

*Ekoji
Buddhist
Temple*

Kalavinka

84,000 Thoughts: A Message From the Minister

Reverend Nariaki R. Hayashi



Have you heard of the actor Kevin Bacon and the idea of seven stages of separation? This is the notion that anyone can be linked to Kevin Bacon through seven steps.

That is any person will have appeared with someone who will have appeared with another and so until you reach Kevin Bacon. A very similar experiment was held in the 1960s in America. The experiment was to send a letter indirectly to a stranger living a thousand miles away. One would send the letter to a person who, based on a guess, might know the intended recipient. That possible acquaintance then sent the letter to another person who might know the recipient and the next person would do the same. The forwarding of this letter continued through a chain of possible acquaintances until the recipient eventually received the letter after it had passed through six people.

In 2002, the same experiment was conducted on a global scale. The letter was sent from another country to a stranger living in America who then sent it on again. The result was the actually same. It reached the intended recipient after only six tries.

So this shows how we are wrong to think that we live among strangers who have no connection to us. Quite the opposite, the above shows how we are all interconnected in ways that we do or do not recognize.

Interconnection is a basic teaching of Buddhism in that we are all connected much like the way fibers are connected in a net. A net consists of a series of knots, and each knot has its place and purpose in relation to the other knots. Like the construction of a net, all of us are involved—unconsciously or not—to others and are also constantly influenced by others.

Without these connections, the survival of life is nearly impossible.

So, there is a real truth to the Buddhist concept of interconnectedness.

Even more, this experiment and the Buddhist concept of interconnectedness can prove that I am personally connected to Kevin Bacon! Isn't that cool?

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President's Message

Joran Stegner, Ekoji Co-President



As we get closer to winter and the many successes and challenges this year move to the forefront of our minds, I'd like to take a minute to thank all of my fellow board members, Reverend Hayashi and the Sangha. It's been a wonderful year full of many things for which to be grateful. I'm blessed to serve as Ekoji's Co-president of the Board and as I complete my term, I step back to focus on a new path with a little one on the way. I wish to pass both gratitude and words of encouragement to the new upcoming board in 2018 and all they can and will accomplish.

I'm very excited about the momentum we've gathered this year, working to improve the Temple and also to plan for the future going forward. With the new board coming right around the corner, I look forward to passing on the legacy of leadership and with that, the hope for a promising and enlightened journey.

From exciting changes posed by the Religious Committee to new service guides and service books on the horizon, Ekoji is thriving under the leadership of Reverend Hayashi. This year was very successful under his guidance and vision for where Ekoji can be as we all travel through life together.

We've had our share of challenges this year too, mostly from repair issues arising from our aging Temple, grounds, and property. The replacement of the Tsuji Center floor and the garden facing windows in the Hondo have gone a long way to maintaining the legacy that is our wonderful Temple. And we can't forget the garden! The garden committee and all of their great work has resulted in our garden being more beautiful than ever! We must all work together to keep our home Temple in good repair so we may enjoy it with gratitude for the years and decades to come.

It is my hope that many of you made it to our Annual Meeting and heard about all the great things we've done and plan to do in the coming year. Although my term on the board will soon be complete, I have all intention of giving my best to support and keep the Ekoji vision alive as an active member.

May we all have a beautiful remainder of the year and strive to get involved where we can to keep Ekoji growing and strong.

In Gassho,

Joran

Thanks to the Sangha for Supporting Nen Daiko's Performance of a Lifetime

Carla Brown, Nen Daiko

In August, Nen Daiko performed at the North American Taiko Conference in San Diego, California. This conference brings together taiko performers from around the world. We chose to perform the pieces that we thought best represented our group, including our interpretation of "Buddhist taiko." We opened our performance with the song, *Satori no Michi* ("The Road to Enlightenment"), which starts with the opening verse of the Jodo Shinshu Buddhist chant *Shoshinge*. Several of our friends in the audience told us afterward how much they enjoyed

how we represented taiko's Buddhist connections.

Nen Daiko whole-heartedly thanks the Ekoji Sangha for your support over the past year as we prepared! You encouraged us and cared for our children at our frequent and extra-long practices. You gave us snacks and meals which we devoured gratefully. You donated to our fundraising campaign to offset travel expenses. Some current and past Sangha members came to San Diego to see us perform.

For those who donated, your names are sewn on a quilt now displayed in the Dharma School classroom. We took the quilt to California as a way of bringing your positive energy with us. You can read the full story and see photos at <http://nendaiko.weebly.com/blog/taiko-jam-2017-performance-of-a-lifetime>.

