



Fellow Travelers

The monthly newsletter of the Longmont Buddhist Temple

2020 Apr

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Longmont Buddhist Temple Northwest corner – Pike Road and Main Street
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Message from Sensei John Minister's Assistant

As we move into April and spring awakens the world around us, we should be going to our children's and grandchildren's games; planning for prom and graduations; all the normal things that occur in the regular wheel of life. This includes preparing for Hanamatsuri – the celebration of the birth of the Buddha. However, this is a different year. We are dealing with COVID-19. We are sheltering in place. We are maintaining social distancing. The Temple is closed and will not be open for Hanamatsuri.

Gail and Karen will not be carrying on their mother's



tradition of decorating the Hanamido. I will miss seeing each and every one of you; but if nothing else it is incumbent on us to remember the teaching that we deal with what is not what we wish to be.

We are not doing normal things now. Rather we are dealing with is a global pandemic. That makes this a difficult and scary time. BUT that does not mean we have to live in fear. Nor do we need to be angry or greedy.

It is good to be aware of the Three Poisons - GREED – ANGER – IGNORANCE. It is good to remember this all the time, but especially in hard times. In hard times we need to turn into difficulties with love and loving-kindness to all rather than with fear or anger. We can practice being aware of the space between stimulus and response. Rather than reacting out of frustration or anger, we can

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pause and respond from love. We can respond with understanding of the other persons situation.

This disease will run its course. Whatever the new normal is will become normal. Life will continue. We will love and hurt. There will be good times and times that are not so good. Suffering will continue. And much of it will be caused by ourselves. This is the circle of life.

At this time each of us needs to do our best each day to do what is right in the moment. Stay safe; take care of those in need as you can; be a beacon of light to those who are fearful or angry. Remember the METTA. "May all beings be happy. May they be free from illness and want..." Keep yourselves and your loved ones safe.

How have we been dealing with the shutdown of normal life? Nancy and I have been watching some old movies, reading, walking, doing Silver Sneakers classes over Face Book and starting to work in the yard. We have, through the gift of technology, talked with most of our grandkids and seen their faces over various apps. I have been

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teaching one grandson how to play cribbage over Zoom. Three of our granddaughters came over and we talked and played in the front yard – without touching – and maintaining a six-foot separation. Additionally, my customers have been having me setup applications and computers to allow their staff to work from home. All from the safety of our home.

Try to be creative on how you can stay engaged with your loved ones, friends, work associates and of course the Dharma. You Tube has a variety of good Buddhist and meditation resources available. The BCA has a You Tube channel with links to many services and talks; Denver Tri-State has one too with a growing list of choices; Orange County Buddhist Church has many web-based resources as do many other of the large temples. This sheltering in place is difficult, but we have had practice most of the last six months as I have recovered from my surgery.

Name Amida Butsu, John Sensei.

Hanamatsuri

Sunday April 5th should be the Hanamatsuri service at Longmont Buddhist Temple. However, with the current stay at home order, we will not be gathering to celebrate the birth of Siddhartha Gautama who became Shakyamuni Buddha. The birth of one who will become a Buddha is a rare occurrence. To our knowledge it has occurred only once in recorded history on this planet. It is fortunate that we live in a time when the Dharma is available to us.

While it is unfortunate that we will be unable to gather for Hanamatsuri, let us remember this special occasion. Each of us in our own way.

The Orange County Service Book says that this service more correctly is called Kanbustu-e (bathe-Buddha-gathering) rather than Hanamatsuri (flower festival.) This is in reference to the pouring of sweet tea over a statue of the baby Buddha that we do in place of burning incense at this service.

We pour the sweet tea in memory of the story that when Siddhartha was born a gentle rain perfumed by flower petals fell over Lumbini Garden as part of the indication that this was a very special child who had just been born. The statue of the baby Buddha is sheltered in the hanamido (flower-pavilion) which is decorated with flowers.

