



KOKORO

NEW YORK BUDDHIST CHURCH



Shinran Would Go!

March 2017

Prior to coming to NYBC, I served a temple just below the University of Hawaii, Moiliili Hongwaji Mission. Since it was the nearest temple to the university, we often met very interesting people. One was Professor Dessi, whose wife had been invited to be a lecturer at the university for two semesters. Both had travelled to Japan to study the life and teachings of Shinran Shonin. I believe that they were well versed in the life of our --founder. Professor Dessi would often visit me at the temple, where we discussed different aspects of Jodo Shinshu. During the year that he was in Hawaii, there were several social issues that had become quite controversial and debates in the legislative body of our state government were constant. Of many issues the subject of recognizing same-gender relationships became a very heated topic. It seemed that the entire state was divided concerning this issue; and being an election year many government officials took a stand and this became the center of their platform.

At the annual *Giseikai*

(Hawaii's version of the BCA National Council), a resolution was introduced to recognize and sanction same-gender relationships. The debates and discussions on this matter went on for a long period of time. Of course, Asians are quite concerned about being involved with social issues such as this but were not sure as to how this should be addressed. There were requests for proof that this was socially correct and how it would affect the perception of the Hongwanji if this position was adopted. The person who introduced this resolution was the young chairman of the social concerns committee and he stood up to answer all questions. The resolution when further examined was not about the moral aspect but based upon the concept of equality suggested by the teachings of the Buddha. It was said that this single topic held the record for being the longest debated issue in the history of the Hongwanji in Hawaii. After much deliberation, the representatives unanimously passed and adopted the resolution. It took much courage when you reflect upon the fact that many Japanese-Americans do not openly discuss controversial social issues.

Letters of support were sent to state representatives and senators voicing our views and concerns. It was the first time that a Buddhist group had openly taken a stand on such an issue. Soon many letters of support from many other groups were received.

Hawaii had already established a Pride Parade and because of the great division that this issue had created, many wanted to be visibly supportive and march in the parade. Because of my involvement with several groups I was also asked to participate by leading opening prayers. Personally, I had no objections to participation. However, being Asian and representing an Asian group and temple which had both progressive and conservative members, I was concerned as to how my participation would reflect upon its membership.

Professor Dessi came for a visit and seeing the concerned look on my face suggested a discussion. After openly expressing my concerns in great detail, Professor Dessi



Reverend Earl Ikeda

compassionately looked and me and stated, "If he were here, Shinran would go!"

This simple but honest statement resonated throughout my entire being and has helped me to further understand the dynamics of Shinran Shonin's teachings and his responsibility to help all sentient beings create a path. Buddhism is based upon the equality of all beings and Shakyamuni Buddha himself is said to have helped do away with the caste system in India during his lifetime. Perhaps the Buddha was trying to tell us that it takes courage to do what one feels is important.

The focus should be, whether right or wrong, to be honest to one's self and give others another point of view to decide for themselves.

立ちあがった親鸞聖人

ニューヨーク仏教会住職 池田アール

親鸞聖人は約750年前仏法をひろめられました。聖人は人々を「御同萌御同行（おんどうぼう おんどうぎょう）」とよばれ、平等で差別のない仲間社会を作ることをめざされました。

さて私はニューヨーク仏教会へ来る前、ハワイ大学近くにあるモイリジ寺院の住職でした。そのご縁で学識の深い学者さんや、いろいろな分野の人にであう機会をいただきました。イタリア人のデッシー教授はその中の一人でした。教授は日本文化や仏教に興味を持っておられたようで、奥様と日本をおとずれた時、親鸞聖人の教えを探究（たんきゅう）されたようでした。教授と私は浄土真宗や聖人についての話に夢中になり、時間のたつのをわすれたこともありました。

デッシー教授がハワイ滞在中に、同性結婚を認めるかどうかという社会問題がおこりました。この問題は皆様ご存知と思いますが、アメリカ社会を二分するような大問題で毎日のように論争されました。

ハワイの本願寺派寺院も、この問題が対岸の火事ではなく、評議会（ギセイカイ）の年次総会の議題でした。しかし、日本人社会は難しい社会問題について論争をさけるような傾向があったので、この問題をどのように対応したらよいかわかりませんでした。そのためまず、男女でない二人の結婚を認めることは一般常識に照らして正しいか、またこの問題が日本の本願寺にあたえる影響を話し合いました。

この決議案を出した人は、社会問題委員会の若い議長でした。彼と議員はあらゆる方面からこの問題を検討しました。たとえば、この問題の道徳的な面だけでなく、仏法に照らして検討しました。ハワイ本願寺の議事録によると、この問題は一番真剣（しんけん）に長時間をかけて話しあわれたと記録されています。

