherry Blossom Festival. This annual celebration in Washington, DC, is our busiest performance time of the year, with Nen Daiko performing usually at five or six events during the several-weeks-long celebration. These public performances allow Nen Daiko to fill key parts of our mission—to represent Ekoji by exposing the DC metropolitan area to the cultural and musical aspects of kumi-daiko, to continuously improve the group's technical and artistic caliber, and to raise awareness of the connection between taiko and Jodo Shinshu Buddhism.

Nen Daiko's ability to perform at these public events allows us to serve as one highly visible face of Ekoji and provides a different avenue to raise awareness about Jodo Shinshu Buddhism to those who are or might be interested in learning more. Every public performance begins with an emcee introduction of Nen Daiko as the taiko ensemble of Ekoji Buddhist Temple in Fairfax Station, VA, and we often use transition time between pieces to give a short description of Nen Daiko's history and of Buddhist taiko. Many audience members ask group members more about

Ekoji and Buddhist taiko after our shows—and some follow up with an in-person visit to Ekoji—and we always see a spike in visits to our website following Cherry Blossom Festival season.

Nen Daiko takes seriously our responsibility to represent Ekoji, which is why we work to provide the best possible performance each and every time. We also ensure that each of our members, as well as our trainees, can give a brief explanation of Buddhist taiko and answer basic questions about Ekoji.

We hope to see many Ekoji sangha members at one of our upcoming performances—please check out our website (www.nendaiko.org) for specific performance times as the dates draw closer!

- NCBF Family Day (National Building Museum)—Saturday, 21 March
- National Japanese American Memorial Foundation Freedom Walk—Saturday, 28 March
- Smithsonian American Art Museum Family Day—Saturday, 4 April
- Southwest Waterfront Fireworks Festival—Saturday, 4 April
- NCBF Sakura Matsuri Street Festival—Saturday, 11 April

BCA Voices

Continued from page 3.

bathroom. I still get chills reading about it. Of course you can Google the story. Fortunately, it sounds like the drive-in may have been demolished in the 1980's. When the Halawa Stadium was being built, there were an unusual number of accidents. Workers complained of sightings. Eventually, a priest was asked to bless the construction work. The stories of Hawai'i are filled with night marchers, Pele sightings, menehune and other stories of things that go bump in the night. Not all are scary. Some are friendly and helpful. Just hard to remember those stories.

Experience will influence our thoughts about these stories. We might think of these stories as just things to scare kids around a campfire or just stories of superstitious people. But if you experience something that evades explanation, some framework of belief may help put it in context. For someone who does not share these views, these stories may seem quaint. For many in Hawai'i these beliefs are commonplace and

to be respected.

Not sharing a common set of beliefs can put someone outside a circle of inclusion. Acknowledging we include and exclude based on shared experiences can lead to softening the boundaries that can separate and result in conflict. What I think is appropriate may not be seen in the same way by someone from another culture. From the other's cultural perspective my behavior may be completely inappropriate. Cultures can be other than nationalities. Cultures can be any group of people who share a common set of values and behavior. Our culture is filled with subcultures. Democrats and Republicans. Religious and non-Religious. Biker gangs and motorcycle clubs. Shared values. Shared experience. Each of these cultures may have values that come into conflict with my values. I may disagree with another's beliefs just as much as the other may disagree with my beliefs.

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Ekoji President's Message - BCA Update

By: Laverne Shidou Imori

Last March 2014, I wrote my Kalavinka message from the BCA National Council Meeting in Bellevue, Washington. Today is February 28, 2015, and once again I'm writing my message from the National Council Meeting – this year held in San Diego, California.

Reverend Kurt, Jane Blechman, and I are here to represent the Ekoji Sangha. As I stated last year, while you may not feel directly impacted, the actions taken by this governing body do have implications on Ekoji.

In last year's article, I gave you a brief overview of the BCA (Buddhist Churches of America) and shared my personal impressions of the National Council meeting. This year, I'd like to give you a brief summary of this year's meeting.

One of the most significant changes was in the meeting format. More time was set aside for listening to the Dharma and for exchanging ideas with representatives from other BCA temples. The time spent on business matters was shorter, but this was managed by keeping reports concise.

