

# NENJU NEWS

JSBTC



JODO SHINSHU BUDDHIST  
TEMPLES OF CANADA

Volume 3, Issue 3

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## JSBTC VISION AND MISSION

**VISION:** A community living a life of gratitude on the path of the Buddha Dharma

**MISSION:** Acting as a catalyst for growing a network of Jodo Shinshu Buddhist centres through dynamic and focused leadership



## New Year's Greeting

Happy New Year, everyone! At the beginning of this New Year, I would like to extend my best regards to you all.

Over these past couple of years, we have had to adjust our lives in accordance with the scale of the spread of COVID-19. I would like to offer my deepest condolences to those who fell victim to the disease and express my sympathies to those who are undergoing treatment. I would also like to express my respect and sincere gratitude to the doctors, nurses, and frontline medical professionals who have been engaging in the treatment of infected people, as well as all essential workers who have made it possible for us to continue with our lives.

This infectious disease has not only greatly affected the life of each one of us, but also revealed many issues that had been contained in our society. Sakyamuni Buddha, who passed on the Dharma to us, made clear of the fact that we cannot see the truth because we are too attached to our own thought. Therefore, it is only natural that conflicts and divisions come about in a society in which those who like us, fundamentally self-centered beings, act in accordance based on one's own thought.



In the following *wasan* poem, Shinran Shonin deeply reflected on himself and described what we humans are like:

Although I take refuge in the true Pure Land way,

It is hard to have a true and sincere mind.

This self is false and insincere;

I completely lack a pure mind. (*Hymns of the Dharma-ages*)

As the *wasan* shows, we are basically incapable of accepting the reality of this world, such as, dependent origination, impermanence, and no-self. And because of this we constantly suffer. Only through being aware of and appreciating Amida Buddha's compassionate and salvific working, are we enabled to accept our true self. Shinran Shonin clarified that such ignorance is the very reason why Amida Buddha's salvific working has reached every one of us. Keeping in mind that we are always embraced in Amida's compassionate Light, let us live each day to the fullest, even though we have yet to see the end of the tunnel.

I feel truly assured hearing that many of you have been making efforts to share the Jodo Shinshu teaching within the greater society through various and innovative ways despite the current situation. It is my hope that your temples will continue serving as your spiritual home, and therefore, I humbly ask for your understanding and cooperation in support of your temples. I would like to conclude my new year's greeting with my heartfelt appreciation to you all.

January 1, 2022

**OHTANI Kojun**

**Monshu**

Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha

### **Holiday Season: “*Dana*” Generosity**

As Buddhists, we try to live respecting and admiring the truth and the goodness of people of all religious traditions. So please enjoy the winter holiday season of its many diverse cultural and religious backgrounds! We make a choice of a gift not knowing precisely what is desired by the receiver. In return we will be receiving gifts from others who do not know exactly what it is that we desire. The important thing to remember is the ‘spirit’ of the season which is to give with no conditions and to have a sense of gratitude and appreciation as the receiver.

What better time is there to practice *dana*, the Pali word for generosity? *Dana* is about giving with no attachments or from any thought of receiving anything in return. It is a gift of gratitude and of letting go of the sense of self that feels the need to acquire more and more in our perpetual scavenger hunt for happiness. It is my wish that all the temples in Canada share the Buddhist practice of ‘giving’ with a hope that we can use this joyful time to expand our generous hearts and give to local charities of your choosing.

This is a time when we are able to express our appreciation to so many people who have helped us throughout the whole year. I would like to thank you all for the support you have given to your local Sanghas. I would like to express my appreciation to the senseis and temple directors for their dedication in maintaining and keeping our temples vital and moving ever forward. As we enjoy wonderful family time during the festive season, I would like to wish all of you a very happy holiday season and New Year!

