



Fellow Travelers

The monthly newsletter of the Longmont Buddhist Temple

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Temple Updates

by Jackie Tono, Temple Board President

Happy spring, I hope!! Mother Nature is sure working overtime this winter and spring. All the latest snow & rain is great for our farmers, for the eastern plains & for our water levels. All this wet weather will help keep moisture in the mountains to help lower the fire danger. We should be thankful for all the small gifts that nature gives to us. Hopefully everyone survived the huge wind storm in April without suffering too much damage to their property.

On the news last night they were honoring the 12 children and one teacher at Columbine High School who lost their lives 19 years ago. As a Buddhist we are taught about impermanence & change. Nineteen years has passed and yes, there has been change, the world has moved on but yet things are still the same and sometimes have gotten worse. Columbine was one of the earlier school shootings and the world was stunned and horrified that anyone, let alone fellow students, could do such a terrible deed to their classmates. Today it's a common occurrence with each mass shooting trying to top the last mass shooting. What is happening to our basic principles of life of respect for each other? I worry for our younger generations because of how violent this world is becoming.

I'd like to thank our Sangha members for stepping up and hosting the few Toban dates that we had open. I am always so appreciative when I ask for help with something and everyone eagerly steps up.

Some upcoming events in May and June:

May 27th, Sunday, Assistant Minister John Hughes will conduct a short memorial service at the Temple at 10:30 then proceed to Mountain View Cemetery to visit the gravesites of those who passed before us.

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June 3rd, Sunday, will be another short service so we can have our annual Temple clean up. Both inside and outside so bring your cleaning supplies, rakes, pruning shears, gloves, vacuum, etc.

June 16th & 17th, Saturday & Sunday, we will have a visiting minister. Rev. Ron Miyamura from Chicago's Midwest Buddhist Temple will come to do a one day seminar and conduct the Sunday family service.

Everyone please take a moment out of your work day and smile and say hi to a stranger. Maybe if we all do one small act of kindness we can change someone's life for the better.

In Gassho,
Jackie

Shinran Shonin Day (Gotan E)

by Mike Shibata, Temple Member

Shinran Shonin was born near Kyoto on May 21, 1173. The loss of both parents at an early age moved him to enter the Buddhist priesthood. He studied for 20 years on Mt. Hiei, the site of 3000 monasteries

where he endured the most difficult of meditations and practices.

At the age of 29, he abandoned the method of finding enlightenment by his self power (jiriki) and placed his faith in Amida's power (tariki) to realize Buddhahood.

Even though Shinran Shonin probably did not think about establishing the Jodo Shin Sect, it is now the largest and most flourishing sect in contemporary Japan. Shinran, like his teacher Honen Shonin, denied the formal temple-priest system of his time. After Shinran descended Mt. Hiei, he never lived in a temple, but in huts or small hermitages. Shinran stressed "household religion as more important than temple religion."

Shinran's teaching was not meant primarily for those who left their homes to enter the priesthood and attempt to follow the difficult path of discipline in search for Enlightenment. Without distinguishing between the priesthood and the laity, he pointed out that everyone without distinction of rank or class would be saved by reciting the Nembutsu with Faith in Amida Buddha. In his teaching, there was no distinction or discrimination between men and women, young and old, good and evil. Everyone was equal before the Buddha, and all could be equally saved by Amida's Compassion. This was Shinran Shonin's Faith in the Original Vow of Amida Buddha.

In celebrating the birthday of Shinran Shonin, let us quietly recall his life and visualize him quietly meditating on the depth of his karmic actions as well as visualizing Shinran Shonin happily embraced by the Infinite Compassion of Amida Buddha which also shines upon us. This vision should show us the kind of life - filled with gratitude - which we should follow in our daily lives.

As all of us are "ondobo" and "ondogyo" or fellow practitioners of the Nembutsu, we are able to share together equally the Nembutsu. To be able to share equally the gratitude of Shinran Shonin's birth on the occasion of Gotan E or Fujimatsuri is for us, indeed a blessing.