In other news, Nen Daiko kicked off a new year with four apprentices. We also started a new youth taiko program for teenagers that meets for one hour before our Sunday practice.

We are experimenting with the best way to maintain the new floor in the Sangha hall, which we wipe down before and after practices. What a beautiful place for learning and playing!

Nen Daiko member Victoria Swisher departs this month for a new chapter in her career in Jordan. She has been a long-time Nen Daiko member, and she promises she will be back in a few years. We welcomed back Lya and Lyna Tomomatsu who played with Nen Daiko from 2004-2008.

Sangha members are encouraged to attend our monthly open houses. Dates are on our website at <http://nendaiko.weebly.com/performances.html>. Follow Nen Daiko on Facebook and Instagram for updates.



Sangha Profiles – Making Sangha Connections

Vickey Churchman, Membership Committee

We come to Ekoji on Sundays and together learn the Dharma. We share conversation over “snackies” and yet there is always more we can learn about each other. Sangha Profiles asks members a series of questions that will shed some new light on members we already know and love.

This month: **Guy Lukes**



He found Ekoji by coming for Tai Chi classes which he continues to practice. Originally born in California, Guy has also lived in the Midwest and Charlottesville, VA. He’s a graduate of Virginia Tech (Go Hokies!) and works in software development.

He has three grown children who are fortunately local so he get to see them all the time. Guy’s hobbies and interests are too long and varied to cover here but they include gardening (you can find him amongst the wisteria in Ekoji’s garden often), growing vegetables and fruit, reading, music, and loves to cook, etc.

He is quite the Renaissance man. When asked what he likes most about Ekoji, he said “the community and diversity of our Sangha”.

When asked what is one thing that no one from Ekoji would know about you, he replied: “I hitchhiked across the country starting in Virginia, headed to Louisiana, and ended in California sleeping in a tent that I carried. I just did it to find money, adventure and the meaning of life and found adventure.”

Dharma School Dana for the Stillbrave Foundation

Maya Horio, Ekoji Dharma School Co-Superintendent

Ekoji’s Children’s Dharma School helped support the Stillbrave Foundation in October by filling bags with Halloween treats and creating Halloween party decorations. Stillbrave is an organization that supports families of kids facing cancer. It was founded by sangha member Tom Mitchell after his daughter, Shayla, passed away from cancer in 2009. Stillbrave organization members do countless activities to help bring joy and relief to cancer-stricken kids and their families, including hosting parties at local cancer clinics.

The Dharma School for the past few years has worked with Stillbrave to contribute Halloween goodies so Stillbrave can host a Halloween party. Kids at the cancer clinic might be too ill to go trick-or-treating, so Stillbrave brings the treats to them, allowing them to still enjoy the best part of the holiday. Before we put the treat bags together, we reviewed the Buddhist teaching of dana--unconditional, nonjudgmental, selfless giving.

Tom and the members of Stillbrave practice true dana every single day, and the Dharma School was grateful for the opportunity to learn from their example and help contribute in our own small way.

CROSSING OVER TO THE BUDDHIST PATH

Kennon Nakamura, Religious Committee Chair

On October 8, about 23 Ekoji Sangha members who had left religious tradition and belief systems they had grown up with, discussed their journey to the Buddhist path. In this “Crossing Over” Seminar, some were still “kicking the tires,” others thought they might stay and see if there was a resonance with Shin Buddhist thought, and others have decided that this was their path and they felt at home.

When Ekoji started more than three decades ago, a “Crossing Over” seminar would not have been considered as needed because if you were to look at Ekoji’s Sangha at the time, you would have seen that almost everyone was Japanese American and had been born to Buddhism as opposed to Crossing Over from another tradition. If you look at today’s Ekoji Sangha, there would be a great diversity in the Sangha and very few Japanese Americans. Most of today’s Sangha have already or are possibly Crossing Over. Thus, it was felt that it was important to try and assist those in the process.

Session I discussed “Who We Are” from many different perspectives. We looked this temple and Sangha in terms of (1) Hongwanji, the BCA and its history and why in that history, we are and do things as we do -- such as sitting in chairs and not on the floor, and singing gathas, and having various types of organizations such as the Young Buddhist Association. We also looked at the (2) Development of Ekoji, and some of the causes and conditions that brought Ekoji into being, and some of the thought of its founding minister, Rev. Kenryu Tsuji. A third part of the First Session, was an explanation by Rev. Hayashi about what those who are Crossing Over are coming toward – Shin Buddhism. In broad strokes, because of the lack of time, Rev. Hayashi spoke about the altar and traditions, and about the basic teachings of Shin Buddhism.

