

Only By Embracing...

Office of Buddhist Education Newsletter

March 2006 Volume 2 Issue III



Embraced by the Vow... In Harmony

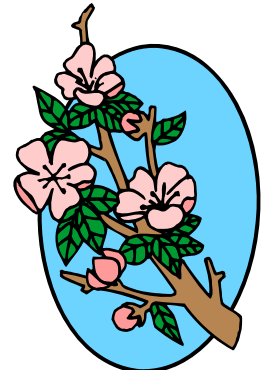
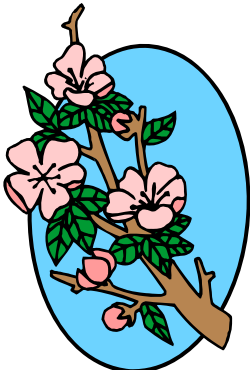
Embraced By The Vow: In Harmony

Let us awaken to the realization that from moment to moment and breath to breath we are always embraced, cared for, and never let go by the Pure, Clear Light of Great Compassion and Wisdom. The true and real life that we have is given to us by Infinite Life. When we awaken to the realization of this inexplicably wondrous condition, the joyous heart of gratitude naturally seeks to find always to express itself.

The Gassho heart and mind is naturally moved to aspire to try as best as one can to harmoniously share life with all beings in one's thoughts, words, and within what one does. Then let such aspiration become resolution, a resolution for taking part in the manifestation of Amida Nyorai's working to establish a peaceful world, within oneself and all about. This surely is the way of Nembutsu.

Waka:

Beginning to end
This life encircled in light—Peace filled Gassho mind.
Awakened inspiration to realize
harmony.



Simply An Ordinary Man



* Excerpt taken from *Rimban's Corner* - February 2006 Issue of The Goji—The Hawaii Betsuin Newsletter.

It is a very beautiful and wonderful thing to be able to live with all of one's strength. But sometimes, isn't it the case where the harder we try, and the more effort we put into something, the deeper the conflict we create with people

around us? This type of situation causes various misunderstandings, and things become the opposite of what we intended. Our good intentions and clever resolutions for situations, even with sincere efforts, can often make the situation worse. "How can this happen to me, I'm trying my best?"

"Why can't people understand?" The more eager we are to resolve a situation, the harder it becomes and we end up saying "I can't stand this anymore." "Heck, who cares whatever happens anyway!" Finally, we get to the point where we want to give up.

In his novel, *KUSAMAKURA*, Soeki Natsume, a very famous novelist of the Meiji period, wrote:

"Thus he mused as he went up the mountain path: Let Intellect be your guide and you will become harsh and rigid; let Emotion be your guide and you will drift away; let Volition have her way and you will be like a snail in her narrow shell. The harder the world weighs upon you, the easier the place where you seek to go."

As he expressed in his thought, we all often experience in walking the slope of life.

As Rennyon Shonin said, "No one thinks of himself as bad" and "In general, man does not think of himself as being inferior to others." We tend not to realize our own faults and bad points. Even if they are known, there are always excuses to justify them to ourselves. Regarding our own things, we are unbelievably tolerant. In other words, we are helplessly self-centered and never want to admit our mistakes

Before realize it, we tend to feel that we are wise and superior to others. Therefore, we always behave "wisely", and intend to be "sincere" with good intentions.

Once things go wrong, we become angry, and we stubbornly try to get into a piteous plight. The sad fact is that without realizing it, we are hurting others and deeply hurting ourselves as well. It is extremely difficult to come to realize our deep seated complexes within ourselves as being wise and easily forgiving of ourselves, and externally looking down upon and judging others.

Long ago, I enjoyed reading a column in looking down upon and judging others.

Long ago, I enjoyed reading a column in the *ASAHI SHINBUN*, a major newspaper in Japan, where a number of prominent members of society responded to letters from readers who were having problems. Among the many there was one response by a famous architect which I still remember clearly since it impressed me.

A woman wrote to him, "I have been trying to be kind to my mother-in-law for the past three years and to serve her to the best of my ability. Yet it is hopeless now. I can not longer bear to live with her for even a single day. I thought of living separately, but my husband does not listen to me since he is an only son. But I can't stand it any longer. I've had it! Is there any way out other than divorce?", she pleaded in desperation.