In the Shoshin Nembutsu Ge, Shinran Shonin wrote:

“The reason for the Tathagata’s appearance in the world
Is solely to preach the ocean-like Original Vow of Amida.

The ocean of multitudinous beings in the evil age with five defilements
Should believe in the Tathagata’s true words.”

The Buddha was born to reveal the teaching of the Dharma to the world. Specifically, Shinran is telling us that the reason that Shakyamuni Buddha appeared in this world was to teach the Primal Vow:

“If, when I attain Buddhahood, sentient beings in the lands of the ten quarters who sincerely and joyfully entrust themselves to me, desire to be born in my land, and call my Name, even ten times, should not be born there, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment. Excluded, however, are those who commit the five gravest offenses and abuse the right Dharma.”

The Primal Vow is the key teaching of Shin Buddhism. If I sincerely and joyfully entrust myself to the infinite light and life of the Tathagata, my birth in the pure land is assured. Once I take refuge in Amida, my job in this life is to do the best I can to treat all beings with loving-kindness. Such a simple teaching. Do the next right thing that is before me.

Namo Amida Butsu

Message from the President By Sean Lehman, Temple Board President

It is safe to say that our world and way of life has drastically changed in the last several weeks. While impermanence is a key aspect of Jodo Shinshu teachings, that doesn’t necessarily make it easier to cope over the coming weeks and perhaps months. However, accepting the notion of impermanence can go a long way toward also accepting this new reality in which we find ourselves.

There is no doubt however, that these are the the times when having a solid spiritual footing is definitely very helpful. So when you find yourself having difficulty coming to grips with the fear and anxiety that is surrounding us, reach out to a member of the Sangha, or Sensei, or me – for some support or reassurance. We are a community of

empathetic, caring people eager to proper each other up spiritually when needed. It may not ever be needed more than it is right now.

In the meantime, here are some questions I saw recently that you can ask yourself during a time of social distancing and quarantine:

1. What am I grateful for today?
2. Who have I check in with, or connected with today?
3. What expectations of "normal" am I letting go of today to accept this impermanence?
4. How can I find a way to get outside today?
5. How am I exercising or moving my body today?
6. How am I exercising or engaging my mind today?
7. What beauty am I either creating, cultivating, or inviting in today?

It's not a cliché when you hear some variation of the saying "we are far stronger collectively than we are individually." There is much scientific, emotional and anthropological evidence that suggests we thrive as communities. Today's global situation has made that challenging, but not impossible. When we continue to find ways to bond as a Sangha and a community there is no doubt we will get through these trying times more effectively and more lovingly.

Thank you all for your community and for supporting one another and the Sangha, particularly during this challenging time.

In Gassho,
Sean

SOUNDHEALS Blog

By Christina Hildebrandt, Temple Board Secretary

This is a link to Christina's SOUNDHEALS blog for holistic health support for your soul.

<https://soundhealshh.wordpress.com/2020/03/>

Wheel of Dharma

January 2020

New Year's Greeting

By Gomonsu Kojun Ohtani



Happy New Year, everyone! At the beginning of this New Year, I would like to extend my best regards to you all.

Last year again, following the year before, Japan, as well as many other countries in the world, was struck with multiple natural disasters. I would like to convey my deepest condolences to those who lost their lives through those disasters and express my sympathy to everyone affected. In addition, we must never forget that armed conflicts and terror attacks as well as severe starvation is making it difficult to live, and lives are being lost every day.

Last September I had an opportunity to make an official visit to the temples of the Buddhist Churches of America as Monshu for the first time. This allowed me to complete the first round of visitations to all of the overseas districts which include Canada, Hawaii, South America, and the US mainland.