それまで日系人の団体は社会問題をオープンに話し合う習慣がなかったので、大変勇気のいることでしたが、結果は満場一致で同性者の結婚に賛成する事に決まりました。そして仏教団体が初めて重要な社会問題についてその立場をあきらかにし、同性結婚賛成の手紙を州議会議員（しゅうぎかいぎいん）と上院議員（じょういんぎいん）に出しました。その後まもなく、たくさんの団体から支持の手紙をいただきました。

その頃プライドパレードが計画されましたが、人々の関心と理解を高めるためより大きなパレードに改正されました。私は個人的にですが、初めからこの集会に参加していましたので、パレードや祝賀式に参加するようにもとめられました。しかし、私はモイリジ寺院の代表（住職）という立場でしたので、参加することを決めかねていました。そんな時デッシー教授がお寺へ訪ねて来られました。彼にこの事のいきさつを話したところ、「もし親鸞聖人がここにおられたら、立ちあがるだろう。」と言ってくれました。私は教授の意見に全く同感でした。今こそ立ちあがらなければと思いました。親鸞聖人はすべての人々を御同萌御同行とうやまわれ、救われない凡夫の我らを南無阿弥陀仏の名号（名前）によって、平等に救くわれていく道を教えてくださいました。また、お釈迦様の教えは、インドのカースト制度（身分制度）をなくすることに影響をあたえたと言われています。

平等で差別のない社会を作ることをめざしたいものです。 南無阿弥陀仏

Spring Higan-e March 19

Higan is observed in Japan for a period of one week in the Spring from March 18 or 19 and again in the Autumn from September 20 or 21, during the spring and fall equinox when the seasons are in balance.

The word Higan comes from the Sanskrit word Paramita, which is translated as "other shore." It is an abbreviation of Tohigan ("to arrive"). Tohigan means "to arrive at the Other Shore." The "Other Shore" is Enlightenment or Nirvana, that is, the Pure Land. We are able to arrive at or reach the Other Shore when we transcend the cycle of birth and death, crossing over the sea of worldly passions arising from illusion.

How can we cross this wide sea and arrive at the Other Shore of Nirvana? The Six Paramita serve as a bridge spanning across this wide sea, and by practicing Charity, Morality, Patience, Right Effort, Meditation, and Wisdom, we can reach the Other Shore.

In the Shin teaching, however, the Six Paramita are not considered a necessary practice for attaining Nirvana, but as an act of gratitude on our part for being assured of attaining birth in the Pure Land through the all-encompassing compassion of Amida Buddha.

Spring Ohigan is a time to express our gratitude for awakening to Amida's infinite Wisdom and Compassion and to direct our compassion and gratitude to other sentient beings and living things.

The New York Buddhist Church has three guest rooms in its 331 Riverside Drive Building which it makes available from time to time to visiting ministers and other guests, including friends and family of pledged temple members and members of other Buddhist sanghas.

If you are interested in staying in one of them, please contact Nancy Okada at NYBC, 212 678 0305

A donation to the NYBC is requested to assist in the maintenance and upkeep of the rooms and the temple.

White Elephant Sale March 25

By Tony Armstrong

The Adult Buddhist Association's annual White Elephant Sale, a major annual fundraiser, will be held on Saturday, March 25, from 10am to 4pm in the NYBC Hondo, and includes a Silent Auction from 10am to 2pm. Delicious homemade Japanese food and desserts will be sold along with unique "treasures", including jewelry, household goods and other items donated by the Sangha and neighbors. In addition, a demonstration of the Japanese tea ceremony, taiko drumming, dancing exhibition by the Tachibana dance group and a martial arts demonstration will take place at various times throughout the day.

We are accepting donations on Sundays which are tax-deductible, so now is a great time to clean out those closets for items you would like to donate, except for electronics, clothing and books which do not sell, based on past experience. Traditional Japanese crafts, obi, etc. are especially welcome. Contact Yoriko Fujita, Keiko Ohtaka, Nobuko Kodama or myself, for information and if you would like a receipt. If you can provide baked goods, please let us know.

If you wish to purchase space to sell your own items, we have tables for rent for members at \$25 for a half table and \$35 for a full table; for non-members at \$30 for a half table and \$40 for a full table, but space is limited. Vendors are expected to help clean up afterwards or to pay a \$10 surcharge.

We would really appreciate volunteers to help set up on Friday night, March 24 from 4 to 8pm, and to clean up on Saturday, March 25, after the event at 4pm.

This annual event is a lot of fun, a chance to sample great food, see many of the activities of the NYBC, meet up with friends and family, and find that special treasure. Bring your friends and family for a great time!

