



Spokane Buddhist Temple

JANUARY 2008

VOLUME 54 ISSUE 1

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Announcements

January Sangha Services—Our Sangha Service (Sangha is the Sanskrit word for Buddhist community)



is a traditional Jodo Shinshu service with chanting led by a Doshi. We meet after service for refreshments and discussion.

New Custodian & Maintenance Person -We're please to announce that beginning in January, Todd Milne is taking over as our volunteer custodian and

maintenance person. He'll be coordinating our *Toban* (temple cleaning) events and taking care of the maintenance duties in the building. David Wilson has volunteered to assist Todd in this effort. Those quiet, behind-the-scenes people who keep the temple clean and tidy play a vitally important role in temple life. We are extremely fortunate and grateful to Todd and David. So, let's be ready to roll-up-our-sleeves when the next *Toban* is scheduled. Also special thanks to Paul Vielle who has been our maintenance guy for the past five years. He'll now have more time to devote to his work as Minister's Assistant.

Bookstore Bits

Anne is seeking one or two Temple members to help out in the Bookstore. It's time to do an inventory and she'd also like some fresh ideas. Volunteers may also be asked to run the Bookstore after services. Help share the dharma! See Anne, in the Bookstore of course, after service.

Temple Board Meetings are Open to all Members

—All Temple members are welcome to attend our monthly Board Meetings. Come see what we're doing and how your Temple is maintained.

Spokane Buddhist Temple Team

Supervising Minister:
Rev. Don Castro
Seattle Betsuin
Minister's Assistant:
Paul Vielle

Board of Directors

Christine Marr, President
Leslie Green, Vice President
Ann Heineman, Secretary
Liat Parker, Treasurer
Fumi Uyeji, Auditor
Janet Tamura, Board Member
Jefferson Workman, Board Member
Bonell McLeish, Board Member
Jun Yugawa, Board Member

Newsletter Editor
Leslie Green

Garden Delight

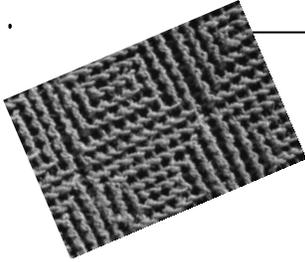
No doubt you've noticed the beautiful little "garden" tucked away in the corner of the dining hall downstairs. This pleasing little spot of greenery called a *Hako-Niwa* (box garden) was constructed by Jeff Zahir. He put it there to promote a meditative frame of mind for those attending his *Shakyou* (sutra copying) classes. It is meant to simulate a watering place where one can refresh oneself with a cool drink of water before sitting down to begin the *Shakyou* activity.

It is such a pleasant thing to look at, that he decided to leave it in place for the rest of us to enjoy. A little ingenuity and artistic flair has transformed this otherwise drab corner into a thing of beauty. Thank you Jeff!



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Remembering Our Founder

In January we observe *Ho-on-ko*, the memorial service for Shinran Shonin (1173-1262), the founder of the *Jodo Shinshu* or True Pure Land School of Buddhism. In his book *The Buddhist Holidays* Rev. George Shibata explains that the characters "Ho-on" mean "return of gratitude" and "ko" means "a gathering" of those who wish to return (or express) this gratitude. The *Ho-on-ko* memorial service was introduced by Shinran's grandson Kakunyo Shonin, the third Abbot of the *Hongwanji* (the mother temple in Kyoto, Japan). This service has been observed by *Jodo Shinshu* followers for over 600 years.



Usually a memorial service is attended by those who not only knew the deceased person first-hand,

but who also were deeply influenced by them in some way. The attendee feels an emotional connection to the deceased. It might be a grandparent, parent, sibling, spouse, child, relative, or a friend. We might also go to service for someone we may not have known personally, but who lived in our lifetime and was someone whom we greatly respected and admired, someone for example like, President Kennedy or Pope John Paul II. Or it might be a person who was anonymous to us, but to whom we owe a great debt. I'm thinking of the 'spontaneous hero', a stranger, who steps into our life at a critical moment to save our life and then disappears or dies in the effort. I've met many combat veterans from the Vietnam War who owe their lives to the timely intervention of an unknown soldier. Every year they hold a private memorial for their unknown hero. Such people touch our lives in profound ways. They shape and define who we become as human beings. It is a debt we cannot repay. About all we can do is to remember them with gratitude in some sort of memorial service.

