

FEBRUARY 2025

KALAVINKA

A NEWSLETTER OF EKOJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE

NEHANE -- THE PASSING OF SIDDHARTHA



MAKE YOURSELF A LIGHT

To his disciples the Buddha said, “My disciples, my last moment has come, but do not forget that death is only passing of the physical body ...the true Buddha is not a human body, it is Enlightenment. A human body must die, but the wisdom of Enlightenment will exist forever in the truth of the Dharma and in the practice of the Dharma”

And then he said, “Make of yourself a light. Rely upon yourself, do not depend on anyone else.” In these immortal words, the Buddha taught us that there was something greater than the physical body. He was pointing to the power of Enlightenment, a power that all beings possess. We must search for the inner light, which is the infinite Buddha within. Nobody can find the Buddha for us. Each person must find the Buddha within him or herself. And when we find the Buddha, we realize that it was this Buddha -- the great power of Wisdom and Compassion -- that has been operating within throughout timeless time.

(Rev. Kenryu T. Tsuji, The Heart of the Buddha Dharma)



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NEW YEAR'S GREETING FROM GOMONSHU KOJUN OHTANI
GOMONSHU KOJUN OHTANI

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

As in previous years, many people throughout the world have been affected by natural disasters, including earthquakes, floods, and forest fires. I would like to offer my deepest condolences to all who have perished in those calamities. I would also like to express my sympathies to those who are still coping with the dire situations. It is my sincere hope that all who have been affected will soon be able to return to normalcy.

In addition to the continuing Russian invasion of Ukraine that began in February 2022, armed conflict in the Middle East since October 2023 has intensified, putting a toll on civilians. As Buddhists, let us embrace the words of Sakyamuni Buddha that "Everyone fears violence and is scared of death. In consideration of all life, do not kill and do not make others kill."

We, as human beings who have received life in this world, shall have our human rights equally guaranteed regardless of reason, and must never have our lives threatened. However, in reality, conflicts and terrorist attacks have occurred everywhere in the world and for many people, their right to live and exist has been threatened. As Buddhists as well as Nembutsu followers who aspire to achieve peace, we must keep seriously in our hearts the words of Sakyamuni Buddha as well as Shinran Shonin who aspired for a peaceful world in pursuing our endeavor of contributing toward world peace and security.

Through the Jodo Shinshu teaching, we are guided to appreciate Amida Buddha's working that enables us to become aware of our true self. Being caught up in our self-centered thinking and desires, we are unable to accept the Universal Truth of dependent origination and impermanence, and that is why we constantly suffer from our human desires.

Unable to leave us in such a state, Amida Buddha continuously works to lead us to the Dharma. By regarding each individual as a fellow traveler following the same path being guided and embraced by Amida Buddha, we are enabled to respect and help each other while courageously coping with difficult social issues. Let us continue listening and appreciating Amida Buddha's working as Buddhist followers while cherishing each and every day.

JANUARY 1, 2025

OHTANI Kojun
Monshu
Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha



84,000 THOUGHTS

By Rev. Kurt Rye

OUR DENOMINATION – JODO SHIN BUDDHISM

When the Ekoji board asked me to conduct a weekly service by zoom, it was an interesting proposal. The desire was to develop a service

held during the week to offer individuals an opportunity to take a pause from their daily lives by sharing the Buddhist teachings. The service format would include silent sitting, chanting, a Dharma talk and time for an open discussion with those in attendance. The resulting service is called Dharma Breeze and is held every Wednesday at 7:00 PM EST. Everyone is welcome. More information is available on the Ekoji webpage.

The participants' experience with the Buddhist teachings can vary from those who were born into a Buddhist family to those whose first exposure to the teachings might be attending the Dharma Breeze service. This often leads to discussions of an individual's understanding and personal connection to the Buddhist teachings, and why certain Buddhist paths appeal to different personalities. This can progress to a discussion regarding the different schools of Buddhism with their varying views on the Dharma and practices.

As the person leading the discussion group, I'm often asked what school of Buddhism is practiced at Ekoji and how it can differ from other schools. Ekoji is part of the Jodo Shinshu school of Buddhism which is a Pure Land tradition. As with other schools of Buddhism which developed in Japan in the 12th century, the emphasis of practice was revised. It was changed to the perspective of the everyday layperson. It can be referred to as householder Buddhism since one does not need to take monastic vows, or give up their daily lives.