In gassho,

**Tatsuya Aoki, Bishop,**

Jodo Shinshu Buddhist Temples of Canada



## Gratitude for the Jodo Shinshu Teaching

This year we will once again have the opportunity to observe the Commemorative Service of the Establishment of the Jodo Shinshu Teaching together. This service's name, 'Establishment of the Jodo Shinshu Teaching,' refers to Shinran Shonin's systematic presentation of the Jodo Shinshu teaching through his main writing, *Kyōgyōshinshō*, or *The True Teaching, Practice, and Realization of the Pure Land Way*. In this work, he clarified how Amida Buddha's compassionate working, or Other Power, reaches and guides each of us. This annual observance is a great opportunity for us to deepen our gratitude for the teaching.

The founder of Buddhism, Sakyamuni Buddha revealed the reality of this world as "everything is changing" and "all things are without self." However, ordinary beings like us are not able to accept this reality, and that is why we struggle constantly. Typical examples are the four difficulties expounded by Sakyamuni Buddha, that is, birth, aging, illness, and death. We, who possess blind passions of greed, anger, and ignorance, cannot escape from suffering until the moment that life ends.

Shinran Shonin used the expression 'foolish beings filled with blind passions' to describe us, those who are not able to accept this reality. Amida Tathagata wishes to save us, who are drowning in the darkness of blind passions, and continues to work with compassion in the Nembutsu, "Namo Amida Butsu." As Shinran Shonin wrote in a hymn,

Karmic evil is from the beginning without real form;  
It is the result of delusional thought and invertedness.  
(*Hymns of the Dharma-Age*, Verse 107)

The compassion of the Tathagata is grounded in true reality, which begins to work prior to human cognition, and thus embraces all life equally and takes it as it is without abandoning anyone.

Shinran Shonin described his understanding in another verse as "attaining Buddhahood through the nembutsu is the true essence of the Pure Land way."

Since shinjin [entrusting heart] arises from the Vow,  
We attain Buddhahood through the nembutsu by the [Vow's] spontaneous working.  
The spontaneous working is itself the fulfilled land;  
Our realization of supreme nirvana is beyond doubt. (*Hymn of the Pure Land Masters*, Verse 82)

Jodo Shinshu is the teaching that we will attain enlightenment beyond form and become buddhas in the "Pure Land of naturalness" through shinjin alone. In shinjin we accept without doubt the heart of Amida Tathagata's Vow of "Namo Amida Butsu" – "Entrust yourself to me. I will liberate you just as you are".

When we are touched by this warm compassion and learn of Amida Tathagata's wish for our life, we are empowered to live at ease, share joy and sadness with people, and a world of mutual respect and support opens up. With ease and joy, Shinran Shonin walked the path of gratitude for being saved by Tathagata's compassion. Aspiring to learn from his way of living and transmit his teaching to the next generations, I would like to express the essentials of the Jodo Shinshu Teaching in the following passage.

## Gratitude for the Jodo Shinshu Teaching

Namo Amida Butsu.

“Entrust yourself to me. I will liberate you just as you are.” This is the calling voice of Amida.

My blind passions are embraced in the Buddha’s awakening,

So the Buddha calls to me “I will liberate you just as you are.”

Gratefully responding to the Buddha’s call,

I find that I am already on the path that leads to the Pure Land.

And the Nembutsu flows freely from my thankful heart.

Living with the Dharma as my guide

Softens my rigid heart and mind.

Gratitude for the gift of life I have received

Frees me from becoming lost in greed and anger,

And allows me to share a warm smile and speak gentle words.

Sharing in the joy and sadness of others,

I shall strive to live each day to its fullest.

In 2023 we are going to conduct a Joint Celebration of the 850th Anniversary of Shinran Shonin’s Birth and 800th Anniversary of the Establishment of the Jodo Shinshu Teaching. In gratefulness for the birth of Shinran Shonin and his expounding of the teachings of Jodo Shinshu, let’s recite “Gratitude for the Jodo Shinshu Teaching” together, work together, and live a life of Nembutsu together to spread his teaching. As for “Our Pledge,” delivered in my Dharma message at the 2018 Perpetual Memorial and Autumn Service, it is my hope that it will continue to be recited by everyone on various occasions, particularly by young people and those who are not familiar with Buddhism or Jodo Shinshu, and that it will lead to closer connections with the teaching.

April 15, 2021

**OHTANI Kojun**

**Monshu**

Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha

## Our Pledge

Reaching out to others,

I will share a smile and gentle words.

