

Vol. XXXIIV, No. 7 July 2015

Celebrating Obon - Mindfulness Beyond the Festival By Brant Horio

This July, Ekoji will celebrate with its Obon Festival, a summer festival that is an opportunity to celebrate those who have come before us, to remember our past loved ones, and to reflect upon their influence on the causes and conditions that have led us to where we are now in this very moment. While having this awareness is one of the purposes of the Obon Festival, we would all stand to benefit from creating for ourselves opportunities much more frequently, to conceptually apply Obon-mindfulness and the gratitude it elicits to other aspects of our daily lives.

One way we do so in Nen Daiko—Ekoji's taiko ensemble—is to incorporate reminders into our practice for remaining aware of taiko's deep history, the taiko community, and the contributions of so many that have established and evolved the art form into what we know and love today.

These reminders take many forms. One example is workshops with leading practitioners of our art from all over the U.S. and Japan. We learn the history of pieces and the intent of the composition before we learn to play them, so we may properly communicate the ideas of the composer. This reminds us that taiko existed long before us and required the passion of individuals to carry on the art form over the years, ultimately allowing for taiko at Ekoji. Another example is that at

the beginning of each practice, we play oroshi, an exercise in which we perform a series of hits on the taiko, starting out slowly, with beats widely spaced in tempo, and progressively getting faster until it becomes a rapid roll of hits. Oftentimes, we also play drills that focus on improving some aspect of our playing. This practice of oroshi and basic drills are simple, stripped down playing of hits on the drum, taiko at its purest. In its simplicity, it reminds us of the time and effort someone spent on finding ways to improve a player's skill, and in the long run, improve the quality of the art form itself to carry it through the centuries. It reminds us that we have a role to play as well, to do our upmost to play the best we can for the group and ourselves, since we never know when we might inspire another to pick up a pair of bachi, and embrace taiko to continue its progression further into the future.

So at this Obon Festival, remember and celebrate our lost loved ones and their influences on our lives, but also remember that this state of Obon-mindfulness doesn't have to be confined to this one day or to our past ancestors. Find the opportunities to remain aware in your daily life and in doing so, find gratitude in your heart.

Namo Amida Butsu.

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Sangha News and Events

July and Future Events

July 5 (Shotsuki Sunday)

- 9:00 AM: Sangha Temple Clean-up
- 11:00 AM: Shotsuki Service

July 11 (Saturday) OBON FESTIVAL 2015

- 5:30 PM 9:00 PM
- www.ekojiobon2015.weebly.com

July 12 (Sunday)

• 11:00 AM: Obon Service

July 16 (Thursday)

• 10:00 AM: Oasaji Service (Hondo)

July 18 (Saturday): Seabrook Buddhist Temple Obon Festival, Bridgeton, New Jersey

https://www.facebook.com/SeabrookbuddhistTemple July 19 (Sunday)

- 10:00 AM: Buddhism 101 (Sangha Hall)
- 11:00 AM: Regular Service

July 25 (Saturday)

- 1:00 PM: John Ohta Funeral Service
- 1:30 PM: Obon Memorial Service at Willow Grove Cemetery, New Brunswick, NJ

July 26 (Sunday)

- 10:00 AM: Buddhism 101 (Sangha Hall)
- 11:00 AM: Regular Service
- 12:30 PM: Ekoji Board Meeting (Board Room) August 2 (Shotsuki Sunday)
- 9:00 AM: Sangha Temple Clean-up
- 11:00 AM: Shotsuki Service

August 16 (Sunday)

- 9:30 AM: Every Day Dharma
- 11:00 AM: Regular Service

September 13: Seminar by Dr. Ken Tanaka, author of Oceans

October 17 – 18: Fall Seminar with Reverend Dr. William Masuda

In-kind Donations and Thanks

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

A special thank you to our Vietnamese families who prepared and served a beautiful and delicious traditional Tet luncheon!

- Kalavinka Editor and Contributors: Andrea Walter (Editor), Kennon Nakamura, Rev. Kurt Rye, Brant Horio, Laverne Imori
- · Special thank you's to Minister's Assistants Mi-

chael Galvin, Rob Fike, and Erick Ishii for delivering the Dharma Messages in June and July.

- Office Management: Jane Blechman
- Wisteria Lane, Library, and Three Treasures Garden: 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
- After-service refreshments: Thank you to all who contributed refreshments, prepared coffee and tea and cleaned up afterward! We need volunteers to bring refreshments and help clean 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

Our deepest condolences to Gloria Ohta and her children on the passing of their husband and father, John Ohta. John was a member of the Ekoji Sangha. He passed away after a long struggle with brain cancer. He will be missed. A memorial service is scheduled for Saturday, July 25th at 1:00 PM at Ekoji.