One of the key teaching our founder Shinran Shonin shared that demonstrates us practicing Buddhism in our daily lives, is the concept of "Foolish being" (bombyu). This teaching illustrates every person is full of blind attachments to objects and ideas. It also is an expression of a person's spiritual ignorance, or lack of understanding of the teachings.

Our relation to attachments is one of the core concepts of the Buddhist teachings. The Buddha taught that it is our connection, or attachment, that binds us to a thought that makes it difficult to see things as they truly are. It is the understanding that when we experience an event, we make assumptions consciously or unconsciously. For example, we might see a flower, which is simply a flower. In our mind we might add that it is pretty, ugly, colorful, or smelly. All these ideas are from our mind, not the fact they are added upon a simple flower. As Buddha said, "We create the world with our thoughts."

(Our Denomination: Cont. on pg. 3)

(Our Denomination : Cont from Pg 3.)

Spiritual ignorance does not connote a minimal knowledge of the Buddhist teachings doctrinally. Rather, it is the understanding that most of us in our daily lives don't always use the Buddhist teachings to put our daily situations in context. It is our predisposition to see the world from our own egoistical point of view. This is not a self-critical reflection upon us to cause guilt or self-doubt. Rather it is an opportunity to expand beyond our everyday self. It is to go beyond our own ego-driven world view. A refocus on our relationship with reality and touch the true essence of the Dharma.

In Shinran's view if we truly understand that we are imperfect beings, it can help break the ego-centric way we view the world. If we can break out of our dualistic view of our relationship with the Buddhist teachings, it would be a transformative view that we are already brought to awareness of the wisdom of the teachings. Shinran teaches that true wisdom is only understood by the heart and mind of one who has awakened to the compassion of the teachings. One, then, truly realizes we are foolish beings. This liberates us to lead a more genuine life by truly seeing things as they are, without our attachments and a clouded perception: To live a life of gratitude that we are both supported and enriched with the Buddhist teachings.

Namo Amida Butsu

EKOJI'S VIRTUAL "DHARMA BREEZE" PROGRAM OF A SERVICE AND DISCUSSION WITH REV. KURT RYE WILL BE HELD EVERY WEDNESDAY EVENING, AT 7:00 PM.



WEDNESDAYS
7 PM ET
EKOJI.ORG

DHARMA BREEZE WILL INCLUDE: 3-MINUTE MEDITATION, CHANTING, DHARMA MESSAGE AND A SHORT DISCUSSION.

RSVP FOR THE ZOOM INFO USING THIS LINK:

[HTTPS://US02WEB.ZOOM.US/MEETING/REGISTER/TZMLCOGSQT0TGDIRTNNT5EYDBZXK9F2OVZJO](https://us02web.zoom.us/join/91012020000)



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: Together We Are ONE Sangha

By: Andrea Chapman

February 2025

I wish to extend my deepest condolences to the countless people who are grieving a loss from the Flight 5342 collision. It is impossible to make sense of such a tragedy although my mind is steadfast in seeking an explanation. In quieter moments, the Dharma is there to remind me we are all connected and that is why we are grieving as ONE. Namo Amida Butsu.

(This Visit by Rev. Umezu and Rev. Nagata, has been Postponed to Later. But When It is Rescheduled, Join Us For A GREAT Seminar!) Soon Rev. Umezu and Rev. Brian Nagata will visit Ekoji. They are willing to answer your questions about living a life as a Shin Buddhist. We have established an email address, run2ekoji@gmail.com, to which you can submit those queries.

If you are new to Buddhism, or have crossed over from another faith, like me, you may not be sure how to pose your question, or you may even feel like your question might be silly or illogical. Understandably so, as there is so much to learn, and in the absence of a resident minister, it can feel overwhelming. Please take advantage of this opportunity and ask what is on your mind. I assure you, if you have the question, someone else is also seeking that answer.