No one today has first-hand memories of Shinran Shonin. What we know about his thinking and life emerge from his own writings and the accounts of people who have written about him. If I were to meet Shinran today, we could only stare at each

other helplessly, separated as we would be, by a vast gulf in language, culture and epochs. It's hard for anyone today to feel an "emotional" connection to Shinran. Yet this month, we observe *Ho-on-ko*, commemorating the 746th anniversary of his death. How should we, as modern beings living in the 21 century, observe this most significant of Jodo Shinshu events? More to the point, at this memorial service, what is the "indebtedness" we acknowledge but can never repay?

In a word, we are grateful to (indebted to) Shinran for his insightful and sublime *teachings*. In the long evolution of Buddhist thought, what separated the various schools and sects often came down to the question of 'practice'; the set of attitudes and behaviors a person adopted in the hope of attaining ultimate wisdom. It seems to me, all the great doctrinal debates in Buddhism, e.g. *Hinayana* or *Mahayana*, *Path of Sages* or *Pure Land Path*, *Self Power* or *Other Power*, all have to do with the issue of what is the correct way to practice?

What Shinran discovered was that all practices based on self-effort were futile. He himself spent twenty years as a Tendai monk engaged in austere practices, but felt no closer to his goal of freeing himself from his self-centered, ever-grasping mind. He considered himself a total failure; a foolish, ignorant monk beset with anger, greed and lust. Then he met his teacher Honen Shonin (1132-1212) and learned about the Pure Land of Amida Buddha and his Essential Vow to liberate all suffering beings regardless of their karmic evil. All anyone need do was to recite the *nembutsu*, the Buddha's name (Namu Amida Butsu) with a sincere, entrusting mind and desire to attain birth in the Pure Land. 'Pure Land' is a kind of metaphor for a transcendent state of mind in which we realize that we are *made to exist* by the infinite wisdom and compassion (of Amida); realities that operate continuously in our life. In other words, Life comes to us *just as we*; despite our delusions and selfish preoccupations.

Thus, Shinran's great insight was his understanding that he was utterly incapable of escaping his self-centered, grasping nature. No amount of self-initiated "practice" would ever eliminate his blind passions and delusions. But in recognizing this

"Shinran's great insight was his understanding that he was utterly incapable of escaping his self-centered, grasping nature. But in recognizing this reality about himself, he found true liberation and joy!"

Dues and Donations

The Spokane Buddhist Temple gratefully acknowledges the following dues and donations. Please notify Fumi Uyeji or Liat Parker of any omissions or errors. Dues are acknowledged when received and are often time for a few months or paid yearly.

Nov 19 – December 20, 2007

Dues

Leslie Green
Jefferson Workman
Bonell McLeish
Satoshi & Mary Terao
Paul & Karen Vielle
Kazuko Kuwada
Hyacinth Dezenobia
Leo & Yuriko Kiyohiro
Todd & Ellicia Milne
Kam & Fumi Uyeji
Tom Lande
Celeste Sterrett
Toshie Kawahara
Anonymous
Pat Omine
Greg & Leanne Sapp
Kiku Terao
Mary Naber
Jeremy Phillips
Rachel Scudder
Marcelline Burdett

Donations

Paul & Karen Vielle
Ann Heineman
Mary Naber
Susan Kadel
Jim & Shirley Bennett

Bodi Seals

Kam & Fumi Uyeji
Toshie Kawahara
Pat Omine
Kazudo Kirihara
Leo & Yuriko Kiyohiro
Jim & Shirley Bennett
Anonymous
Mrs. Yamagiwa