Our condolences to Cherry Tsutsumida on the passing of her husband, Edward Aguirre, on May 22, 2015. Cherry was one of the original members of Ekoji and co-chaired the building of the temple. Dr. Aguirre's memorial service was held on Friday, June 5th in San Mateo, California.

Our condolences to Ruth Vines and family on the passing of her mother, Yoshiko Shishido, on May 29, 2015. Ruth and her husband, Steve, were early members of Ekoji and Ruth was one of the original members of Nen Daiko. She also taught Dharma School and organized the *Don't Clap – Just Throw Money Band* comprised of Dharma School students.

Our condolences to Ekoji member, Ella Maneely, and her family on the passing of her aunt, Sadako

Continued on page 5.

BCA Voices: Obon - Homecoming

By Rev. Dr. Kenji Akahoshi

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 is by Reverend Dr. Kenji Akahoshi, which appeared in the August 2014 newsletter of the San Diego Buddhist Temple, Bussei Script.

As the slow rhythm of Obon no Uta floats in the warmth of the summer evening, I swing my arms in unison with the other dancers. The activity of the dance, the crowd and noise, and the memories of past Obons, brings me to a singular point of the past, present and future. I am content because I am home. For those of us who have grown up in this important Shin tradition, Obon seems to bring all the Teachings and practice together, into the experience of the Obon dance. There is also something compelling for those who were raised outside of this tradition. The dance seems to beckon all to come in and join the "Gathering of Joy."

Each year, the Obon dance appears to attract a younger and more diverse assembly. And the dancers are not there to perform for others; they are there to enjoy the dance. Is it unusual for a religious gathering honoring those who have passed, to be celebrated with a dance? Not for Shin Buddhists. For the primary message from those who have passed, is that life is about living. It is about the dance.

I arrived here in San Diego a year ago. Obon was the first activity of my new assignment. Although I did not know very many people, there was a familiarity with the surroundings. My wife Karen, and I have enjoyed the warm, welcoming energy of one year, it seems to have passed by quickly. Although the surroundings and people are new, we feel very much at home here. "Coming home" is a strong message of Obon.

The Japanese word, furusato, describes an essential part of Obon for me. An English definition of furusato, may combine the experiences of a homecoming, Thanksgiving dinner, and Holiday family gatherings. The experience includes past childhood memories as we greet and meet with relatives, and old and new friends. It may also bring up past negative feelings of awkward past relationships. But this is about life.

We want to be in step with the dance, but sometimes, we're just off with the beat. The important part is this feeling of being home. It has a casual and accepting feeling to it. Who among us has not done a solo dance to the radio, when no one else was home? Who among us has not sung a favorite song in the solitude of the shower? At home, our ego gets lazy. With family and good friends, our ego relaxes off duty. It is not about how we look, it is about how we feel.

The Sangha here has made us feel at home. Visitors must also feel this attitude, as they join our activities and dance. The solemnity and respect we share in memorial services are balanced by the exuberance of the reception, or otoki, which often follows the service. Our Obon/Hatsubon Service is followed by the Obon dance in a similar way. We dance because we are grateful and joyful to our loved ones, who have passed on, who represent all life (causes and conditions) that have made my life possible. We dance with joy in a way that affirms that "I realize that I am alive because of the efforts of others." We call these conditions, "the Compassion of Amida." Shinran states in his preface of his Kyogyoshinsho: "I am aware of the profundity of the Buddha's benevolence. Here I rejoice in what I have heard and extol what I have received." (CWS, 4)

In the vernacular of ordinary Japanese, going to the Pure Realm is often referred to as "returning home," Ojodo ni kaeru." So the issue of death is placed in a familiar experience. For those of us who may be attached to the pleasures of life, death might be unknown and unwelcomed. However, for those who have listened and heard the Teachings, and express appreciation for what has been received, the Nembutsu offers the comforting feeling of being at home.

Regardless of our actual history of childhood and home, each of us has a sense of being accepted, just as we are, and loved for just being "me." This is an experience of Namo Amida Butsu. Being accepted by the Buddha is like being One with the Buddha. Namo Amida Butsu is our expression of gratitude for being alive and having the opportunity to dance.

This year I dance for my mother's Hatsubon (1st year after passing). I hear her calling, but she knows that I love to play. I have a few more dances before I go home. *In Gassho, Kenji Sensei*

Ekoji President's Message - Obon By: Laverne Shidou Imori

This month we celebrate Obon – a time for remembrance and gratitude.