At the recent Board of Directors planning session, we talked about what it might look like to have an Adult Dharma School at Ekoji, as well as other ways in which we can instill confidence in our members and lay leaders to speak about Jodo Shinshu Buddhism and Ekoji Buddhist Temple. What would you say if someone asked you "What is your practice?", "Why did you become a Buddhist?", "What does Namo Amida Butsu mean?". All very common questions for newcomers and ideally we could all answer them with ease.

Buddhist Education is one way to do that, and we are so excited to welcome Laverne Imori back to Ekoji as a Minister's Assistant. Laverne was a longtime member, past President of the Board, and has remained a steadfast advocate for Ekoji. She will primarily be supporting the temple via Zoom with plans to visit us several times a year. You can learn more about her experiences and her journey to Jodo Shinshu Buddhism in her Echo Ekoji podcast interview: <https://youtu.be/52E-OmXu088?si=6DG1hyAXIXt0EEV>

During his recent visit, Dr. George Tanabe suggested as part of our growth strategy we may also want to form some social groups at Ekoji. In years past we enjoyed an active women's group which would visit museums, go to the movies, attend concerts and such. Albeit short lived, there was also a group called Sake with Sensei (that still makes me chuckle). If you would like to follow up on Dr. Tanabe's suggestion and form a club or other social group at Ekoji, let me know! Some possible suggestions: art / crafting club, writing club, cooking club, photography club, parenting group, and so forth.

Thank you in advance for your continued support and enthusiasm to try new things and meet new people. Together we are ONE Sangha.

Namo Amida Butsu

EKOJI 2025 SNOW POLICY

As we head into the colder weather, please note that Ekoji generally follows Fairfax County public school closures (fcps.edu). For Ekoji, we will try to let everyone know of temple closures via email and social media as soon as closure decisions are made.

Note that the Board has a very high bar for deciding to plow the parking lot, since plowing is extremely costly. If we decide to cancel in-person services, we will try to switch to virtual instead.

For Dharma School classes, we will probably cancel and let the students play in the snow instead.



JOIN OUR TEMPLE

**THE EKOJI BUDDHIST
THE TEMPLE OF THE GIFT OF LIGHT**

We are committed to growing a worldwide Sangha and invite you to join our diverse community. Explore the benefits of membership by visiting our membership portal at: <https://ekojibuddhisttemple.wildapricot.org/join-us>

ALL OUR WELCOME -- COME AS YOU ARE



EKOJI – THE TEMPLE OF THE GIFT OF LIGHT -- SHARING THE DHARMA

SERVICES

- Regular Sunday Services – Sunday 11:00 am
- Dharma Breeze – Wednesday, 7:00 pm
- Shotsuki Service – First Sunday of each month
- Meditation Session, Weekly, Thurs. evening 7:30 pm
- Children’s Dharma School – 9:30-10:30 am (20 Students for 2004-05 year)
- Special Life Markers Services
 - *Hatsumairi – first service usually for children*
 - *Weddings*
 - *Kieishiki – Affirmation Services*
 - *Funerals*
 - *Memorial Services*
- Other Services

SANGHA FELLOWSHIP

- Young Buddhist Association (YBA) – Started in 2024 for Buddhists in their early 20s and 30s.
- Nen Daiko – Ekoji affiliated renowned Taiko Group since 1994
- Dounen Daiko – Nen Daiko’s Youth Taiko Group since 2017
- Monthly Ekoji Podcast, “Echo Ekoji,” and learn about our fascinating Sangha Members
- Participation to meet fellow Sangha members from other East Coast Temples, Churches and Buddhist Organizations through the EBL

DEDICATED RELIGIOUS ADVICE AND COUNSELING WITH REV. KURT RYE

1. Rev Rye has dedicated Wednesdays Office Hours from 1-2:00 pm
2. or Schedule a Zoom or Phone Meeting

LET’S TALK

- Regular Hybrid Discussions after each Sunday Service
- Regular Discussions as part of Dharma Breeze Sessions – Wed, 7:00 pm
- Virtual Movie Discussions with Buddhist Lessons, 3rd Sundays of each month -2:00 pm – Led by Ann and Joran Stegner
- Periodic Seminars such as the virtual seminar with Rev. Don Castro on an “ Eco-Dharma “
- A Safe Space for a casual conversation with fellow travelers on the Buddhist Path