Session II, “Why Are We Doing This” was primarily a discussion among the participants of the seminar. New York Buddhist Church Minister’s Assistant, Gary Jaskula, asked how many of those present thought of themselves as Buddhists. About 1/3 of the group raised their hands. He then asked who thought they were still searching and looking at Buddhism, and perhaps the rest raised their hands. Gary talked about his own experience starting from his life as a Benedictine Seminarian through leaving the church, his move into atheism, and finally crossing over to Shin Buddhism with a lot of diversions along the way. Others in the group talked about their own journeys, the support of family and friends or the hostility they met as they left their own tradition and began a journey toward something else.

REACTION -- CROSSING OVER FROM A “BORN IN” PERSPECTIVE

When you are “Born In” a religious tradition with your grandparents, parents and their friends as examples, you develop a certain view of reality that is shaped by those Buddhist causes and conditions in which you find comfort, peace, and grounding.

Thus when you listen and participate in a “Crossing Over” discussion, and listen to people’s stories, you develop a sense, and only a sense, because you have nothing to compare it to, of what it must be like, the mental and emotional difficulties, to leave that which shaped your view of reality in your growing up years.

What seemed to be common in many of the stories dealt with, for one reason or another, a loss of faith in the existence of a benevolent, all powerful, though judging God. Another commonality was the rigidity of their old church so that one could not question nor challenge, or just think about things. Some went to nihilistic atheism,

which some described as dark and empty, and not fulfilling. It is hard to imagine what it is like to seek a new anchor for one's sense of reality.

Another aspect of that journey from leaving their former belief system, was for some the support they received from family and friends, and for others, the condemnation and anger they confronted. One person talked about her mother crying when she learned her daughter was considering Buddhism, and said she was facing eternal damnation, and that she would pray for her. But the young woman talked about being strong in her new faith and eventually having her mother continue to love her and accept her as she is now. Another young man talked about his father shouting at him, disowning him and never asking if he was happy.

We had members participating from Baptist, Mormon, Islamic, Catholic, Theravada Buddhist, others and also self-described "Nothing" backgrounds talking about the journey. As you listen to their stories and talk about what there is at Ekoji, you get a sense of how difficult this journey can be. There were very real emotions. A friend commented afterward that "People were not crying like that because of small differences in decorations or sitting arrangements. These are deeply held issues."

When you think of what started each of these members of our Sangha down this road, I can only wonder if what they felt was somewhat similar to the feelings of our Japanese grand- and great-grandparents. Many had just come to America to work, and found their sense of reality askew. They found themselves living in this strange land, with a strange culture and language, and facing discrimination and contempt. In 1888, they petitioned our Shin Buddhist mother temple in Kyoto to send minister's to the United States to share the Buddha-Dharma and meet a spiritual need that existed in them. In 1890, two Buddhist priests landed in San Francisco as a result of that plea, and started the Jodo Shinshu path in the United States. I suspect they would be surprised to see how wide that path has become, and the diversity on display at our 8 October seminar. People from many religious backgrounds – all meant to be here.

Volunteer at Ekoji!

- Outreach – To develop strategies for increased visibility in the community.
- Hospitality – To plan and execute the social needs of the Sangha including the purchasing of all provisions.
- Religious – To work with the minister regarding Ekoji's religious aspects, programs, dialogue, and talks.
- Membership – To encourage Temple membership and manage all tasks related to new and renewing members while working with related committees.
- Facilities – To update and make recommendations to the Board of Ekoji, regarding the five-year master plan.
- Finance – To support the Treasurer in managing and maintaining the financial matters at Ekoji.
- Communication – To develop and maintain communications and publicity about Ekoji and its programs, seminars, and special events.

If you are interested in joining any of these committees, please contact ekoji.info@gmail.com.

Potbelly Restaurant Fundraiser Night

When: Thu, Nov 16 5:00-8:00pm

Where: Potbelly Sandwich Shop, [3955 Chain Bridge Rd, Ste 107, Fairfax, VA](#)

Why: Because Ekoji receives 25% of all profits made between 5-8pm!

Come help us raise money and enjoy some sangha-building at the same time!