"The aim of our fellowship is to live the life of gratitude, and share the rejoicing of it with others, having awakened to the fact that we are being taken care of by the Immeasurable Light and Life, the Wisdom and Compassion of Amida Buddha." (From the Ekoji Website Home Page)

Although I was not raised in the Jodo Shinshu tradition, Obon was, and still is, a special time of year for me. My earliest childhood memories of Obon are of my Grandmother's house in Okinawa where she welcomed family and friends with lots of delicious foods and invited each of us to light incense at the family altar and burn uchikabi (symbolic paper money) doused with sake to send with my grandfather and ancestors as they returned to the spiritual world. It was truly a time of fellowship in which we expressed our deepest gratitude to our ancestors for our lives and rejoiced in their "homecoming." Family members who had moved away from the village returned at Obon and the entire village paid their respects at each home.

This is my fourth Obon at Ekoji and I have a similar sense of fellowship and gratitude. Ekoji is truly The Temple of the Gift of Light as it provides me a place to hear the Dharma and share the experience with a wonderful Sangha.

This year's Obon season is extra-special as I personally experienced the recent losses of a precious teacher and of a dear Sangha friend, Reverend Shojo Honda and John Ohta. At this Obon celebration and service, I will celebrate them and express my deepest gratitude for their impact on me in allowing me to share the last days of their lives. They each taught me that this life is, indeed, precious and must be lived as fully and as authentically as possible.

The Ekoji Sangha is my community. I am grateful beyond words when the Sangha pulls together each year at Obon. There are so many moving parts, and this year we owe a special thank-you to Ed Sams and Greg and Lisa Nakamura who stepped up to co-chair the event. It is gratifying that members who live far return to Ekoji to help at this event and that our benefactor, BDK America, continues to send a representative all the way from California!

Thanks to all our volunteers. You guys are the BEST! I realize there's a lot going on and that you may be feeling pretty stressed about now. Please know we are grateful for your efforts and commitment. More importantly, don't forget take at least 30 minutes on the 11th to enjoy the festivities and rejoice with your fellow travellers. Namo Amida Butsu. Gassho, Laverne

Welcoming the Aloha Spirit to Ekoji By: Laverne Shidou Imori

On Sunday afternoon, June 7th, Ekoji welcomed more than 30 visitors from the Hawaii Kyodan (Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii) and were accompanied by Reverend Tomo Hojo of the West Kauai Hongwanji

Buddhist Temple in Hanapepe. They represented several temples on Oahu, Maui, Kauai, and the Big Island of Hawaii. These fellow Nembutsu travelers had attended the Buddhist Women's Association Convention in Calgary, Canada, and extended their trip to include visits to Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Washington, D.C.,

Philadelphia, and New York. Their trip included stops at three other Jodo Shinshu temples in Calgary, Toronto, and New York.

Welcoming them to Ekoji were former kama'aina



(residents of Hawaii) and many discovered connections. Nori Nakamura met up with a grade school friend and I met a classmate of my ex-husband. This truly is a small world! Thank you to Ken and Nori Nakamura, Norman and Gail Kondo, and John and Ann Ishikawa for greeting the visitors with the spirit of Aloha.

Sangha News and Events

Continued from page 2.

Shimabukuro in Hawaii on June 7, 2015.

Our wishes for a speedy recovery to Nancy Motonaga after her hip replacement surgery. Burt said they'll be signing up for the next marathon.

Congratulations to our high school graduates, Sonia Chulaki and Anh-Thu Vo! Sonia graduated from West Springfield High School and will be attending Grinnell College in Grinnell, Iowa this fall. She is the daughter of Anna Chulaki. Anh-Thu graduated from Westfield High School and will be attending the University of Virginia this fall. She is the daughter of Kim Nguyen and Hung Vo.

Congratulations to Robert Nishigawa, who graduated from the University of Syracuese. Robert is the son of Steve Nishigawa and Susan Kasa.

Congratulations to the Nagatani family on the birth of James Christian Nagatani to Nora and Ron Nagatani's son Gerald and daughter-in-law Janice.

Congratulations to BDK America on the opening of their new offices in Moraga, California. They were formerly located in Berkeley and the Moraga office was officially opened on May 5th.

Congratulations to Reverend Kurt Rye and Ekoji Sangha member Sam Fugitt on their recent participation at the successful LGBTQ seminar in New York City the weekend of June 27th.

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.