STAYING IN TOUCH

- Weekly End of Service Announcements
- Weekly E-Messages about coming activities at Ekoji
- Monthly Kalavinka newsletter including: Rev. Rye’s Thoughts, full Treasurers Report and Secretary’s Board Minutes Report
- In Development – a New Web Site
- Meetings with the Sangha like the Annual Meeting

WORKING TOGETHER – TAKING CARE OF OUR RELIGIOUS HOME

- Help in Cleaning Up the Temple
- Join the Garden Maintenance and Other Programs when the call for help goes out.
- Help the Temple Financially
- Check with the Temple Pres. where volunteers are needed on both long (Committees) and short term basis. REMEMBER, EKOJI IS A 100% VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATION

**SHARE YOUR IDEAS AND SUGGESTIONS
WITH YOUR TEMPLE BOARD**



HOW DO YOU FIND HAPPINESS?

SHARING THE DHARMA

A JOINT HYBRID SEMINAR



**WITH THE EKOJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE AND
THE WASHINGTON INTERNATIONAL BUDDHIST ASSOCIATION**

January 11, 2025

By Ken Nakamura

On a cold winter January 11 evening, about 40 members came together at Ekoji, in person or online, to listen to various Buddhist Denominations talk about the road to happiness through our enlightenment, and how we often block ourselves in walking the Buddhist Path.

Participants were Bishop Marvin Harada of the Buddhist Churches of America, who served as both the moderator for the evening and the participant from the Jodo Shinshu perspective; Bhante Uparatana from the Theravada tradition; Venerable Hyeyong from a Korean Mahayana tradition; Venerable Shjingza Rinpoche from the Vajrayana of the Tibetan Tradition; and Rev. Bup.

The evening began with each of our participants separately chanting a short sutra in the language of their tradition. In the case of Bishop Harada, he began the evening by chanting the Vandana Ti Sarana.

Bhante Uparatana said that when we see Siddhartha as the Buddha, we are actually looking at accumulation of merits in the practicing of the paramitas over eons. But in this practice, he sought the enlightenment of everyone, not just himself, and in doing so, we were told the importance of Mindfulness as part of his great heritage.

The Venerable Hyeyong discussed the path to Happiness was to “Let go of the Three Poisons of Greed, Hatred, and Ignorance.” In terms of Greed or Craving, she told us to learn to be satisfied in life for Greed has no limits. Hatred is a matter of a circle of frustration, resentment, and hostility toward situations, people, or circumstances that feed upon themselves and does not cease. But we are the ones to break that chain, we matter. And as the Venerable Hyeyong talked about Ignorance, she said that it is the lack of understanding of the Truth. We ignore what is truly important while getting caught up in the illusionary belief that something is truly important and forever when it is actually only a short-sighted pleasure.

The Venerable Shingza Rinpoche spoke to us through an interpreter, and focused on our emotions in achieving a Happy Life. The Buddha taught we have 84,000 different emotions, and talked to us about an antidote for each. He asked us where these emotions are coming from. He said there are three destructive causes as the source of these emotions – the Three Poisons of our lives, Greed, Anger,

(Happiness cont. on Pg. 8)

(Happiness: Cont. from Pg. 7)

Ignorance. He said that once we identify what we are feeling (the Three Destructive Emotions), we can examine and seek how to resolve it. We are controlled by self-directed ego, and we can seek the antidote to reverse our mind-course through mindfulness and meditation to explore the “I” and the “pain” it is causing.

Rev. Harada was the last speaker of the evening and spoke of understanding “Impermanence” as our way to Happiness. He introduced the group to the phrase, “Ichigo – Ichie”. He said that the phrase tells us to live every day as if it were the first day of our life, and also live every day as if it were the last day of our life. He said that he found the 50’s and 60’s comic Red Skelton as his teacher. He explained that “Red” would put 100%+ into each of his performances because, he said, he didn’t know if it would be his last. And so from Ichigo – Ichie, we should live our life with deep gratitude as we realize it may be the last day of our life, and we should live our life accordingly as if were the first day of our life.