Just like the Buddha, who always calls out with Aloha.

Breaking away from my greed, anger and ignorance,

I will try to live in peace and harmony.

Just like the Buddha, who shares tranquility and kindness with all.

Moving forward from self-centeredness,

I will share a life of joy and sorrow with others.

Just like the Buddha, whose caring heart always embraces us.

Realizing that I live because of others,

I will strive to live life to the fullest with an attitude of gratitude.

Just like the Buddha, who promises to embrace us all.

## SCROLLS ON THE *NAIJIN*

As you sit in the *hondo*, looking at the *naijin*, you see four scrolls. The ones immediately adjacent to the altar are Shinran Shonin and Rennyo Shonin. But have you ever wondered “Who are those seven people on that scroll on the left side of the altar?” You may know that they are referred to as The Seven Patriarchs, and you may have heard your minister mention Shan-tao (or Zendo), but which one is he? And who are the rest of them? And who is the person alone on the scroll on the opposite side of the *naijin*?

### THE SEVEN PATRIARCHS\*

#### NAGARJUNA

The first of the Seven Patriarchs is Nagarjuna. He lived in the 2nd—3rd century AD in southern India, and is known for advocating the teaching of emptiness (*sunyata*). The *Shoshinge* refers to his two paths: one is difficult but the other, reliance on the vows of Amida Buddha, is the path of easy practice. Nagarjuna is sometimes credited with writing *Junirai* (Twelve Verses of Reverence).

#### VASUBANDHU

Vasubandhu lived about 200 years after Nagarjuna and was born in north-western India. He was a noted Hinayana scholar but converted to Mahayana Buddhism. In his writing *Objorono – Treatise on the Pure Land* he states that one should rely on Tathagata Amitabha single heartedly and wish to be born into the Pure Land of Bliss.

#### T’AN-LUAN

T’an-luan was born in the 4th—5th century in northern China. He wrote a detailed commentary on Vasubandhu’s *Treatise on the Pure Land*, emphasizing the first line: “*With singleness of heart, I rely on the world honoured one*”, maintaining that singleness of heart arises from single, pure and continuous mind. He states that the *aspect of going to the Pure Land* and *aspect of our returning to this world* are both possible only through the workings

#### TAO-CH’O

Tao-ch’o was also born in northern China, approximately one hundred years after T’an-luan. In one of his major works, he divides Buddhism into the Sacred Path and the Pure Land Path. The Sacred path leads to attainment in this world by one’s own power while the Pure Land Path leads to attainment in the Pure Land through receiving Amida Buddha’s light. Believing that people were living in a period of decadence, he taught that the only way to become a Buddha was through the Pure Land Path.

#### SHAN-TAO

Shan-tao (Zendo in Japanese) (613—681) was a direct disciple of Tao-ch’o and lived during the height of the flourishing of Buddhism in the Tang Dynasty in China. Of his many writings, the most important treatise is the *Commentary on the Mediation Sutra*. In addition to his many important teachings, he also taught the parable of *Two Rivers and a White Path*, which describes a traveler walking a white narrow path that stretches between a river of raging water (greed) and a river of fire (anger). From the eastern shore, Shakyamuni Buddha urges the traveler to go forward on the white path while Amida Buddha beckons the traveler from the western bank. It was during this time period that Buddhism arrived in Japan, and the Pure Land tradition

Dr. Taitetsu Unno, a renowned American Buddhist scholar, used this parable in his book *River of Fire, River of Water: an Introduction to Pure Land Tradition of Shin Buddhism*.



## GENSHIN (ESHIN SOZU)

Genshin (942—1017) was born in the Nara prefecture in the Heian Period. One of his most famous works was called *Collection on the Essentials for Attaining birth in the Pure Land*. Through this writing, he greatly influenced the people of that period to practice the nembutsu. He encouraged people to practice the nembutsu exclusively rather than practice it along with other Buddhist practices.