One Extra Click Can Raise Money for Ekoji Through Amazon.com

As we enter the holiday season and people start planning for Black Friday and holiday deals, please also remember to support Ekoji by routing through [ekoji.org](#) for all of your Amazon purchases. If every sangha member makes that simple extra click before submitting their Amazon purchases, Ekoji could potentially net more than \$100--equal to some of our smaller fundraisers that require a lot more manpower and time. The link is conveniently located on our main homepage, so start using it today!

Ekoji thanks the following individuals for their selfless dana in the month of October:

Ajit and Samanthie Silva
Andrew Barden
Anna Tecson
Annemarie Russell
Anthony and Kristy Capizzi
Archer Harmon
Arlene and Wayne Minami
Brian and Jennifer Smith
Carmen Bennett
Christopher Macey
Clifford Long
Edward Hill
Edward Sams
Ella and William Maneely
Eric and Erika Hildre
Erick Ishii
Frank Swithers
Geoffrey Lee
Heidi Forrest

James McMahan
Jane Blechman
Joran and Ann Stegner
Justin and Molly Kuramoto
Kazunori Takahashi
Ken and Nori Nakamura
Leslie Poon
Mahkameh Doroud
Mark LaWall
Maya and Brant Horio
Milton and Emiko Wiscott
Norm and Gail Kondo
Pilar Uelmen
Rachael Lang Harris
Rachel Green
Robert A. Rowe and Archer W.
Harmon
Rosemarie Fitzpatrick
Sandra Lukic-Dapoingy

Sandra Lukic-Dapoingy (Ana, Stella)
Sandy and Teresa Kita
Saundra Johnson
Stuart Ott
Tasha and Thomas Brickhouse
Tida and Art Rask
Yuko and Toshiaki Keicho

IN MEMORY

Arlene and Wayne Minami
- *For Mary Okamoto*
Norm and Gail Kondo
- *For Mary Okamoto*
Estelle Marlor
- *For Mary Okamoto*
Faye Goeken & Norma Johnson
- *For Mary Okamoto*

Ekoji Buddhist Temple

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www.ekoji.org

JOIN US FOR SERVICE

Adult Service: Sundays at 11 AM

Meditation: Thursdays at 8 PM

Children's Dharma School: Sundays (10 AM Service; 11 AM Class)

Thank you to our contributors of the October Kalavinka: Carla Brown, Vickey Churchman, Rev. Naraki Hayashi, Maya Horio, Kendall Kosai, Ken Nakamura, Joran Stegner,

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT OF EKOJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE!

Ekoji Buddhist Temple
6500 Lake Haven Lane
Fairfax Station, VA 22039

Ekhoji Buddhist Temple

November 2017

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|---|---------------------------------|--|--|---|---|--|
| | | | 1 7:30 pm Nen Daiko Practice | 2 8:00 pm Guided Meditation | 3 | 4 9:00 am Ekhoji Beautification Day - Work Party |
| 5 9:00 am All Sangha Temple Clean-Up 10:00 am Dharma School Family Service 11:00 am Dharma School Classes 11:00 am Weekly Adult Service 12:30 pm ANNUAL ALL SANGHA MEETING | 6 6:45 pm Tai Chi | 7 7:50 pm New Event | 8 7:30 pm Nen Daiko Practice | 9 8:00 pm Guided Meditation | 10 10:00 am Memorial Service | 11 2:00 pm 49th day service |
| 12 11:00 am Dharma School Classes 11:00 am Weekly Adult Service 1:00 pm Nen Daiko Youth Program 2:00 pm Nen Daiko Practice 2:00 pm Nen Daiko Temple Cleaning | 13 6:45 pm Tai Chi | 14 7:00 pm Great Journey of Buddhist Art class | 15 7:30 pm Nen Daiko Practice | 16 10:00 am Casaji Service 8:00 pm Guided Meditation | 17 | 18 |
| 19 10:00 am Dharma School Classes 11:00 am Joint Pet Memorial Service 12:30 pm Buddhism Book Discussion and Study Group 1:00 pm Nen Daiko Youth Program 2:00 pm NEN DAIKO OPEN HOUSE 2:00 pm Nen Daiko Practice | 20 6:45 pm Tai Chi | 21 7:00 pm Great Journey of Buddhist Art class | 22 | 23 8:00 pm Guided Meditation | 24 | 25 11:00 am Hatsunairi Service |
| 26 10:00 am NO DHARMA SCHOOL ACTIVITIES 11:00 am Weekly Adult Service | 27 6:45 pm Tai Chi | 28 | 29 7:30 pm Nen Daiko Practice | 30 8:00 pm Guided Meditation | | |