As the evening had begun, each of our participating ministers again closed the evening in their own tradition. For Bishop Harada, he chose the Sutra, Shishinrai,

At the end of the evening, I was struck by the common themes of mindfulness, our suffering (big and small) arises from ego and the Three Poisons, Impermanence, and gratitude that was part of each of their traditions and found their roots in the Buddhas teachings.

The evening was co-sponsored by Ekoji and the Washington, D.C. group, the International Buddhist Association of America (IBA) led by Dr. Hebar.



From the BDK art collection on the Life of the Buddha -- “The First Turning of the Wheel of Truth -- The Emnlighented Buddha Sharing the Dharma”

**POSTPONED DUE TO ILLNESS AND INCLEMENT
WEATHER -- CHECK EKOJI ON-LINE WEEKLY UP- DATE
FOR NEW SEMINAR DATE**

**RUN, DON'T WALK
To The SHIN PATH!**



Have you been searching for meaning, purpose and happiness in your life? Did you realize that you have discovered the most practiced form of Buddhism that originated in Japan over 850 years ago?

If you're new to the Shin Path, have you ever wondered--- what are they doing? Or why are they doing that? Or how are they doing what they're doing?

If you have some basic questions about HOW to live your life as a Shin Buddhist, RUN to this seminar!

While we won't be able to answer all questions or inquiries in the time allocated for the seminar, hopefully, we'll be able to offer you practical information about the practice, history, culture and how to live as a Shin Buddhist in the 21st century.

You'll be "running" through this seminar with Rev. Kodo Umezu, retired Bishop of the Buddhist Churches of America, and Rev. Brian Nagata, Education Director for BDK America, Ekoji's benefactor.

If you have any simple questions about the practice and your life as a Shin Buddhist, please submit your questions to: Run2Ekoji@gmail.com by January 31, 2025 and we'll try to respond to your questions during the seminar.

We'll see you **on Saturday, February 8, 2025 from 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM** at the Ekoji Buddhist Temple, 6500 Lakehaven Lane, Fairfax Station, VA 22039.



BISHOP MARVIN HARADA “ON BUDDHISM AND MUSIC”

EKOJI DHARMA TALK

January 12, 2025

On January 12, Rev. Marvin Harada, Bishop of the Buddhist Churches of America, provided the Dharma Talk for Ekoji’s hybrid Sunday Morning Service. His theme was “Music and Buddhism.”

He talked about how much he liked music -- all kinds -- all genres. He said he even works at the computer listening to music.

He told the Sangha that there are things, like music, that can create magical moments in life when a thought, or feeling, or an experience is transmitted from the musician so that it lives in someone else. It can connect something with others so that both can share it.

Talking about and playing portions of pieces that resonate with him, like “Over the Rainbow,” Rev. Harada says that music can transcend both time and space, and that anyone can be moved by it. Depending upon the song and the person, and perhaps the context in which it is being heard, music can touch us deeply inside. The Dharma can be like that.

Rev. Harada asks isn’t this what the Dharma is all about? He suggested that Siddhartha did this for 40 years as he walked around northeast India after attaining his enlightenment. The transmission started, for Siddhartha, when he spoke to the five monks he had started his search with and told them what he had experienced. And for more than 2,500 years, those ideas and feelings have been transmitted from generation to generation as it became part of our lives.

Rev. Harada believes that Shinran Shonin’s experience, the founder of our denomination, can be similarly characterized. It is said that he struggled in a monastery on Mt Hiei for 20 years seeking his way to enlightenment, and felt no closer than when he had first joined the temple. He decided that he would leave this practice. However, at this time, he encountered a teacher, Honen, and a teaching, the Nembutsu Path, as a profound truth that resonated deeply within him.

Shinran transmitted this Profound Truth of the Nembutsu Path to the people of Echigo on the Japan Sea coast, and later to the people of the Kanto region, and later, over the centuries, to us at Ekoji.

Bishop Harada said that, like music, the Dharma is a living thing that is being transmitted from one person to another. And as we listen to messages that surround us all the time with an open heart and mind, whether those messages be from music or some other source, we might find, transmitted, wonderful lessons of the Dharma.