1. Changes to the Bylaws as follows. All motions passed.

a. Should we simplify the BCA Bylaws and voting rules for ministers at National Council Meetings (NCM) by permitting all ministers certified as Kai-kyoshi the right to vote at NCM?

b. Should the restriction be deleted from the BCA Bylaws that past presidents are ineligible for election as a Director-At-Large until they have served for 3 years on the National Board (NB) as a district representative?

c. Should changes to the CBE Bylaws require approval by both the NB and the National Council?

d. Should the (a.) Guidelines for Establishment of Temples and (b.) Guidelines for Selection of the Bishop, be subject to oversight to approve changes? If Yes, should the NB and/or the National Council have oversight responsibilities?

e. Should the proposed changes to the BCA Bylaws for the purpose of improving its clarity, accuracy, and organization be adopted?

2. Election of three delegates-at-large. All voted in.

3. The BCA 2015-2016 Budget. BCA dues were increased from \$107.25 to \$109.39 to cover the increase in BCA operating expenses. Passed. (The BCA dues are taken out of the \$500 annual Ekoji dues.)

4. The Executive Board presented a motion to install solar panels at the Jodo Shinshu Center to reduce the long-term energy costs and to support efforts to maintain a green facility. Their motion included a provision that the costs be covered by an increase in BCA membership dues of \$10 per person. The Ministers' Association recommended that the solar panels be approved but that the proposal be returned to the Executive Board to come up with an alternative funding mechanism that would not negatively impact temple members and temples. The motion as amended was passed.

5. Resolution of Appreciation to recognize individuals and organizations which participated in the meeting. Passed.

As a paid and registered member of Ekoji Buddhist Temple, you are a member of the Buddhist Churches of America. Part of your dues goes to funding the programs sponsored by the BCA. This includes ministerial training as well as the development and delivery of educational materials and courses. Please don't hesitate to ask questions of myself, Jane Blechman or Reverend Rye.

On a more local level, the February meeting of the Ekoji Board was cancelled due to inclement weather. The agenda for our next meeting on March 15th will include discussion of the Ekoji Committees, Ekoji Religious Program curriculum and O Bon, as well as presentation of committee reports and activities updates.

BCA Voices

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Buddhism begins with acknowledging my inability to see things as they are. I impose my preferences on the world. I recognize good and bad from my experience. That should not try to distinguish. Within our culture there are accepted behavior. We should try to do good as we understand it. But we should always remember, be mindful, and what I value is limited to

my experience. It is a way of seeing the world that I choose to see, not a way of seeing the world that is necessarily shared by others.

I am a foolish, unenlightened being, unable to see things simply as they are and yet who is sustained by infinite wisdom and compassion.

84,000 Thoughts

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we should be focusing on appreciating the fact that we are part of the ongoing process of achieving nirvana. We in fact are part of Amida's Vow, not spectators viewing the mechanics of the vow externally. The process is happening and we should focus on what is occurring instead of the process itself. In life, we can see events clearly by looking at what is happening in the moment instead of how we perceive it.

I had many such experiences in my years working as a mental health professional with people who suffered from debilitating mental illness. As an undergraduate, my first internship was at a state hospital working on the male geriatric ward. I was intimidated by working in a locked ward, where the clients' mental illnesses were so severe that many had spent most of their adulthood in the hospital. I also knew most of them had a history of violent behavior that kept them from living outside of the institution. My only counseling experience was what I had read in books and learned in class. To make things more uncomfortable, the patients were about three times my age, making the role of being their counselor seem ludicrous. I spent fifteen hours a week in my internship and got to know the personalities and habits of the 25 residents on the ward. I would take folks out of the ward to go for walks on the grounds, take them on outings to parks or fast food restaurants, listen to their stories, and provide support. Folks would be happy to see me for it meant getting out and talking to someone.

One of the patients I enjoyed most was a gentleman called Frank. Frank had been in and out of mental hospitals for 40 years. To his credit he had an outgoing personality, helping other patients when they couldn't express their needs, but, unfortunately, he also had a temper which he had problems controlling. That was the main reason he stayed in the hospital. He worked hard to control his temper. After calming down he would apologize for what he

said or had done.