## HONEN SHONIN

Honen Shonin was born in 1133 in Okayama prefecture. As a monk, he studied a number of different Buddhist doctrines, but in 1176, influenced by Genshin's *Collection on the Essentials for Attaining birth in the Pure Land* and Shan-tao's *Commentary on the Meditation Sutra*, he abandoned other paths and single-mindedly entered the path of the nembutsu. He built a temple at Yoshimizu in Kyoto, teaching the way of the nembutsu in simple, common terms and accepting all people, regardless of class, age or sect. Honen's major writing is *Passages on the Selection of the Nembutsu in the Original Vow*. As a result of this writing, Honen established the independent sect called Jodo Shu or Pure Land sect. Shinran Shonin was one of those who gathered at Yoshimizu and accepted the essence of Honen Shonin's teachings. Shinran Shonin then developed Honen Shonin's teachings further and founded the Jodo Shinshu school of Buddhism.

The scroll on the other side of the *naijin* is Prince Shotoku.

## PRINCE SHOTOKU

Prince Shotoku was born in 574 and ruled Japan as Regent from 593 to 622. He is regarded as the "father of Japanese Buddhism." He made Buddhism the state religion by constructing major Buddhist temples such as Horyu-ji near Nara. His goal was to create an harmonious society. Recognized as a great intellectual in a period of reform, Shotoku was a devout Buddhist but was also well read in Chinese literature and influenced by Chinese philosophy and political thought. In 604, he created his Seventeen Article Constitution, which set out the basis for an harmonious society. The 10th article of his Constitution is contained in the *Seiten* and is often referred to. It is incredibly relevant today, fourteen hundred years later:

*Let us cease from wrath, and refrain from angry looks. Nor let us be resentful when others differ from us. For all beings have hearts, and each heart has its own leanings. Their right is our wrong, and our right is their wrong. We are not unquestionably sages, nor are they unquestionably fools. We are both simply ordinary beings. How can anyone lay down a rule by which to distinguish right from wrong? For we are all, one with another, wise and foolish, like a ring which has no end.*



\* Information summarized from "The Guide to Jodo Shinshu Teachings and Practices" by Rev. K.S. Ikuta and Trudy Gahlinger

## UPDATE FROM THE BOARD

There were several virtual meetings in October, as various JSBTC groups held their regular fall interim meetings. First, the Board met with the Ministers' Association for a good discussion of issues the Ministers are dealing with, especially the stress and workload of having both in-person and online services. Then, the Board had its own extended meeting, starting with a presentation from Sensei Tanis Moore on "Social Engagement". Tanis Sensei introduced the Board to a number of concepts on strategic engagement and interfaith dialogue, including the Charter of Compassion project, <https://charterforcompassion.org/> and <https://youtu.be/q15aPytLbbU>. The Board had an interesting discussion following the presentation and asked Tanis Sensei to present this material to the JSBTC AGM in April, 2022. For those delegates who attended the 2019 AGM in Vancouver, this presentation compliments the panel discussion led by Professor Jessica Main at that AGM and continues the conversation on the importance of making connections, having conversations and giving time.

Based on suggestions from some of the Temples, it is likely that future AGMs will alternate between being in-person one year and online the next. Since the past two AGMs have been online, the Board has decided that the AGM for 2022 will be held in-person but that it will also include online components for those delegates who might not feel comfortable attending.

**The AGM will be held at the Steveston Buddhist Temple on April 22, 23, and 24. More information on the AGM will be forthcoming.**

Further, the Board discussed JSBTC's future direction and the need for more representation from the Temples across Canada. The Board recognizes that the Temples struggle to find their own board members and volunteers, but it is important that the Temples make an effort to have representation on the national organization. Currently, there is no representative on the national board from any temple east of Winnipeg, nor is there representation of several of the larger temples. The Board encourages people to volunteer with the national organization to ensure that all the Temples' voices are heard.

The Women's Federation also held its interim fall meeting virtually in October, with delegates from across Canada. Building on its successes this past year, the WF is again planning on connecting with seniors across Canada ("We Care"), holding another Zoom information session, undertaking a formal Ministers' Appreciation program, and initiating planning for the 2023 World Buddhist Women's Convention to build in Kyoto. The delegates were lucky enough to have a demonstration from two Kelowna Buddhist Temple members on how to make spam musubi! Unfortunately, since it was online, there were no tasting samples. Finally, the WF is making arrangements to have Rev. Christina Yanko speak via Zoom at their April annual meeting.