Bodhi Day

Anonymous
Christine Marr

Convention Debt

Celeste Sterrett
Sahkiyo Meditation Group

In Memory

Greg & Leanne Sapp
In memory of
Madelyn Isabella Sapp

Ann Heineman

In memory of
Madelyn Isabella Sapp

Liat Parker

In memory of
Madelyn Isabella Sapp

Christine Marr

In memory of
Madelyn Isabella Sapp

Janet Tamura

In memory of
Mary Higashi
Kayo Tsuji

Fumi Ekinaka

In memory of
Jinsaku Takamura
Heideo Ekinaka

Joyce Terao

In memory of Rev. E. Terao

Christine Marr

In memory of Rev. E. Terao

Ann Heineman

In memory of Skylar Cullitan

Mary Naber

In memory of Skylar Cullitan

Liat Parker

In memory of Skylar Cullitan

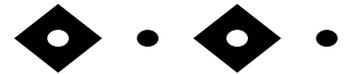
Help Support the Newsletter

In order to share with newcomers who might be curious about our Temple, we have a free signup list for our newsletter to be mailed to



anyone who wants it. In order to cover postage to help spread the dharma, we do accept donations specifically for the newsletter. Please indicate NEWSLETTER on your check or on the envelope. If you no longer want to receive the newsletter by mail, please let us know. It is available electronically on our website at:

www.spokanebuddhisttemple.org



Shotsuki-Hoyo

Shotsuki-Hoyo

(the remembrance service for deceased

loved ones) will be held Sunday, January 20, 2008, during Reverend Castro's visit. According to temple records and other sources, a total of 9 people passed away during the month of January.

They are:

Asayo Heyamoto
Michael Higashi
James Horiuchi
James Kiyaichi
Koga
Sagata Kuwahara
(Mrs) Ida Shige
Grover C. Twiner
Richard Williams
Manichi Yamaguchi

December Shotsuki-Hoyo

Shotsuki-Hoyo was inadvertently left out of the December newsletter. We apologize for any problems this may have caused. There were 14 people who passed during the month of December.

They are:

Janis Birkel
Skylar Cullitan
Yukiko Evans
Yoshitaka Inouye
Otokichi Matsuo
Rachael Phillips
Madelyn Isabella Sapp
James Stewart
(Mrs) Mary Tsugie Terao
Rev. William Shigeo Terao (Founder of SBT)
(Mrs) Michiko Tsuchida
(Mrs) Yuki Tsuji
(Mrs) Kayo Tsuji

Looking Ahead . . .



2008 Dates to Remember

February 15-17—Northwest District Buddhist Convention—Seattle

April 20—Spring Bazaar

April 26 –27—Japan Week Lecture and Hanamatsuri Service

June 15—Socho Ogui visit and Sarana Affirmation Service
(Buddhist Name)

Congratulations
To the winners of
our raffle
baskets:

Mike Regan won
the Family Basket

Arlene M
Won the Wine
Basket



Well Excuse Me for Living!!
by Tom Lande

*Hypocrisy issues from me,
I deceive in daily activity,
But keen perception
calls others to task,
Imagining some exalted,
Everyday truth.*

*The moment is gone,
But I paddle furiously,
none the less,
As if demonstrating worthiness
once and for all,
Nothing else to do, ever.*

*Maybe all I need
is a Good Excuse
for being sad, crazy, lazy,
(Guilt hangs on authority like
ravens on the trees)
Are adequate reason
to cease to function.
Nobody will blame me.*

(continued from page 3, "Remembering Our Founder")

reality about himself, he found true liberation and joy! In an instant, he understood Amida's wisdom and compassion embraced him just as he was. As he later noted:

"When I ponder on the compassionate Vow of Amida...it was for myself, Shinran alone. Because I am a being burdened so heavily with karma I feel even more deeply grateful to the Primal Vow which is made to decisively save me." (Tannisho—Epilogue)

This recognition was the turning point for him. Thereafter he abandoned all other practices and simply entrusted himself totally and unreservedly to saying the *Nembutsu*, the Buddha's name *Namo Amida Butsu*. The utterance became for him an expression of his profound gratitude for Amida's wisdom and compassion.

Today, we recite the *Nembutsu* for exactly the same reason. In saying the Buddha's name, we acknowledge our gratitude for the fact that despite our ignorance, we are allowed to live just as we are—in "oneness" with all else in the universe. From this perspective, we're able to engage the world more easily. We cope better with our daily reversals and disappointments. We understand, Amida's compassion embraces all, without distinctions or judgments.

Ho-on-ko is our opportunity to reflect on the life of Shinran Shonin and to remember with gratitude his most excellent teachings. May we, like Shinran, aspire to live a life that benefits others. *Namo Amida Butsu!*

Paul Vielle
Ministers Assistant