To this the architect responded: "I am simply an architect, and not a specialist, so I don't know how to respond. And no matter how much you explain your position to me, it is still only your claim and I never know how your mother-in-law is thinking - it is impossible to grasp the entire picture for me. Even if I can see the whole picture, I still think it is you who knows best the answer to your problem and how to resolve it. Therefore, I will ask you to make a list of all the possible solutions you can think of to your problem. It's alright even if it's something very unusual or outrageous. Please send me that list. Then I can select a few that I believe might work for you. That is the only way I can help you."

There was no answer for a while, but the architect received a very nice thank you letter from the

Simply An Ordinary Man Continued...

the woman two months later. "Thanks to you everything is fine now.

I did as you said and started to list all the possible solutions I could think of, and as I did, I started thinking, 'with these many solutions, what have I been doing?' More important than this, I was ashamed when I realized how arrogant I have been and it was sincerity that was lacking in everything I did for my mother-in-law.

I was filled with frustration and anger just thinking that I was trying my very best and my all for HER! I was very ashamed to realize that it all came from MY self-centered-ness. Although I am filled with shortcomings, I intend to live my life fully while I constantly reflect on myself. Thank you very much for your precious advice. I'll always be grateful."

As Soeki continued,

"There is no better place than where you are. The world where we live was made by neither gods or demons. Your honest neighbors who are busily getting about on your right, your left and opposite of you, are what you found. If you begin to find it unendurable to live in the world you yourself have created, there will be no other place to go. Even if there were somewhere to go, it will still be inhabited by beings like us. It will be a country of elves, where it will be still harder to live."

The world which is difficult to live in is not one made by others, but is in fact, made by ourselves. When we come to realize that fact, we feel nothing but shame for judging others and looking down on them, and we cannot help but be a little more humble.

- Rimban Shigenori Makino



A THOUGHT FOR THE FUTURE



At the close of the 94th Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii legislative Assembly, there were many delegates (myself included), deep troubled and concerned about the challenges facing our

Jodo Shin Buddhist communities throughout the state of Hawaii. There are already past signs that local sanghas can no longer pay the assessments allotted to them.

The diminishing memberships and the increasing financial burdens put upon the local kyodans are testing the spirit and tenacity of our spiritual resolve. We must not falter. We must not fall. We are determined to create a beautiful niche in our families, communities and society in which the courageous and unique message of the Buddha-Dharma should lend its voice to a harmonious, multi-cultural, multi-religious, tapestry of life and light.

Significant increases in the budget range from a paid consultant toward standardization/centralization of ministers' salaries, subsidy to the Buddhist Women's Association to host the 13th World Buddhist Women's Convention, thousands committed annually to the Pacific Buddhist Academy for the next five years, State Board of Directors training of roles and responsibilities, and the inquiry into property acquisition in the main Kapolei area for birth and expansion of a new Jodo Shinshu sangha.

Is this the straw that will break the camel's back? Or is this a real indication of a necessary growth and response to the increase in population now intensifying in the second new city of Kapolei?

Our forbearers who came from their homelands have sacrificed blood, sweat, and tears, living and providing for their offspring in

A Thought for the Future Continued...

the hope that a better tomorrow would come -- a promising future for those who would come after them. They toiled and sacrificed, and through a depression, and two World Wars, they succeeded in advancing a dream that brought fruition -- EDUCATION! No other minority has rivaled or surpassed 2nd and 3rd generation Asian Americans.

As the American mainstream flourished, a cultural revolution was taking place in the Asian American community. The 1950's and 1960's saw the flourishing of Asian American communities, both in Hawaii and on the continent, as parents and their children converged in their Buddhist communities. There would be no other time up to the present, when an ethnic minority had so successfully assimilated into the mainstream, while maintaining their ethnic identity and religious solidarity. Likened to a living organism, many fukyojyo (religious sites) were founded as gathering places where cultural and religious expression were found.

From generation to generation, however, the practices of Buddhism saw a natural decline no longer dependant on a previous ethnic identity and cultural solidarity. It is now clear that the Buddhist teaching will find its practical application not limited or bordered by ethnic or cultural boundaries, but in those who choose and practice it's teachings (Buddha-Dharma) that fully engage the present and future through deeper compassionate living.