The Living Dharma Centre is supporting Rev. Dr. Ken Tanaka's plan to revise his most recent book, *Jewels*, to develop a Canadian edition. Dr. Tanaka is coordinating the writing of new chapters for this edition and working with a Canadian publisher. The LDC will be providing financial support for this effort. As well, the LDC Zoom Dharma School continues to be held once a month, providing Dharma School to temples that do not yet have in-person dharma school and to children who do not live near a Temple. Check out the schedule on the next page.

Despite the fact that the past two years have been difficult for everyone, we continue to share the Dharma.



# LDC Zoom Dharma School Information

Once monthly from 10:00 to 10:45am B.C. time on the fourth Saturday of each month.  
Zoom Invitation will be sent approximately one week beforehand.

Short Service lead by a JSBTC Minister or Assistant-Minister.  
15 minute Dharma School Activity/lesson for three age categories:

- Grade Three and under
- Grade Four to Seven
- Grade Eight and up

We have learned about Impermanence, Interdependence, Nirvana, and the first 3 of the FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS since January 2021.

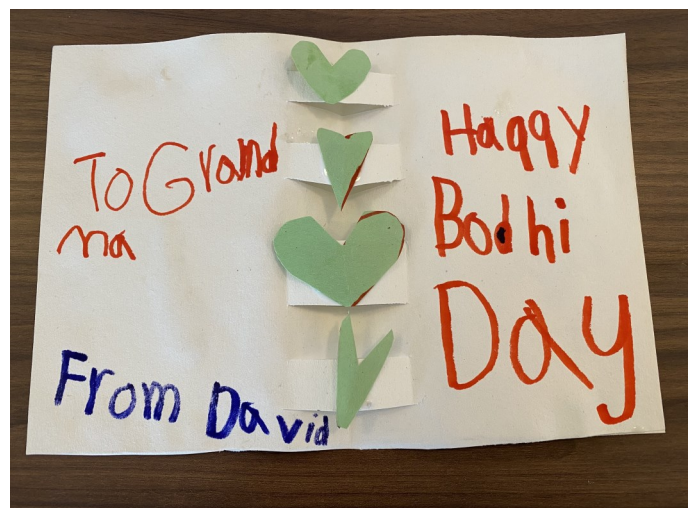
We will finish this School Year by learning about the EIGHTFOLD NOBLE PATH

- Oct 23<sup>rd</sup> - Shakyamuni Buddha's Eight Paths to try to Smooth Your Bumpy Road (Fourth Noble Truth)
- Nov 27<sup>th</sup> - How Shakyamuni Buddha Says We Should Try to Think and See
- Dec 11<sup>th</sup> - We will join a Dharma School being hosted on December 11<sup>th</sup> by Steveston Buddhist Temple
- Jan 22<sup>nd</sup> - What Shakyamuni Buddha says We Should Try to Say and Not Say
- Feb 26<sup>th</sup> - What Does the Golden Chain mean by Pure and Beautiful Deeds?
- Mar 26<sup>th</sup> - Changing Bad Habits is Worth Your Hard Work!
- Apr 23<sup>rd</sup> - Focusing on Now
- May 28<sup>th</sup> - Practicing To Focus On One Thing at a Time
- June 25<sup>th</sup> - Using What We Learned About the 8 Paths Shakyamuni Buddha Said Try to Follow

Dharma School Services and Classes will never be recorded. If you are shy, you can always turn off your Video once we sign you into the Zoom meeting.