Although every temple and district has its own history and background, many of the overseas Jodo Shinshu temples were established and have been cherished by the Japanese immigrants and their descendants. Reflecting on how sincerely our predecessors entrusted themselves to the Buddha Dharma and how importantly they thought of their temples while facing many difficulties such as World War II, I cannot help but feel grateful and even awe for their tremendous efforts as well as many other wondrous circumstances that have allowed the Jodo Shinshu teaching to be handed down to us today.

However, a considerable amount of time has passed since the Japanese emigrated overseas, and the lifestyle of their descendants, as well as the world situation have changed greatly. In accordance with these changes, quite a few people who are not of ethnically Japanese origin have also come to appreciate the teaching clarified by Shinran Shonin, and attend our overseas temples.

What caused this is nothing but the universality of the Jodo Shinshu teaching that transcends time and space. In other words, Amida Buddha's compassion equally reaches and nondiscriminatively embraces everyone in the midst

In this year, let us continue to listen to the Dharma, considering it is directed to each one of us, and keep moving forward to share it with many other people as possible.

You Must Unlearn What You Have Learned
By Rev. Kory Quon, Venice Hongwanji Buddhist Temple



Happy New Year! Happy 2020! Best wishes for this New Year. As this is another turning point in our lives, let us reflect and appreciate this Nembutsu path and keep with the foundations that make it right for each and every one of us.

Have you ever shared something special with someone? How did they receive your gift? Recently, I was able to share a moment with my 7-year-old son.

I thought it was time to show him a large part of my childhood. We sat together to watch “Star Wars” for the first time. Do you remember the hold it had over us over 40 years ago? Do you remember the visions of galaxies far away and the battle of light and dark that raged not only around but also within us?

If you were not a fan, fanatic or zealot, I am sure you know someone that is or has been. As we watched the original “Star Wars: A New Hope,” a review from my son opened my mind.

“This is weird. Why would they do that?” he kept on saying. By the time we reached the halfway point of the movie, he was done and the electronics came out. I was very surprised.

We continued on to the next film and he kept his stance. This is where the title of this piece comes from. It is quoted from a character who is considered a great teacher that has given guidance and has been a great influence for many people of my generation.

Do you know where the words, “You Must Unlearn What You Have Learned” comes from? The words belong to the Jedi Master Yoda.

As I heard Yoda’s words, I thought of these words by Shinran.

For evil sentient beings of wrong views and arrogance, The Nembutsu that embodies Amida’s Primal Vow Is hard to accept in shinjin; This most difficult of difficulties, nothing surpasses.

of all sorts of pain and agony.

Let me explain why. “You Must Unlearn What You Have Learned,” Yoda says this to the main character, Luke Skywalker, while training him. Luke is already too old and set in his ways to be trained. On a subconscious level, he constantly fights the principles of the Force and Yoda’s teachings with doubt.

How often must we remind ourselves of this? It feels like each year we mentally want to start anew, but it sometimes also pushes us into worldly habits like wanting to do good to be happy rather than doing good because of the great and wonderful gifts you already have.

For some, it is even every day that we go back to wanting material items, control things that are out of our control, or have power over the things that give us none. For example, we want to share something like a film and expect it to be loved or appreciated equally.

To be a follower of Amida, we constantly need to be mindful of our egocentric heart. With this realization, we can release the things in our lives that stop us from really enjoying it. “You Must Unlearn What You Have Learned.”

Then you begin to understand the most difficult of difficulties is relying on Amida’s path of Nembutsu. Then say again, “You Must Unlearn What You Have Learned” followed by “Namo Amida Butsu, I reflect, I return to, I contemplate, I think upon, I even take refuge in the Buddha of Infinite Light and Immeasurable Life.”

We are born into this world of material possessions and human perspectives, and in this life that we are all living we can only control our own minds. Yoda’s words are not religious, but they help open the doorway to change — “You Must Unlearn What You Have Learned.”

It then takes time, but through the sharing of life’s experiences, the power of the Primal Vow, and the spontaneous utterance of Namo Amida Butsu you will never be the same.