The Buddha-Dharma will not die. The Jodo Shin is no exception. This living and dynamic organism continues to draw on those who practice it. For those who do not enjoy immeasurable light and life in the Buddha-Dharma, that chapter will come to a close and altogether cease.

There are already those of us who know the overall effects of a diminished agriculture-based culture and economy. But if the quintessential spirit of our spiritual forbears is to find vigor, the stress on education and its embodiment in our humanity and fellow man should not be underscored.

There will come a time when local Buddhist communities, (not temple buildings) renegotiate, re-adjust to the fluid change of population changes and shifts. Will properties, land, and or buildings be rented, leased, or sold? We must continue to provide religious education to those who remain. Will there come a time when communities (not missions) find the courage to re-assess and re-apportion their boundaries, not based upon property or geographical lines, but upon those persons who are sincerely striving to live joyously and fully in immeasurable light and life.

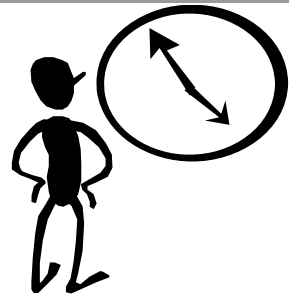
The next Bishop of the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii cannot and will not ignore the need to find a new niche for a Jodo Shin sangha in the new Kapolei city. That like many other beautiful things in life require tremendous sacrifices. Let's seriously consider the greater vision at work. Let's discover real solutions to the ever necessary challenges to our modern living.

In Gassho, Namo Amida Butsu.

- Reverend Bruce Nakamura



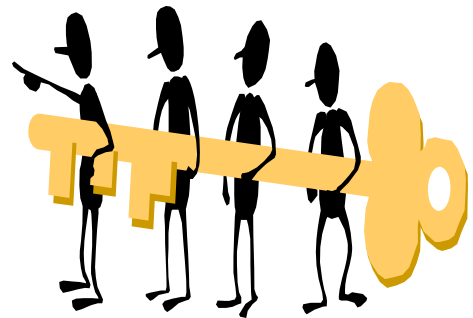
UPCOMING EVENTS



- MARCH 2 – Hongwanji Day
- MARCH 4 – Commission on Buddhist Education Meeting,
Headquarters Conference Room
- MARCH 21 – Spring O-higan
- MARCH 27-29 – Y.E.S.S. Camp XXIII – “One LOVE” Camp Kokokahi, Oahu
For more information call Ann Ishizu at (808) 522-9200
- APRIL 8 – Hanamatsuri
- APRIL 25 – Eshin-ni Day
- APRIL 28-29 – Hawaii Federation of Jr. YBA’s Meeting, Hosted by United Jr. YBA of
Honolulu at the Hawaii Betsuin Lounge

~ GATHERING 2006 ~

TIME: 8:00AM - 5:00PM
PLACE: RENAISSANCE ILIKAI HOTEL
FEE: \$65.00
 \$75.00 - AFTER APRIL 30, 2006



THE SHIN BUDDHIST PROJECT PRESENTS A ONE-DAY CONFERENCE ADDRESSING THE TOPIC “INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF SHIN BUDDHISM.” THIS TOPIC IS BROAD COVERING MANY DIMENSIONS FROM FRIEND AND FAMILY INTERACTIONS TO THE CLOSE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TWO PEOPLE. WE BELIEVE IT IS AN AREA THAT SHOULD BE EXPLORED THROUGH THE LENS OF SHIN BUDDHIST VALUES AND PRACTICE.

THE CONFERENCE WILL ENGAGE SPEAKERS AND PARTICIPANTS ON THE THEME. THE SPEAKERS’ PERSPECTIVE MAY BE IN BUSINESS AND SOCIAL INTERACTIONS, MENTORING AND COUNSELING INTERACTIONS, AND THE ROMANTIC INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS.

JOIN US IN THE CONTINUATION OF THE GATHERING JOURNEY, THIS TIME EXPLORING RELATIONSHIPS AND SHIN BUDDHISM.



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1727 Pali Highway
 Honolulu, Hawaii 96813
 Phone# (808) 522-9210

Bookstore Hours

Monday to Thursday 8:00am—3:30pm
 Friday 8:00am—12noon
 Saturday 9:00am—2:00pm
 Sunday 8:00am—12noon



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