Wheel of Dharma April 2018

President's Message: Renewal **By Rick Stambul, BCA President**



My name is Rick Stambul and I have been serving as your Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) President since February when I was installed at the National Council Meeting in Sacramento, California.

This is only the second time in BCA's 120-year history that a Caucasian member has been called to serve. For me, this brings with it great responsibilities: to preserve and nourish our connections with Jodo Shinshu, to be mindful of the vision of our Bishop, Rev. Kodo Umezū, to honor all our BCA ministers, to celebrate and treasure our traditions and history, to protect the financial security of our BCA assets for ourselves and for future generations, to honor the memory of those who brought our Shin teachings to American shores at great personal sacrifice, and to be responsive and sensitive to the concerns of all our members and all human beings.

It is with humility that I assume the weight of such obligations to continue the sometimes-difficult path others have managed to walk so gracefully in the last century. I am grateful for this moment in my life's journey. I humbly ask each of you for both your support and your goodwill in the years ahead.

Our temples and churches face an existential crisis in this new century. For more than 60 years we have witnessed a continuing and seemingly irreversible decline in membership; aging temple sanghas; children not returning to rejoin their temples; a continuing decline in the number of Shin ministers available to serve the dharma and to teach us; the importance of recognizing the difficulty our ministers face every day in carrying our teachings forward while they and their families may suffer the economic realities of a path in the ministry. How can we best address these urgent issues?

When I first joined West Los Angeles Buddhist Temple in 1985 I was surrounded in Southern California by dedicated ministers and by *issei** and *nisei*** members who brought a vibrant and exhilarating religious spirit that infected all of us. I became a member of "The Bullet Train," also known

as “The Flying Dancers.” We danced at Obon Odori carnivals every summer at different BCA temples. We were a group of about 10 young Buddhists full of ourselves and our egos, dancing with abandon at double speed. We may not have known it then but in hindsight, I think we danced not only to honor the memory of our ancestors but also to experience the sheer joy of dancing in unison, in sync with each other as though we were one human being. It reminds me of chanting *Shoshinge* together with a large group because it sounds like one person chanting with the strength of a thousand.

In the past, our BCA temples were dynamic in their response to the spiritual and physical needs of its members. To paraphrase Rev. Dr. David Matsumoto of the Institute of Buddhist Studies, I wonder whether, in growing up, BCA and its temples have also grown a little old and a bit tired. I wonder whether we haven’t grown a little too inwardly-oriented. I also wonder whether we wouldn’t all benefit from being infected by a renewed religious spirit.

For many of us, the challenges our temples face, as well as the hatred we hear more and more in our country today, spawn fear and anxiety that intrudes into our daily lives. This fear can negatively affect our plans and create difficulties in our closest relationships. Perhaps it may be helpful, particularly at this time, to renew and energize our links with our Shin Buddhist teachings, and with our friends. We have so much to offer each other in searching together for peace of mind, for security, and most importantly, for the Dharma. It seems to me that we can find renewed purpose and strength in our lives as one united BCA Sangha far more successfully than we can as individual temples and churches. Let us make this the year to begin that renewal.

Let us also recognize that the future lies with a new generation of Shin Buddhists. It rests not with my generation but in the hearts and minds of our youngest members. Let the sound of the *kansho* ring out from this time and place to call all of us together filled with a renewed vigor, leaning outward with kindness and in the spirit of *Namo Amida Butsu*. Let this clarion call especially be heard by our youngest members. The innovative use of new technologies to spread the dharma is the future. I ask you to join in this noble quest. We need your excitement, your new ideas, your zest for life. *Now* is the time! Together, we can move a mountain...one stone at a time.

**issei: immigrants from Japan*

***nisei: children of immigrants from Japan*

Gratitude: The Opening Gate of Nembutsu
By Rev. Kenji Akahoshi, Buddhist Temple of San Diego



The popularity of Buddhism and Buddhist practices is evident in magazines, books, and popular culture. And yet, the attendance and membership at BCA temples are decreasing. Why haven’t our children and friends

been attracted to the recognized benefits of a Buddhist lifestyle? Perhaps we may need to provide a guided process that was not necessary in Japan, since the Nembutsu experience is unfamiliar in America.

