



Wahiawa Hongwanji Mission

DECEMBER 2014

Phone: 808-622-4320 [Mon-Fri 8 am to 12 noon] email: office@wahiawahongwanji.org
Website: www.wahiawashinbuddhists.org President: Mr. Glenn Hamamura
Minister: Rev. Kojun Hashimoto (emergency calls only— cell # 772-1904)

BODHI DAY CELEBRATION

Bodhi Day is a Buddhist holiday that commemorates the day that the Buddha achieved enlightenment. Bodhi Day is celebrated on the eighth day of the 12th lunar month. The Buddha was born as Siddhartha Gautama into a noble, privileged Hindu household. When he was close to 30 years old, he abandoned his material lifestyle and retreated to the forest seeking answers to the problem of suffering, specifically old age, sickness and death. According to tradition, he initially sought bodhi (enlightenment) through meditation, self-mortification and practicing other austerities.

DHARMA TALK: WAHIAWA TEMPLE

Pieper J. Toyama
September 21, 2014

Thank you for inviting me to speak this Sunday. As president of the Kyodan, one of my goals is to visit as many temples and meet as many members as I can during my term of office so I can personally communicate with temple members and share what I am seeing as I learn more about the activities of the Kyodan. Invitations such as yours is my only means of reaching my goal. So thank you.

Now let me get on with my talk. This morning I would like to focus on an issue that I have come to understand as critical to the future of Jodo Shinshu in Hawaii, and that issue is sharing the Dharma in ways that are appropriate to the audience culture. It is in fact recognized by Hongwanji leadership in Kyoto as an issue that will affect the future of Jodo Shinshu throughout the world.

Retired Monshu, Koshin Ohtani, and newly installed Monshu, Kojun Ohtani both see the importance of this issue.

In his farewell message on June 5, 2014, retiring Monshu Koshin Ohtani said, "Our sangha has a glorious tradition of upholding and transmitting the Dharma from

person to person. It is my hope that we will keep this wonderful custom despite of the current social fluctuations, and discover the diverse potentialities in the teachings and traditions of Jodo Shinshu so that we can share them with as many people as possible and together follow the path toward realizing a society in which everyone is mutually accepted and respected. In order to realize that, I believe it is important to bring out the individuality and conditions of each person and generation, paying special attention to the young generations who possess the sensibility and ability to implement concepts."

The newly installed Gomonshu Kojun Ohtani on June 6, 2014, added to this message by saying, "...it is significantly important to consider how we can approach and reach out to persons who have never had any contact with a Buddhist temple, as well as those who are already involved with one. The Nembutsu teaching remains unchanged, regardless of the changing times and society. However, the methods for transmitting and sharing it needs to evolve and adapt according to social changes. Now is the time for our Hongwanji institution to utilize our collective wisdom and knowledge for considering approaches to convey the Buddha Dharma to our contemporaries today."

Both call on us to walk the path of sharing the Shin Buddhist teachings in ways that can reach our changing audience in our fast changing society. And we should readily and enthusiastically answer this call...for Jodo Shinshu is a spiritual tradition that is especially relevant to challenges we face living in the 21st century.

I recently returned from the 17th European Shin Buddhist Conference held in Southampton in the United Kingdom. Australian Shin Buddhist minister, John Paraskevopoulos, shared the following in his presentation titled: ***Jodo Shinshu: The Supreme Teaching for the Present Age***. He described our teachings as "eminently capable of meeting our deepest spiritual needs and in so doing furnishing our lives with a quiet undercurrent of abiding joy." He goes on to say that Shin Buddhist teachings give us "the confidence to face the world as it is, even if we cannot change the forces that propel our lives in uncertain and troubling directions."

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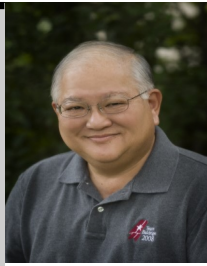
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Roy Higa, Editor



President's Message
Glenn Hamamura

In Gassho

Glenn Hamamura



REVEREND'S MESSAGE

Dharma Talk Theme for this month is Sho-Jin "Trying to do my best"

Buddhist Thoughts

Candyland Adventure

“Let’s play Candyland, Poppy!” Said our four year old grandson, Jason. It’s been a while since we last played it. He is always preoccupied with something else so this was a pleasant surprise after dinner.