Shotsuki Hoyo Memorial Services Schedule for 2017

Shotsuki hoyo is a traditional monthly service to remember your loved ones who died during that month, particularly in the intervals listed below. The Memorial Service provides a way to express your gratitude and recognize their continuing influence in your life. To arrange a shotsuki hoyo memorial service, please talk to Rev. Earl Ikeda or one of our minister's assistants.

2016... 1st Year

2015 ... 3rd Year

2011 ... 7th Year

2005 ... 13th Year

2001... 17th Year

1993 ... 25th Year

1985 ... 33rd Year

1968 ... 50th Year

The names of the persons we will be remembering this month and next are listed below.

March 2017 Sunday, March 5

Fukuchi, Kaname 1994
Hahn, Maude 1992
Hayden, Joseph 1994
Hino, Larry Tateaki 2004
Horita, George Hiroshi 2003
Horita, Haruo 1997
Inoue, Kazuko 2011
Ishida, Kazumi 1965
Ito, Mary 2005
Kamada, Mitsuye 2016
Kasuga, Mieko Grace 1968
Kasuga, Teruo Terry 1986
Katajima, Robert 2004

Kubo, Yukichi 1957
Kume, Hidekichi 2008
Miyamura, Yoshio 1985
Nakamura, Suya 1978
Nogami, Mitsue Arita 2015
Ochiai, Fuku 2008
Okada, Barbra Teri 2011
Okada, Isaburo 1949
Okada, Richard Alan 1987
Pascarella, Josephine Tringali 2004
Poon, Peter 2000
Tamura, Yoshiko NA
Usui, Betty Tono 1999
Walker, Charles F. 1991
Yabuki, Tadayuki NA

Yamakawa, Richard Alan 1992
Yampolsky, Anne Rei 1964

APRIL 2017 Shotsuki Hoyo Service: Sunday, April 2

Briceland, Penelope Warren 1994
Chen, Po-Shen 2005
Hondo, Rev. Shoji 2015
Horiuchi, Yoshitaka 1991
Iizuka, Reiko 2010
Ikoma, Chiyoko 1985
Ikoma, Fumiko 1948
Kaneko, Seijuro 1968
Kikuchi, Chiyoko 2004
Kubo, Matsuye 2010

Magome, Shizuo 1995
Matsukawa, Nabe 1994
Matsushita, Ryomen 1922
McCarthy, Joseph 2008
Mine, Seki 1973
Mitani, Chiyo 1973
Nishida, Tomihiro 1997
Sakioka, Tomio 1995
Shih, Michael 2015
Suzuki, Haneko 1991
Takaishi, Mokichi 1975
Takayama, Yukiko, NA
Tominaga, Riro 1969
Unno, Hanako 1999
Wakuya, Ted Tadao 1988

Hatsumairi, Infant Presentation Service April 9

By Minister's Assistant Shobo Gary Jaskula

The New York Buddhist Church invites you to bring your newborns and very young children to participate in our annual Hatsumairi Ceremony, which takes place just before our Hanamatsuri (Buddha's Birthday) service on Sunday, April 9, at 10:30am.

Hatsumairi is often translated as "Infant Presentation Service" and it traditionally celebrates the first opportunity for parents to bring children who were born during the previous year to the Temple. Young children who have never come to church can also participate. The main purpose of Hatsumairi is for children to attend a Buddhist Service for the first time, acknowledging that they will grow up according to the Buddhist way of life.

This occasion also provides our temple with the opportunity to give expression to the Primal Vow of Amida Buddha, which embraces people of all ages, genders, races, and social strata. At the New York Buddhist Church, this lovely ceremony is associated with Hanamatsuri (Buddha's birthday) celebration, which is popular with children of all ages.

If you wish to participate in the Hatsumairi Infant Presentation, please contact Reverend Earl Ikeda or a Minister's assistant by Wednesday 5, April .

Sangha News By Ruth Funai

Tony and Yoriko Armstrong spent three days between Christmas and New Year's visiting Tony's mother, who is 91-years old, two sisters and three of his brothers, one who owns and operates an organic farm in the area. His youngest brother and wife were present with their eight children. The trip was the first time Tony's mom met Yoriko as a daughter-in-law since the couple's August wedding. In Park Forest, IL, where most of Tony's ten siblings were raised, they feasted on delicious home-cooked meal prepared by his younger brother, the first night, of roast beef and a YinYang cake which were amazingly delicious and on tortillas filled with either beef or chicken by his brother-in-law the second night.. They wandered along Chicago's Magnificent Mile one day and then spent another, strolling along Oak Street Beach, stopping for afternoon tea at The Drake hotel. In the evening, they attended the Improv Comedy Club for a little laughter about someone else's family. When they flew back home to their cat, Angel, she showed her displeasure at her humans' rude behavior for leaving her with a complete stranger, also, called a Cat Sitter.