Namo Amida Butsu



JANUARY 2025 TREASURER[S] REPORT

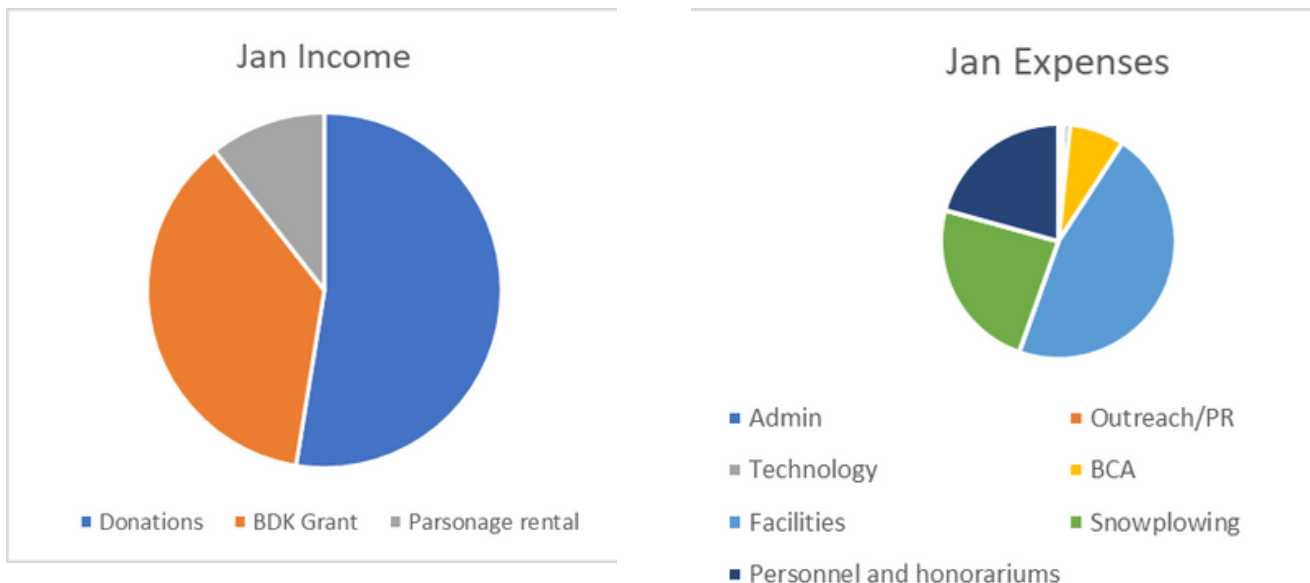
By Maya Horio, Treasurer

The Board presents this column to make transparent how we use sangha donations and our other income streams, and to illuminate the daily financial flows that happen behind the scenes, complementing the financial recap and outlook that we share at our annual sangha meeting each fall. We welcome your thoughts and questions, as directed to our temple Treasurer, Maya Horio, at ekojitreasurer@gmail.com.

Jan 2025 Finance Flows: We were pleased to welcome BCA Bishop Harada and BDK’s Dr. George Tanabe to Ekoji this month, both of whom attracted higher numbers of in-person and online service participants who were eager to start the year with the Dharma.

We were less pleased, however, to welcome the 9 inches of snow in early January, which cost more than \$3000 to plow from the temple parking lot. We had lowered our emergency facilities budget to \$10,000 for 2025 because of our new preventative facility maintenance approach, but the plowing costs ate 30% of that fund in the first month. Shin Buddhists shy away from superstitions, so in lieu of snow dances and crossed fingers, we’ll just hope that the weather causes and conditions allow for only mild temperatures for the rest of the winter!

- Income (\$9,849): Sangha membership renewals made up our largest chunk of income this month, closely followed by our monthly grant from BDK America and parsonage rental income.
- Expenses (\$16,156): Snow removal and facility expenses comprised 75% of our monetary outflows this month, followed by personnel and honorariums and our monthly BCA dues.





UPON THEIR SHOULDERS EKOJI'S PAST -- OUR PRESENT

The first Sunday of every month, Ekoji conducts a SHOTSUKI SERVICE in memory of those people whose date of death (meinichi) falls in that month. The Kalavinka provides a list in remembrance of Ekoji's members and friends who passed away during the month of the issue. Your Ekoji Buddhist Temple exists because of their devotion and efforts as they become a part of our Nembutsu history.