Candyland is a board game for children under 6. On the surface, it is a game to help children learn colors. There is a stack of cards which is turned in sequence, and a color tile is usually on it. Sometimes there are two tiles showing the same color which directs the player to jump to the next two, say “blue” tiles on the board. There is a long winding route of color tiles to follow to the end where there is a castle. The winner is the first person to reach the castle. Along the way, there are surprise treats like ice cream cones or cake or lollipops. There are cards with pictures of these treats also so one may be close to the end, only to pick a “treat” and have to return to the that specific tile.

We’ve been playing this game for at least two years. There is a built-in “win-lose” duality... and neither of us like to “lose!” In recalling Dr. Mark Unno’s lesson on Duality and Oneness, I tried to be mindful of the positive nature of the game. It occurred to me that pulling a “treat” card can be considered a penalty. In some cases, one has to start almost from the beginning. During the game, whenever I pulled a “treat” card, I would say “yum!” I should also say I “lost” three times!

When one sees the “bigger picture” of the

game, it is not about the duality of winning or losing, it’s about just interacting with the child, taking turns in sequence, playing by the rules, experiencing disappointment and learning from each other. How often do we think this way in life? Are we always just thinking about “winning?”

In our daily living, we are presented with Duality challenges every day. How often do we say: “Life is not fair?” Being mindful provides a learning opportunity every moment of the day!

Namu Amida Butsu!

In Gassho,
Rod Moriyama



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So with the retired Monshu and our new Monshu calling us to share the Dharma and Rev. Paraskevopoulos reminding us that Shin Buddhism is the supreme teaching for our present age, what is keeping us from our task? If our message is so appropriate and applicable to our daily life, why can't we explain its value with clarity to our children, grandchildren, and friends?

It is on this difficulty we have in sharing the Shin Buddhist Dharma that I want to focus the rest of my talk this morning.

It is my opinion that the problem is the language that we use to talk about our teachings to people who know little or nothing about Shin Buddhism. Consider the words and phrases we commonly use to explain our religion. Here are examples that I have taken from promotional brochures put out recently by Headquarters, excerpts from Hongwanji publications, and phrases used at a seminar I attended yesterday at the Betsuin:

Attaining the endowed awakened mind of true entrusting through the working of the Buddha's primal vow.

Birth in the Pure Land of Enlightenment.

Instantaneous attainment of Buddhahood.

Deep reflective listening.

48 Vows

18th Vow

Buddha of Immeasurable Life and Light

Shinjin, Tariki, Jiriki, Self Power, Other Power

Dharmakara Bhodisattva

Listen to the compassionate calling for Amida and recite the Nembutsu.

We are awakened the moment we receive and entrust our life to the workings of Amida Tathagata's primal vow of great wisdom and compassion.

These are words that might be understandable to someone who has studied Jodo Shinshu, but certainly not words and phrases that would make sense to someone new to our religion. These are not words that would prompt a person to say, "Wow...Shin Buddhism is a powerful and relevant religion. I can see how it relates to my everyday life. Tell me more about it."

So if this vocabulary is no longer effective then what do we do? Let me share some ideas that are based on my personal experiences of the Dharma in my life and on sharing the Dharma while I worked at PBA with teenagers who have no connection to Buddhism.

I suggest that we begin by developing stages of messaging beginning with a simple message that directly connects the teachings to the daily lives of listener. The succeeding messaging stages would then build more

complex and sophisticated ideas and add vocabulary so the teachings become more fully developed and understood.

What has worked at PBA is this starting message that I have found to be true in my life:

Jodo Shinshu is a spiritual tradition that places the experience of gratitude at its core. Gratitude is the heart and essence of Shin Buddhism. When we experience profound gratitude, we are transformed for that moment. In the moment of gratitude, we can no longer experience the three poisons of anger, greed, and ignorance. In the moment of gratitude, we cannot hate. We cannot be stressed, frustrated, discouraged, and unhappy. The moment of gratitude might last for only a few seconds but negative thoughts and feelings cannot enter our minds, body, and spirit. The experience of gratitude is incompatible with negative attachments and desires. Instead, we become settled and free in a spirit of well-being. Jodo Shinshu is a religion that teaches us to increase our moments of gratitude in our lives and to expand the length of those moments as a means for achieving happiness, harmony and freedom in our life.