Mathew Wise reports: "At the end of 2016, **Matthew Wise and Linda Engstrom** relinquished their duties as NYBC minister's assistants, in order to develop a new venue for the sharing of Buddha-Dharma outside of a formal religious setting. The result, Twelve-Step Buddhists, attracts those who are in recovery from alcoholism, drug addiction, and other compulsive behaviors, and presents the concept of Other-Power as a valid and viable alternative to the Power greater than ourselves, i.e., God, of traditional 12-Step programs. Meetings are held every Saturday, 10:00am, at the University Settlement, 273 Bowery at Houston St." The New York Buddhist Church Sangha sends our wish for much success to Matthew and Linda.

Karl Palma reports that he has eaten at least 20 takoyaki places so far during his trip to Japan, where he is visiting Osaka, Tokyo and Kyoto. We expect a full report upon his return.



Yoriko, looking a little cold, but enjoying the Windy City

Students Invited to Apply for Stanley T. Okada Scholarship

Students are encouraged to apply for the annual Stanley T. Okada Scholarship. The scholarship provides funds for full-time undergraduate, graduate, trade school, or other qualifying educational programs. Pledged members, children and grandchildren of an NYBC pledged supporting member are eligible to apply.

Scholarship recipients are asked to provide a short written report to the committee on how their studies are progressing and how the scholarship has helped them. Their report may be printed in the *Kokoro* newsletter.

For application forms or further information, please contact Gertrude Kihara, Keiko Ohtaka, or Nancy Okada. The application deadline is at the end of May.

The scholarship fund was established in 1980 in memory of Stanley T. Okada, long-time Executive Director of the NYBC, Board of Trustees member, and a significant contributor to the NYBC since its establishment in 1938.

Letter from the Editor

If you are reading Kokoro, you are either a pledged member of the New York Buddhist Church, or should seriously consider becoming one. Receiving a free monthly issue of Kokoro is one of the benefits of being a pledged member.

But more importantly, becoming a pledged member of the NYBC is vital in maintaining the mission and the community of the NYBC. Without your support, the NYBC would cease to exist as a place where the Dharma is taught, discussed and contemplated. For me, personally, the Buddha Dharma is a profound and dynamic means of understanding the world and continuing to work personally and with others towards a more peaceful existence where the constant state of human suffering is alleviated. Without your support the NYBC would cease to exist as a Sangha that truly cares about each other and participates in activities that are as simple as the weekly fellowship and refreshments that follow services, or are as elaborate as the annual Bon O-dori.

The NYBC has always been a place where Japanese and Japanese-American culture has been nurtured, but in today's world it offers much more to all, regardless of ethnic background. Pledged memberships are \$250.00 for individual memberships and \$500 per couple or family. You can donate in one lump sum, or on a monthly or calendar quarterly basis. The way my husband puts it, it's less than \$1/day for the opportunity to pursue enlightenment in a warm and welcoming community. If you are not a church member and participate in one or more of the many temple programs and activities, please consider giving-- in any amount, to assist us in sustaining our operations. We are dependent upon the generosity of both temple members and NYBC friends to provide a gathering place for the Sangha to listen to the teachings of the Buddha and to continue to develop new services and programs for our community. *GMI*

MEMBERSHIP PLEDGE FORM

Name(s) _____

Address _____

Telephone _____ email _____

Individual \$250 ___ Family or Couple \$500 ___ Other amount _____

Full amount enclosed ___ Monthly ___ Quarterly ___

Please mail this form and checks to: **New York Buddhist Church
331-332 Riverside Drive
New York, New York 10025
Attn: Membership**

So Daiko News By Mac Evans

2 New Drumheads, and 2 New Probies. We have reskinned the heads of two of our drums. This round we managed to get some really good tension on the rawhide before tacking them to the wine barrel bodies, so they are very high pitched and promise to last us for several years to come. They are too high to even perform with at the moment, and we will be breaking them in at practice for a while to get them to the familiar boom similar to our other chu daiko.

Similarly, we have two new probationary members who have made it past the trainee period. For the first three months they worked hard and have proven their potential in learning our repertoire and growing stronger. In the next couple months we will be breaking them in at practice for a while to get the familiar boom similar to our other Soh Daiko members.