This Service is not for those who have passed away because they are already taken care of by the fulfillment of the 18th Vow, but it provides us an opportunity to remember, express our gratitude and reflect on their continuing influence on our lives.

Traditionally special family memorial services are held on specific years following the death of a loved one. It allows us, as a family, to remember once again those who passed away and to hear the Dharma together. Arrangements for Special Family Memorial Services may be arranged by contacting Ekoji at ekoji.info@gmail.com.

Based on the year of the passing of a loved one, for 2025 the years for Special Family Memorial Services are: 2024 – 1st Year; 2023 – 3rd Year; 2017 – 7th Year; 2011 – 13th Year; 2007 – 17th Year; 1999 – 25th Year; 1991 – 33rd Year; 1974 – 50th Year; 1924 – 100th.

FOR THE MONTH OF FEBRUARY, we will be remembering with gratitude:

JANUARY 2025

Evelyn Kitahara

- 4/22/1918 - 1/12/2001

Mariko Tamura Horita

- 12/4/1925 – 1/13/2016

Dr. Ray Murakami

- 1/24/2018

Yukio Kawamoto

- 11/13/1919 – 1/7/2019

Shigeki James "Shig" Sugiyama

- 12/19/1927 - 1/14/2019

Richard Kenichi "Dick" Amano

- 7/11/1947 – 1/15/2019

John Sutch

- 1/20/1932 – 1/11/2020

Sayoko Omori Kawamoto

- 3/23/1922 – 1/31/2023

FEBRUARY 2025

Lillian Oie

- 1/25/1940 – 2/1/1998

Fred Okamoto

- 3/21/2000

Rev. Kenryu Takashi Tsuji

- 3/1/1920 – 2/26/2004

Yone June Honda

- 4/8/2014

Kenichi Kuwabara

- 2/5/1925 – 2/23/2015

Hisao "Mat" Matsumoto

- 2/11/2018

MARCH 2025

Reiko Matsumoto

- 3/13/2016



CHILDREN'S DHARMA SCHOOL UP-DATE

By Maya Horio and Kim Ngyuen, Co- Superintendents



We kicked off our 2024-2025 Dharma School year in October—the same month that Ekoji hosted the Eastern Buddhist League (EBL) conference, which benefited Ekoji's Dharma School as well. Rev. Todd Tsuchiya participated in our monthly Dharma School service and delivered a fun Dharma message that drew from the Halloween tradition of wearing costumes. He noted how even when not in the Halloween season, we can sometimes use invisible masks to hide our true selves from others, and the power of shedding those masks and sharing our authentic selves with others. He ended by having the students join him in the recitation of “Namo Amida BOO-tsu.” Several Dharma School students also participated in the EBL obutsudan-making workshop, assembling beautiful pre-made kits built and provided by Twin Cities' Brian Tsuchiya.

Our Dharma School students also benefited from BCA Bishop Harada's annual visit to Washington DC to participate in the National Chaplains Endorsers' conference in January. Bishop Harada participated in our monthly Dharma School service and provided a wonderful Dharma message on the six realms of samsara and the juxtaposition of the states of samsara and nirvana. He spoke in language that was accessible to even our youngest Dharma School students but resonated also with the older students and adults, and several of our parents and teachers took photos of his whiteboard markings for their personal reflection.

We are repeating our same yearly schedule of one Dharma School service and two classes per month. Our Intermediate-level students continue to lead our monthly services and ring the kansho, and we follow each monthly service with a temple clean-up and “Dana Bite” community service activity. We have about 17 students enrolled this year, split among our four class levels by age. Each class aims to instill in our students a basic understanding of Buddhist terms and concepts, working towards our overall Dharma School goal of enabling our students to be able to explain Buddhism and the Shin sect of Buddhism in their own words by the time they graduate. We also help the students learn to lead and chant at least two sutras on their own, understanding that many of our students will be physically distant from a Buddhist temple at various times in their post-Dharma School life.





2024-2025 DHARMA SCHOOL YEAR CALENDAR

By Maya Horio and Kim Nguyen, Co-Superintendents



Dharma School classes are open to all kids ages 4 to 18, and our monthly Family Service is open to all sangha members and children of all ages. Dharma School students are split typically by age into the following classes: Pre-Kindergarten-1st grade; Elementary; Intermediate; and Advanced classes.