That's it. That's the first message. The second message goes something like this:

This gratitude I refer to is not the ordinary gratitude that goes with daily "thank you's." The "thank you" for helping me or "thank you" for the gift is simple appreciation. When I say gratitude, I mean that experience in which you know that there is a force and presence greater than yourself. It is when you pause and really look at something incredibly beautiful...like here in Wahiawa, the full moon shining on the pineapple fields, or a sunset off the North Shore, or the cherry blossoms on a crisp spring morning. It is the experience when you really see how beautiful your child or your grandchild really is and it takes your breath away. Or it can be a moment as small as your spouse greeting you in the morning with a cheery good morning. Or as profound as the experience that you have when you become so sad thinking of someone you have lost and yet you smile through your tears because that person was so good to have had in your life. It is when you suffer in your illness and yet you know that there are those who worry and care about you. It is in your darkest moments you know you are not alone.

In those moments your ego is reduced; you are humbled and overtaken by the object or people for whom you are grateful. In these moments you are settled and you are free. Jodo Shinshu is a religion that teaches you to look for these moments in your life. They are everywhere, large and small, significant and insignificant. We learn to find these gratitude moments for they are the stuff that

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transforms your life ... if even for a moment.

Then I add the following:

When you are in that instant that you realize how fortunate you are in this life...how the causes and conditions of the universe have conspired to place you in this unrepeatable moment...how you are embraced by the beauty around you and the people who love you...at that instant the only response that can come from your inner most being is the sound of thank you. And for Shin Buddhists that sound of gratitude is **Namo Amida Butsu**.

This is Shin Buddhism to me and this is how I explain it to someone who knows nothing about Buddhism. I fully recognize that there are other effective ways of presenting the Dharma. That is why I am proposing to Bishop Matsumoto that he convenes a small team of ministers and lay members who will develop these simplified beginning messages. They will be useful for ministers and members to use in conversations with interested individuals, their friends and children, in informational brochures, on temple websites and in Dharma Talks at which there are many non-Buddhists in attendance. With messages that are clear and immediately relevant to our listeners, we all can more easily travel the path of sharing the Dharma that Zenmonsama and Gomonshusama are urging us to travel. We all can be more confident in sharing the importance of our teachings in this present age.

Again thank you for inviting me to speak. I would appreciate your thoughts and feedback on what I have shared today to guide me in pursuing this initiative. Thank you.

Acknowledgements



Every effort has been made to accurately present these records. Please call the office 622-4320 to report any errors. If you do not want your name to be published, please mark your donation. "Do Not Publish." *Thank you very much.*

December 2014

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4 7:30pm-9pm The Bombu Academy (Buddhist Adult Ed.)	5 1pm-4pm Mahjong (BWA Room)	6
W/WM Cleanup and Membership Meeting in Children Conduct Food Drop-Off for Sangha Strummers	8	9	10	11 7:30am-10:30am Hosha Kai 7pm-8pm Club Asoka Meeting BWA Room 7:30pm-9pm The Bombu Academy Readings (Buddhist Adult Ed.)	12 1pm-4pm Mahjong (BWA Room)	13 SH Mochi Project
Sunday Service BWA Meeting (BWA Room)	15	16	17	18 11am-12pm Hospital Visitation (PD) 7:30pm-9pm The Bombu Academy (Buddhist Adult Ed.)	19 1pm-4pm Mahjong (BWA Room)	20 SH Mochi Project
Justice Sunday Service (Ohana Project Hall)	22	23	24	25 Christmas	26 7:30am-10:30am Hosha Kai (Hosha/Kadomatsu Bamboo Harvest) 1pm-4pm Mahjong (BWA Room)	27 SH Kadomatsu
Appreciation & Installation Sangha Strummers	29	30	31	Notes:		