My initial assignment was just talking with the patients on the ward. As my experience increased, so did my responsibilities, and I began to co-lead group sessions. To be honest, I was excited to use some of the concepts and terminology I had been learning in class. In one session, Frank was talking and I asked him a question using my best clinical voice and terminology. He yelled an obscenity that I won't repeat and walked out of the group. After the group was over I found him sitting on a chair with his arms crossed and obviously still angry. I asked if I could speak to him and he replied, "Why should I talk to Mr. Therapist? It seems he thinks he knows everything already." After a long silence I said, "I just want to help." Frank responded, "Help? Talking that mumbo-jumbo and not being real ain't going to help anyone!" Frustrated and confused I said, "What about our other talks?" Then Frank looked at me and said calmly, "You were a person like me, nothing else, and listening to my old jokes is the best therapy for me. You tried your school stuff but speak to me real, that is what it's really about."

I feel this is the essence of what the wasan says. "The spontaneous (natural) working is itself the fulfilled land." (Pure Land or Nirvana.) We do not need to organize the Dharma into categories. When Frank and I spoke as human being to human being we were being natural. We were the process. We were being spontaneous. This taught me to stop and step back and see the Dharma at work. Shinran is making the point that all of these processes are ongoing and we are part of the process.

It is for this reason I would advise everyone who seeks to find in the Dharma a path in navigating the unknowns in our lives to see oneself as part of the Dharma, part of this spontaneous working of Amida's Vow. In a way when we recite the nembutsu we are affirming not only the vow Amida made but that we too are a part of the vow. In Gassho.

Ekochi's YBA Fundraiser

HAWAIIAN BRUNCH



Sunday, March 15, 2015 @ 12:00 pm

TSUJI CENTER SANGHA HALL

Join the Ekochi YBA for Hawaiian fried rice, Portuguese sausage, scrambled eggs and fruit. Coffee, tea and juice will also be served. Suggested donation is \$10 per person. Proceeds go towards supporting YBA activities.

Save the Date!

Eastern Buddhist League Conference
Hosted by the
Cleveland Buddhist Temple at the Westin Hotel
Featuring Keynote Speaker, Dr. Jeff Wilson,
author of Buddhism of the Heart

Labor Day Weekend
September 4-6, 2015



Dr. Jeff Wilson



Ekoji Dana List - February 2015

Allen A. Thomsen
Andrea Walter
Andrew Barden
Anna Tescon
Arlene and Wayne Minami
Art Politano
Corrine Fukayama
Curtis Rothrock
Dharma School
Emily Ihara
Frank Swithers
Heidi Forrest
Jane Blechman
Joseph Balon
Ken and Nori Nakamura
Kristie Brinker
Lani Pham & Pierre Karen
Laura Clapsaddle
Laverne Imori
Leah Kaufman
Leigh Colbert-Martin
Lisa and Greg Nakamura
Mark LaWall
Mary Okamoto
Ngoc-Yen Vu
Norm and Gail Kondo
Paul Q. Piper

Piyatida Rask
Rachael Lang Harris
Rebecca Perry And William
Nelson
Reiko and Hisao Matsumoto
Rob Fike
Ron and Nora Nagatani
Sam Fugitt
Sarah Barlow
Shigeko Walton
Stuart Ott
Susan Grimes
Thomas Griffin
Tim and Susan Cathcart
William Robertson
Yuko and Toshiaki Keicho

Memory Dana

Arlene and Wayne Minami for
Fred Okamoto
Mary Okamoto for Fred
Okamoto
for Fred Okamoto
Masaru Shimoda for Setsuko
Shimoda

Kalavinka

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Sangha members and community businesses can
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contact us for information!

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Join us at Ekoji!

Adult Service: Sundays at 11 a.m.

Meditation: Thursdays at 8 p.m.

Yoga: Mondays at 7:30 p.m.

Children's Dharma School (Sept. through June):
10 a.m. family service and 11 a.m. classes

**Consult the Ekoji website for the
complete event calendar at www.ekoji.org.**



EKOJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE
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Fairfax Station, VA 22039

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

FIRST CLASS