We had our first official gig of 2017 at Rutgers for their Pan Asian Lunar New Year. We have another performance coming up on March 4th at the University of Hartford for their International Festival. These both will help prepare us for our upcoming hour long show at Laguardia Performing Arts Center for the Carnegie Neighborhood Series shows we've been doing these past couple years. March 25th, 3:00-4:00 PM you can find us performing a full show for free. It's a great show to introduce any of your friends to Soh Daiko, or to see what we have been working on for the past few months.

For the most up to date news and performance schedule, check:

www.sohdaiko.org

www.facebook.com/sohdaiko

Rennyo Shonin Memorial Service March 26

Rennyo (蓮如, 1415–1499) was the 8th Monshu, or head-priest, of the Hongwan-ji Temple of the Jōdo Shinshū sect of Buddhism, and descendant of Shinran.

During the conflict of the Ōnin War and the subsequent warfare that spread throughout Japan, Rennyo was able to unite most of the disparate factions of the Jodo Shinshu sect under the Hongwan-ji, reform existing liturgy and practices, and broaden support among different classes of society. Through Rennyo's efforts, Jodo Shinshu grew to become the largest, most influential Buddhist sect in Japan.

Rennyo believed he was restoring his ancestor Shinran's original teachings, which he summed up in the *Ryōgemon* (領解文, "Statement of Conviction"):

We abandon all indiscriminate religious practices and undertakings (*zōgyō zasshu*) and all mind of self-assertion (*jiriki no kokoro*), we rely with singleness of heart on the Tathāgata Amida in that matter of utmost importance to us now—to please save us in our next lifetime. We rejoice in knowing that our birth in the Pure Land is assured and our salvation established from the moment we rely [on the Buddha] with even a single *nembutsu* (*ichinen*), and that whenever we utter the Buddha's name thereafter it is an expression of gratitude and indebtedness to him. We gratefully acknowledge that for us to hear and understand this truth we are indebted to our founder and master [Shinran] for appearing in the world and to successive generations of religious teachers in our tradition for their profound encouragement. We shall henceforth abide by our established rules (*okite*) as long as we shall live.
(Translation by Professor James C. Dobbins)

January Board Highlights

By Cheryl Ikemiya

The Board Chair welcomed new and returning Board representative(s) and held the election for the Vice Chair and Chair Elect, Mariko Kato. The other officers continue their two year terms with the Chair Isabelle Bernard; Treasurer Nancy Okada; and Recording Secretary Cheryl Ikemiya. The Board elected Anthony Armstrong to fill a vacant Board seat for the remainder of the 2015-2017 term.

The Board agreed to set a date in October for a Fundraising lunch or dinner.

The Religious Education Committee discussed providing new ongoing events, including Introduction to Buddhism class, Adult Buddhist Education classes, the monthly Dharma Gathering on the first Saturday each month and a monastic/vegetarian and Japanese confectionary cooking classes.

The Special Events committee will focus on concerts, exhibitions and film screenings. The musician Kaoru Watanabe is confirmed for a performance on Sunday April 2nd.

The Ukulele Strumming Circle's new leader is Richard Gross. The group will continue to meet twice monthly.

Rev. Sonam Wangdi Bhutia from Nepal will visit the Eastern District during July 24-30. Rev. Ikeda and Isabelle Bernard are working with Rev. Ron Miyamura, Rev. Kuwahara and Hoshina Seki on this special event. He will conduct various events during his visit including Wednesday evening meditation and talk, Saturday public lecture and workshop, as well as the Sunday dharma talks in Japanese and in English.

KOKORO

***www.NewYorkBuddhist
Church.org***

212-678-0305

***Resident Minister: Rev. Earl
Ikeda***

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subscriptions and mailing
address updates, please
contact:

Nancy Okada at 212-678-
0305.

Contributors: Rev. Earl Ikeda,
Ruth Funai, M.A. Koue Akemi
Ishida, Karl Palma, Nancy
Okada, Isabelle Bernard,
Cheryl Ikemiya, Gary Jaskula,
Mac Evans, Tony Di Tomasso,
Brian McGurgan, Richard
Gross, Tony Armstrong,
Chieko Nakagawa and the
Buddhist Women's
Association mailing team.

**Articles and especially
photographs are welcome
and will be published subject
to suitability of content and
availability of space.**

**Send contributions to Kokoro
Editors: Gail Inaba,
ginaba@optonline.net and
Mariko Kato at
mkatony@hotmail.com.**

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join as a pledged member.
Membership Forms are in
the entrance to the Temple.**

**Deadline for submitting articles, info
and photos for the April Issue of Kokoro
is Wednesday, March 15**



kokoro

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331 Riverside Drive

New York, NY 10025

www.newyorkbuddhistchurch.org