Seeking Dharma School Teaching Volunteers

Ekoji's Children's Dharma School is seeking volunteers to help teach our weekly classes. Those interested need not have a background in Buddhism or in teaching--we just need people who are willing to learn along with the students, have a sense of curiosity and creativity, and enjoy working with kids and young adults. Many of our teachers did not start teaching with ready experience and knowledge, and we often read, research, and prep a week or two in advance to stay a step ahead of our classes. We also have a number of substantive and activity resources available to our teaching team.

Most classes are taught by two teachers to help maintain classroom discipline and share the workload. Serving as a Dharma School teacher is time-consuming, but it is also incredibly rewarding to help guide our youngest sangha members as we learn more about the Dharma together. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Maya Horio at ekojidharmas-chool@gmail.com.

Buddhism 101

The dates for the Buddhism 101 classes are as follows: July 19, 26, and August 2, 9, 16, September 13, 20, 27, and October 4, 11, and November 1, 8, 15, 22, 29.

2015 Eastern Buddhist League Conference

The theme for the Eastern Buddhist League Conference is "I Go to the Sangha for Guidance," and it will be held September 4-6, 2015, in Cleveland, Ohio.

Please join us in Cleveland for the 2015 Eastern Buddhist League Conference, where you will gather with friends from Ekoji Buddhist Temple, Midwest Buddhist Temple, Twin Cities Buddhist Association, New York Buddhist Church, Seabrook (NJ) Buddhist Temple, Toronto Buddhist Church, and your EBL host, Cleveland Buddhist Temple.

This year's theme, "I Go to the Sangha for Guidance," is a familiar phrase to us. It's something we have repeated often – and yet, what does it mean for us and others today? The traditional Shin sangha in America, strongly Japanese, has evolved into a community more diverse, but still strong and flourishing. This year's theme explores how traditional and modern sanghas can combine in expression of the same message. In doing so, we will consider questions about the role and purpose of the sangha in the world. How can the sangha communicate to others the peace and joy of leading a Shin life? How do we put books on the shelf? What is effective outreach? How do we make and keep the teaching relevant to all people coming to us "as they are"?

This event will bring together friends from the temples and others who are interested in learning more about Shin Buddhism and how to better incorporate it into our lives and our communities.

We are extremely pleased to announce that author and scholar Jeff Wilson will be with us over the weekend. Jeff will deliver the keynote address and will also participate in the workshops. Jeff has written numerous books and articles on the development of Buddhism in America, including several works on the place of Shin Buddhism. He is contributing editor for Tricycle magazine and author of the books Buddhism of the Heart, Dixie Dharma, and Mindful America.

For more information and registration visit ebl2015.weebly.com.

Ekoji Committee Updates By: Laverne Shidou Imori

Everyone's time and attention is consumed with tasks associated with Obon 2015, but while all this is happening, Ekoji Sangha members are also multi-tasking. Here's a quick update of what's happening behind the scenes that you might not be aware of.

Hospitality Committee: The Board is happy to report that we now have co-chairs for this committee. Erick Ishii and Ann Ishikawa have graciously volunteered (with just a little bit of arm-twisting) to jointly take on the responsibilities of this very important function. Besides coordinating volunteers to provide refreshment and clean up after service, they will also be working closely with Reverend Rye and the Religious Committee to provide refreshments at seminars and workshops, as well as at other special events, such as funerals and weddings. However, they can't do this by themselves and they'll be asking for volunteers to help support them.

Religious Committee: Under the leadership of Ken Nakamura, the Religious Committee is coordinating the Obon service this month and planning for the September seminar with Dr. Ken Tanaka and the October seminar with the Reverend Dr. William Masuda. Working very closely with Reverend Rye, they will also be launching a new series of workshops in August called "Everyday Dharma." These workshops will touch on subjects such as how the Dharma helps us to deal with everyday issues such as stress, anger, anxiety, and parenting. More information will be communicated along with dates.

Ekoji will also be introducing a 10-session language and culture series. Thank you to Art Politano for putting this together! More information to come.

Outreach Committee: Ed Sams and his committee are busy working on some important initiatives including improving Ekoji's Virtual Outreach (internet presence) and developing communication materials. A special shout-out to Tim Cathcart for distributing the Obon 2015 flyers and information.

Finance Committee: Jane Blechman chairs this committee of very capable individuals with strong financial expertise. One of the important items on their agenda this year is to evaluate how current assets are invested.

Membership Committee: This committee of two – Jane Blechman and Sue Cathcart – are currently working on activities for Obon to encourage people to sign on as Ekoji members. Our ultimate goal is to reach

200 members. We're currently at 69. If you haven't renewed your Ekoji membership, please do so and help us reach our long-term sustainability goal!