My grandson reminds me that every skill we have was begun from a process of the basic fundamentals. Think about how we learned to read, write, cook, or play an instrument or sport. The awkward beginning steps were repeated until they became natural. We may have protested the tedious middle steps of detail and refinement. But with an aspiration to enjoy that skill, we reached a level that provided immense joy in our individual expression of that skill. We may not have reached the height of a Julia Childs or Stephan Curry, but the activity afforded great pleasure for us. And so it is with living a life of Nembutsu.

The *issei* and *nisei* shared the experience of the *Nembutsu* with the examples of their lives. This special transmission has been lost as the current American culture does not reflect these values. Therefore, provisional beginning steps may be helpful. Shinran has alerted us ordinary people that no amount of self-effort can achieve spiritual awakening. The experience of Nembutsu is received from the Other. Our human birth has been received from another. Our life is the result of the efforts of countless others. The causes and conditions of Light and Life can be considered as gifts of the Compassion of Amida. *Namo Amida Butsu* is a response to an awakening of these gifts and the joy of life.

For those who are new to the Shin Buddhist life, “thank you” can be the first step to this life of gratitude. To integrate this attitude into a daily habit, we recommend finding something new each day to say “thank you” for. A light switch, clean water, and stoplights are some of the many things we may take for granted. This simple act begins to reveal the many

aspects of life that support us. Acknowledging what we have balances our ego-centric desire for things that we don't have. This shift in our perspective is the cross-wise leap that Shinran suggests in his writings.

As the habit of gratitude becomes a daily occurrence, the next step is to interchange "thank you" with "*Na Man Da Bu.*" "Thank you" can be a means of receiving or hearing the Nembutsu. For those who do not have the benefit of a Shin Buddhist environment, "thank you" eliminates the mistaken belief that the Nembutsu is a form of prayer. In my 20 years of presenting discussions and workshops, newcomers to Buddhism report that "thank you" is a useful first step in relating the unfamiliar term "Namo Amida Butsu" to a personal experience.

The Shin pioneers had lives less fortunate in economic and social status. Yet their lives were rich in relationships and spiritual values. We may find that by expanding our world of appreciation, the joys of life increase. Like many other aspects of our lives, the initial conscious steps of gratitude can lead to our deepest experience of Namo Amida Butsu. "Thank you" becomes the opening gate of the Nembutsu journey.

Mindfulness, Schmindfulness!

Submitted by Christina Hildebrandt, Temple Board Member

Why be mindful? What does being mindful look like? It's slowing down to pay attention to what's going on right now, both in your body mind and in your surroundings.

"Mindfulness" is bandied about in popular culture all the time. Wanna be hip? Just say this magical word, put your hands together to resemble an attitude of prayer, close your eyes halfway like a buddha in meditation, and not only will you feel good but people will think you're pretty hot. "She's really got it together", they'll say. Joking aside, if you take the idea to heart you're bound to find some real benefits. With practice, you'll notice things about your bodymind, behavior and surroundings that you normally would have let go under the radar.

Ok, so let's just make a list of possible benefits to see if this mindfulness thing is all it's cracked up to be.

You'll notice, appreciate and take pleasure in the

taste of your tea, or coffee, or food in general. I once took part in a mindful eating exercise: I ate one raisin and one walnut, fully experiencing every aspect- sight, touch, taste, even sound! When lunchtime came, I found I was already full, just from being fully present with not even a mouthful of food! We notice and appreciate so much more when we take the time to experience the whole enchilada, pun intended. Who knows, maybe your tastebuds will get so mindful, you'll become a well-known wine connoisseur!

Speaking of eating and other daily occurrences, what about paying attention mindfully to the fundamentals of daily living? You might get a better appreciation for the work that goes into the food you eat, the furniture you sit on, etc. Who made that food; who made that chair? Slow down and taste deeply; look deeply! How many people have sat at this table at the coffee shop where you're working at your computer? Who made the coffee you're drinking? Think about it- how many people were involved in bringing that "cuppa" to you?