I wish you a warm and Happy New Year! May this year 2020 continue to bring you peace through Amida’s shining light.

When I Think About the Future of Buddhism



By Tara Umemoto, Berkeley Buddhist Temple

From minister to lawyer, social worker to construction worker, artist to accountant, age zero to 104 — we are each here

upbringing, our culture, and our experiences.

Anyone can be Buddhist, no matter their race or ethnicity or gender or sexuality or socioeconomic class or ability or language. But because of these differences, we also have different perspectives that impact the way we interact with everything around us, including Buddhism.

When I think about the future of Buddhism, I see inclusivity.

With this diversity, we need to be aware that we don't really know other people's experiences, values, and perspectives. You are talking with a new person after service and their eyes keep flickering to their phone sitting on the table.

Are they fearful of being in a new place? Anxious? Shy? What brought them to the temple? Did something happen to them before coming to the temple? Are they waiting to hear back from a loved one who is in another country?

When someone does something we disagree with, we need to remember that they have experiences we may not know about that affect their perspective and actions. We also need to remember that we are all human beings and Amida Buddha accepts us as we are. By having this understanding, we can be more inclusive. When I think about the future of Buddhism, I see change.

Everything is constantly changing. This is a core Buddhist teaching. Buddhism itself has a history of change. It has adapted over time as it moves from one country to the next, one city to the next, one home to the next, one teacher to the next. With each change, each adaptation, it is not quite the same as it was.

Today, our environment is changing. Our political climate is changing. There is increasing diversity, and at the same time fear and ignorance of diversity. There is more and more technology, and with that comes both opportunities for us to connect and also new challenges: distraction, isolation, cyberbullying.

Today, youth face different types of stressors, pains, and suffering than those of past generations. Not better or worse, just different.

And, like everything else, the Buddhist community is constantly changing. Buddhism needs to adapt to meet the new needs of its ever changing members. By listening to the sangha and coming generations, we can change to meet their needs.

When I think about the future of Buddhism, I see kindness.

I was yelled at by multiple people at work. Despite knowing it was not my fault and that I had done all I could

because of infinite causes and conditions. We are who we are because of our interactions with other people, our

do, I kept thinking, "I have failed, I have messed up, I have made a mistake."

After work that evening, I walked onto the temple grounds, where a fellow member caught my eye. A huge smile stretched across her face and she lifted her hand to wave hello, saying, "Hi, Tara! Good to see you!"

In an instant, I could feel the anger and frustration and stress disappear, and instead I was filled with warmth and kindness and courage.

When I think about the future of Buddhism, I see community.

Whether it is deepening my understanding of the Dharma, giving me a job at the bazaar fundraiser, inviting me on the camping trip, offering me a ride home, or simply listening, the temple has made me feel part of a community.

When the roof leaked, many members came out to catch the water, move the carpets, and work together to ensure the service could still happen. When a temple member fell ill, members came together to donate money, write cards, and reach out to make sure they felt supported. The community has been a constant support through the changes and struggles members have faced. It will continue to be there for others facing life's challenges.

I have had a positive experience of Sangha, and not everyone has this. I met a young professional who wanted to join the community. She joined a committee but could not make the meetings because they were scheduled during work hours. This youth didn't feel included. At a youth panel at a Buddhist conference, the majority of the time was taken up by a non-youth telling their story. These youth didn't feel heard.

This shows we have room to grow. In Buddhism, we learn that everyone has the potential to change and be better. We must be intentional about including each person who comes through our doors. We must be prepared to adapt and meet the needs of the new generation. I hope that we all can make that effort every day to continue to learn and change and do better.

When I think about the future of Buddhism, I see inclusivity. I see change. I see kindness. I see community. I see Namō Amida Butsu.