Facilities Committee: Currently, we have an opening for Chair of this very critical committee. In the interim, we have a group of individuals who have met to prioritize all the facilities-related issues. A big thankyou to Art Politano for leading the effort to identify requirements for the Ekoji Kitchen project. The Board will review the requirements and identify next steps.

Help Wanted! If you have special skills, knowledge or experience and would like to serve on any of the above committees or work on special projects, we welcome your help and dana! We're especially in need of individuals who can help us with our facilities projects. It's a wonderful opportunity to get to know other Sangha members.

Finally, a big thank-you to everyone on the committees. We rely on our volunteers to keep Ekoji vibrant and operational and appreciate your time, energy and dedication.

It is almost here! OBON 2015 Saturday, July 11 5:30 PM to 9:00 PM

Please come and join us for our annual summer festival in celebration of those who have come before us.

Fun for the whole family, with highlights that include: Japanese food, Japanese folk dancing, children's games, live music with the Aloha Boys (Hawaiian music) and Nen Daiko (Japanese taiko drumming), and a candle ceremony to remember and honor the memory of your loved ones.

Obon is Ekoji's major fundraiser for 2015. The proceeds from this day go to support Ekoji Buddhist Temple.



Cleveland Buddhist Temple

1573 East 214 St., Euclid, Ohio 44117 www.clevelandbuddhisttemple.com

"I Go to the Sangha for Guidance"

2015 Eastern Buddhist League Conference September 4-6, 2015 Cleveland, Ohio

Have you registered yet for EBL 2015?

The early registration discount ends after August 5, so register now!

Your conference website is http://ebl2015.weebly.com/. To register, click the "Register" tab in the home page menu. Then, click on the "Register" button to complete online registration or, if you prefer the paper way, click the pdf button at the bottom of the page.

You can also access the registration page of the conference website through CBT's website at *clevelandbuddhisttemple.com/ebl-2015.html*.

Please let us know if there are any hiccups in the registration process at ebl2015@clevelandbuddhisttemple.com.

Thinking of a bus?

Give Bill Zaffiro a call at 216-408-1587 to discuss bus arrangements.

Hotel reservations

This year's conference will be held in the Westin Cleveland Downtown. We have a special room rate of \$119/night plus tax that is good through August 5.

Reserve rooms directly with the hotel. You can do this by phone – mention EBL 2015 and the conference dates to get the special room rate. Or you can use the Westin's personalized website for EBL 2015, which you can access through our EBL conference website.

NOTE: The Lake Erie-facing rooms at the Westin feature terrific views and will be a front-row seat for the Cleveland Air Show, to be held over our conference weekend. A limited number of these rooms are available, so if you want a lake view, please reserve your room early and specify a lake-side preference.

HOTEL INFO

Westin Cleveland Downtown
777 St. Clair Ave. NE
Cleveland, OH 44114
216-771-7700 or 888-627-8085
Or use the hotel's EBL 2015 online
reservation site, available through
ebl2015.weebly.com (Travel & Lodging
tab)

Ekoji Dana List - May 2015

Adam Perrv Anna Chulaki Arlene and Wayne Minami Art Politano Beth Fujishige Bob May Bud Uyeda Corinne Fukayama Curtis Rothrock Dharma School Donald and Tomoko Smith Erika Wildrick Erni Diez-Fugitt Frank Swithers

Heidi Forrest John and Gloria Ohta Justin Murray and Susan Sutter Ken and Nori Nakamura

Gabrielle Harrison

Kimberly Gillette Lan-Huong T Hoang Lani Pham & Pierre Karen Laverne Imori

Lisa and Greg Nakamura Mark LaWall

Mary Carr

Mary Okamoto Michelle Amano Norm and Gail Kondo Paul O. Piper

Phat Hoc Tue Quang Tour Rebecca Perry And William

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Tim and Susan Cathcart William Robertson Yigun Shien

Yuko and Toshiaki Keicho

In Memory:

Mary Carr for Rev. Shojo Honda Justin Murray and Susan Sutter for Rev. Shojo Honda Arlene and Wayne Minami for Claire Minami Mary Okamoto for Claire Minami

Kalavinka

Managing Editor: Andrea A. Walter Assistant Editors: Rev. Kurt Rye, Ken Nakamura, Laverne Imori

Sangha members and community businesses can publish advertisements in Kalavinka. Please 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

6500 Lake Haven Lane Fairfax Station, VA 22039

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

FIRST CLASS