Your connection to your intuition- that small, still voice- will be sharper, and you'll notice if something doesn't feel right- or if it does. Your senses will be heightened, and your ability to focus will improve when you're under the influence of this natural brain drug called mindfulness.

You'll be a better listener, paying attention with laser-like focus to whoever is talking. And you'll become a better observer, noticing the things and people, smells and sounds around you. Perhaps this will lead to a new calling, as you are sought after as a shrewd detective. Look out, Sherlock Holmes!

Mindfulness makes it easier to be your own best friend. Do you remember what it's like to receive your best friend's ministrations when you were in distress? Maybe your mom died, you got divorced, you suddenly found you were an empty nester- and your friend came through for you, supporting you when nobody else could and you needed it most. Sometimes, you have to fill that role yourself, to provide for yourself what a best friend would. That can take the form of permission: to take yourself out for tea or to a movie, maybe to spend an hour in the garden, or ten minutes in meditation. Or perhaps it means some tough love in the form of a good talking to! Being mindful of your emotions, you can notice

taking out your feelings on the people around you. After all, you're stuck inside yourself, and that can be either a blessing or a curse...might as well make it a good thing!

Something that a mindful attitude can do for you is help you be less isolated from your fellow humans. When you're slowing down enough to notice and appreciate the little things in life, those protective barriers that you've put up your whole life may develop some cracks in them as you make small, daily indirect or direct connections with the people around you. Then, instead of living life unconsciously and waking up one morning to find decades have passed you by, you'll live each day with gusto, and be a conscious part of the true world-wide web!

Fundraiser

By Nancy Edmonds, Temple Member



AmazonSmile
An easy way to contribute to LBT

Do you purchase anything from Amazon?

If so, please sign up for Amazon Smile and choose "Longmont Buddhist Temple". LBT is now registered with the Amazon Smile Program.

Why?

If you sign up, Amazon donates 0.5% of the price of your eligible Amazon Smile purchases to LBT. The more you purchase the more the AmazonSmile Foundation will donate to Longmont Buddhist Temple.

What is AmazonSmile?

AmazonSmile is a simple and automatic way for you to support LBT every time you shop, at no cost to you. When you shop at smile.amazon.com, (<http://smile.amazon.com/>), you'll find the exact same low prices, selection and convenient shopping experience as Amazon.com with the added bonus that Amazon will donate 5 cents of every \$10 (0.5%) of the purchase price to LBT.

How do you shop at AmazonSmile?

To shop at AmazonSmile simply go to (smile.amazon.com) from the web browser on your computer or mobile device. You may also want to add a bookmark to (smile.amazon.com) to make it even easier to return and start your shopping at AmazonSmile.

Can you use my existing Amazon.com account on AmazonSmile?

Yes, you use the same account on Amazon.com and AmazonSmile. Your shopping cart, Wish List, wedding or baby registry, and other account settings are also the same.

How do you select a charitable organization to support when shopping on AmazonSmile?

On your first visit to AmazonSmile (smile.amazon.com), you need to select **Longmont Buddhist Temple** to receive donations from eligible purchases before you begin shopping.

Thank you for participating in an easy way to help LBT.

May Calendar

May 6	Regular Service	
	Newcomers Welcome	9:30 am - 10:00 am
	Meditation Service	10:00 am - 10:30 am
	Regular Service and Dharma Talk	10:30 am - 11:30 am
	Toban (Coffee/Tea Hour) in Community Room	11:30 am - 12:30 pm
May 13	Mindfulness Class with Sensei John Hughes	10:00 am - 11:00 am
May 20	Gotan E Service	
	Newcomers Welcome	9:30 am - 10:00 am
	Meditation Service	10:00 am - 10:30 am
	Regular Service and Dharma Talk	10:30 am - 11:30 am
	Toban (Coffee/Tea Hour) in Community Room	11:30 am - 12:30 pm
	Board Meeting	12:00
May 27	Memorial Service	10:30
	Mountain View Cemetery	10:45
	Upcoming Events	
June 3	Temple Clean Up	
June 16	Rev. Ron Miyamura seminar	
June 17	Rev. Ron Miyamura Service	
July TBD	Garage Sale	

Contact Information		
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