**Wheel of Dharma
February 2020**

***We Can Think, Say, Act with Kindness in Our Lives
By Rev. Ron Miyamura, Midwest Buddhist Temple***



Shin Buddhism (Jodo Shinshu Buddhism) is often difficult to explain because we do not have any “physical practice” like sitting meditation or esoteric rituals. The beauty and profound depth of Shin spirituality is found in being ordinary human beings.

Historically, Shin Buddhism was discovered by Shinran. It was Siddhartha who discovered “Enlightenment”; he did not create it, rather he found or discovered what was always there. In a like manner, Shinran discovered “Shinjin” (“Awakening”) which was always there. The sense of discovery or awakening has to be a personal experience. It is teachers or ministers who can point the way to start, but in the final analysis, it has to be discovered by the experiences of each person.

Shinran discovered that one did not have to be rich or smart or male or female or whatever. Whoever we are, we all have hindrances and limitations. Rather than trying to get rid of these hindrances and limitations, we use them to go beyond them to awaken to the gift of wisdom and compassion that is Amida Buddha.

It sounds so simple and it has taken me a long time to realize that it is really impossible to teach wisdom or compassion or any of those concepts that we use. We can’t even define these words because, for example, compassion is something we have or we don’t have. We cannot learn compassion, we cannot purchase compassion, we can only appreciate it when we see it. We can only point out the indications or the results of compassion.

We know that compassion is the heart of the Bodhisattva who wishes to share the Dharma and to lead others to the Dharma. As human beings, we desire to be a Bodhisattva, but we fail because we are selfish human beings.

What are we to do? Even with our human hindrances and limitations, we can live in kindness, that is, to think, say and act with kindness. We have to be kind to

ourselves and take care of our mind and body. We have to be kind to our family members, relatives, friends and community. We are just ordinary people, living ordinary lives. We can go beyond our selfish ego-self.

Perhaps kindness is not our “practice,” but it can be how we live and share our lives. We can practice kindness in simple ways: to smile at a stranger; to say a kind word to a friend; to give a hug to your family members; and any number of small and significant ways. This is the time to drop old grudges, to drop unkind words, and to stop hurtful actions.

To quote a retired minister, who shared a wonderful and profound closing: “Namo Amida Butsu, with gratitude and kindness beyond words.”

The Honor of Serving as the Chaplain of California State Assembly

By Rev. Patti Oshita, Chaplain of California State Assembly



In 2016, after 33 years, Rev. Bob Oshita and I retired from the Sacramento Betsuin. Just months before retiring, we were invited by the Speaker of

the California State Assembly, Anthony Rendon, to become the chaplains for the state Assembly.

We were truly honored to be asked, for this is not a position one can apply for or request. Understanding the commitment, we humbly accepted the invitation.

Not only were we the first Buddhist ministers to serve the Assembly, but Speaker Rendon added that we would also become the first husband and wife to serve in this capacity.

In December 2016, we were sworn in as chaplains and officers of the state Assembly to serve a two year term.

As chaplains, we are required to open each floor session with a prayer. Since petitionary prayer is not a part of our tradition, we open the Assembly sharing “Reflections.”

We end every reflection reciting O-Nembutsu. We have come to feel that when we use technical Buddhist words or phrases, they must be defined immediately. Otherwise, we are just mumbling sounds that have no meaning for those we are trying to reach. And so, after reciting “Namo Amida Butsu,” we add, “With Kindness and Gratitude beyond

Serving that first term was a challenging honor. As our two-year term was ending, Speaker Rendon invited us to continue to serve as the Assembly chaplains for another term.

Wanting to highlight women in the Legislature, I was asked to become the main chaplain and Rev. Bob Oshita would be my alternate. This second invitation felt like an affirmation that our Dharma reflections have been resonating meaningfully.

This year, as we begin our fourth year as the chaplains for the California State Assembly, we continue to be honored to represent our Dharma tradition beyond the walls of our temples.

I'd like to close with the reflection I shared to open the first Assembly floor session on Jan. 6, 2020.