- Oct 23<sup>rd</sup> Grant Ikuta Sensei - Introducing the 8 fold Noble Path
- Nov 27<sup>th</sup> Roland Ikuta Sensei – Right Thought and Right View
- Jan 22<sup>nd</sup> Moore Sensei – Right Speech
- Feb 26<sup>th</sup> Ouchi Sensei – Right Action and Right Livelihood
- Mar 26<sup>th</sup> Wilson Sensei – Right Effort
- Apr 23<sup>rd</sup> Yuasa Sensei – Right Mindfulness
- May 28<sup>th</sup> Aoki Socho – Right Concentration
- June 25<sup>th</sup> Minister to be determined

Dec. 11th Bodhi Day Dharma School craft project



***JSBTC AGM***

***Steveston Buddhist Temple***

***April 22, 23, and 24***

***IN-PERSON AND ONLINE***



## **Ocean 2: Further Introduction to Shin Buddhism in the West and Beyond (The Seven Phases of the Pure Land Way)**

Dr. Rev. Ken Tanaka will be holding a once a month ten-part course building on his book *Ocean*, with an approach that makes it easier to understand the uniqueness of Shin Buddhism, which many find difficult to grasp when it is described as “a form of Buddhism in which a person is saved *merely* by reciting the Name.”

This course is for those who want to learn more about

- 1) Shinran (the founder of Shin Buddhism),
- 2) the deeper meaning of Amida, Pure Land, Shinjin, Nembutsu, practice, social engagement, and other main teachings, and
- 3) tips to deal more effectively with the ups and downs of ordinary lives: family, work, school, and human relations.

It is also meant for those who

- 1) experience the challenges and difficulties of living,
- 2) have become more aware of their personal imperfections, and
- 3) are in a sincere search for greater meaning and fulfillment in their lives.

**Dates:** Second Sunday of each month in 2022 (except for January and August), beginning February 13th  
(Each class will be recorded)

**Time:** 5pm - 6:30 pm (Pacific Time)

**Course Tuition:** \$50 - \$100 for the entire course (to be donated). (The *range* in the tuition is meant to accommodate your ability or willingness to pay. You are asked to donate the tuition payment to your favorite Buddhist organization or to another charity. You are encouraged to mention to the recipient that the donation is made in lieu of the tuition payment for this course. Dr. Tanaka does not accept any payment.)

**Inquiries:** Check with your minister for more details or contact Dr. Tanaka, directly at: [chacotanaka@gmail.com](mailto:chacotanaka@gmail.com)

**Reference Books:** You are not required to purchase these materials. The first three will be made available to you free of charge, and the 4<sup>th</sup> book (by J. Ducor) is optional.

1) Takamaro Shigaraki. Tran. by David Matsumoto. *Heart of the Shin Buddhist Path - A Life of Awakening*. Wisdom Publications, 2013. (pdf version of selected pages will be made available free of charge to those who register for the course.)

2) Kenneth Tanaka. *Ocean: An Introduction to Jodo-Shinshu Buddhism in America*. WisdomOcean Publications, 2017. (digital text is available free of charge at: <http://www.yamadera.info/ocean/ocean-index.htm>)

3) Kenneth Tanaka. *Jewels: An Introduction to American Buddhism for Youth, Scouts and the Young at Heart*. BDK America, 2020. (pdf can be downloaded free of charge; printed book is available in the U.S. for \$6.00 (including shipping) at: <https://www.bdkamerica.org/book/jewels-introduction-buddhism-youth-scouts-and-young-heart>)

4) Jérôme Ducor. *Shinran and Pure Land Buddhism*. Jodo Shinshu International Office, 2021. (This can be purchased at Buddhist Churches of America Bookstore \$20: <https://bcabookstore.mybigcommerce.com>)



**JSBTC**



JODO SHINSU BUDDHIST TEMPLES OF CANADA

# JSBTC Japan Tour 2023

Shinran Shonin 850th Birth Anniversary  
Jodoshinshu 800th Foundation Anniversary Kyosan Hoyo  
&  
17th World Buddhist Women's Convention

## Year of 2023

- May 07 Leave Canada for Japan
- May 08 Arrive in Japan, free at leisure
- May 09 Full day Kyoto and Otsu tour (TBD)
- May 10 Celebration memorial service  
at Nishi Hongwanji Temple
- May 11 WBW Convention at Kyoto ICC
- May 12 WBW Convention at Kyoto ICC

*"Life of Nembutsu enables  
us to appreciate every  
encounter"*



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