Please join me in a moment of Reflection:

From the time I was very young, many of my family and friends would begin the New Year making a personal New Year's Resolution. Most I cannot even remember now. But for the past few years, my Resolution has remained the same. It is this.

Let me try to live each day of this New Year, with more Patience, Gratitude and Kindness. Let me not forget that from the moment we are born, there is no guarantee of even one more day of life. Each day is a gift that I must try to live as best I can.

In the year ahead, let us all try to embrace each new day with open minds and warm hearts. Let us try to wake up each day, happy to be alive; and sleep each night, grateful for the day.

Namo Amida Butsu — With Kindness and Gratitude beyond words ...

words." We feel this captures the essence of O-Nembutsu.

**Wheel of Dharma
March 2020**

The Funeral

By Rev. Joshin Dennis Fujimoto, Buddhist Temple of Alameda



A mother passes away quietly at the care facility. A couple of her children are able to be there for those last breaths of air. Labored and uneven ... halting to listen to. Finally, a quiet enters and stays ... an unnerving pause. Sadness mixes with relief

and guilt in swirling compound. "At least she's not in pain anymore." "Yeah, that's right. Guess we should make some phone calls."

News moves quickly to family, to the temple and to the mortuary, and to relatives and friends. Hurry up and wait ... hurry up and wait. Plans are sketched for the funeral. Time and place ... minister ... cremation ... urn ... "Let's get a nice one." Travel plans are set from all over as the ripples on the pond continue to extend. Stories and memories of times past and shared emerge in every person touched by the news.

Elders tell the stories of how the family connections go ... who's connected to who ... and memories of those we have lost along the way. Three generations or maybe four are all my mind can comprehend. After that, it's pretty much a blur.

The first ones to come here were the pioneers ... from whatever country or culture ... daring to come to America ... teenagers looking for a place and a fortune and a future ... building homes and families and temples along the way ... wars and camp ... losing everything and starting all over again ... all of these people and all of these stories ... are marked in cemeteries and stones along the way ... marking the paths of your family and mine ... the truth of permanence continues on ... countless as the drops of dew.

Funeral plans are set and service roles are assigned. Service items are gathered and prepared for ... picture and urn ... Onenju ... fruits and flowers for the altar ... words are planned and practiced.

The day of the funeral is here. Children walk in with their children who come carrying their children ... four generations dot the temple from the urn to the pews. Each

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In weakness, we look to the others ... in strength, we look after the others ... we take turns swinging from weakness and strength. Together, we move from the darkness of grief to the light of gratitude.

This is the process of life that the temple provides and the Nembutsu guides. The story of Indra's Net depicts a reality of many faceted jewels at each node of a net that stretches infinitely in every direction. Each jewel reflects the light of all the other jewels that surround it. Such is our reality and our place in it.

Namo Amida Butsu.

individual life carries an untold story and a potential story that is waiting its turn to blossom.

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Calendar

First Sunday of the month	Regular Service	
	Newcomers Welcome	9:30 am - 10:00 am
	Meditation Service	10:00 am - 10:30 am
	Service and Dharma Talk	10:30 am
	Toban (Coffee/Tea Hour) in Community Room	11:30 am - 12:30 pm
Second Sunday of the month	Mindfulness Class with Sensei John Hughes	10:00 am - 11:00 am
Third Sunday of month		
	Newcomers Welcome	9:30 am - 10:00 am
	Meditation Service	10:00 am - 10:30 am
	Service and Dharma Talk	10:30 am
	Toban (Coffee/Tea Hour) in Community Room	11:30 am – 12:30 pm
Fourth Sunday of the month	Mindfulness Class with Sensei John Hughes	10:00 am
Fifth Sunday of the month	No Services	
	Upcoming Events	
May	Memorial Day Service	TBD
June 7	Clean up Sunday	TBD
August 2	Obon	TBD
October 30-November 1	Mountain States Conference	TBD

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