Each class aims to instill in our students a basic understanding of Buddhist terms and concepts, working towards our overall Dharma School goal of enabling our students to be able to explain Buddhism and the Shin sect of Buddhism in their own words by the time they graduate.

We also help the students learn to lead and chant at least two sutras on their own, understanding that many of our students will be physically distant from a Buddhist temple at various times in their post-Dharma School life.

SEPTEMBER 2024	OCTOBER 2024	NOVEMBER 2024 (Eshinni and Kakushinni Day & Pet Memorial)	DECEMBER 2024 (Bodhi Day)
01 NO DHARMA SCHOOL 08 NO DHARMA SCHOOL 15 NO DHARMA SCHOOL 22 0930 Teacher Work Day 29 0930 - 10-30 am DS Info Session	06 0930 - 1030 DS Classes 13 NO DHARMA SCHOOL 20 0930 - 1030 am Service & EBL Conference DS Home Altar Project 27 0930 - 1030 am DS Classes	03 0930 - 1030 DS Classes (Daylight Savings Ends) 10 NO DHARMA SCHOOL 17 0930 - 1030 DS Service & Tsuji Center Cleanup 24 0930 - 1030 DS Classes	01 0930 - 1030 Joint DS Classes 08 0930 - 1030 DS Classes 15 0930 - 1030 DS Service & Tsuji Center Cleanup 22 NO DHARMA SCHOOL 29 NO DHARMA SCHOOL
JANUARY 2025 (Ho Onko Service)	FEBRUARY 2025 (Nirvana Day)	MARCH 2025 (Higan)	APRIL; 2025 (Hanamatsuri)
05 0930 - 1030 DS Classes 12 0930 - 1030 DS Service & Tsuji Center Cleanup 19 NO DHARMA SCHOOL 26 0930 - 1030 DS Classes	02 0930 - 1030 DS Classes 09 0930 - 1030 DS Service & Tsuji Center Cleanup 16 NO DHARMA SCHOOL 23 0930 -1030 DS Classes	02 0930 - 1030 DS Classes 09 NO DHARMA SCHOOL 16 0930 - 1030 DS Service & Tsuji Center Cleanup 23 0930 - 1030 DS Classes 30 NO DHARMA SCHOOL	06 1045 - 1200 Special Joint Hanamatsuri Service 13 NO DHARMA SCHOOL 20 0930 - 1030 DS Classes 27 0930 - 1030 Joint DS Classes
MAY 2025 (Gotan - E)	JUNE 2025		
04 0930-1030 DS Classes 11 0930 - 1030 DS Service & Tsuji Center Cleanup 16 0930-1030 DX Classes 26 NO DHARA SCHOOL	01 0930 JOINT END OF THE YEAR DS PARTY		

EDITOR'S KIBITZING

By Kennon Nakamura, Editor

EKOJI'S HEART IS THE SANGHA'S HEART

At his first Dharma message when the Ekoji Buddhist Temple officially opened its doors inviting all to “come as they are” and listen to the Dharma, Rev. Tsuji, Ekoji’s founding minister, reminded us *“that the temple, despite its beautiful appearance that day, was not a temple, not without true and earnest seekers of the Dharma to participate and make it one”*.

As I often do, I agree with Rev. Tsuji that a temple is just a building without the Sangha. And with the Sangha, its Buddhist heart and the Temple’s heart are one. We are taught about impermanence, and the all-encompassing Wisdom and Compassion embodied in the 18th Vow of Amida that guarantees our oneness with the Dharma. However, at Ekoji, we also recognize ourselves as “householder Buddhists” with all of the foibles and emotions of human beings trying, not too successfully, to walk the Buddhist path.

And so we at Ekoji celebrate the great things that happen to our Sangha members like conducting Hatsumairi services welcoming babies into the Sangha, performing Kieishiki services when a person seeks a Dharma name, and for individual achievements of our Sangha members like Brant Horio earning his PhD while being a great father, husband, being a temple leader, a Boy Scout Assistant Scoutmaster, and having a very responsible day job all at the same time.

And we cry and grieve together, supporting each other over the loss of those dear to us, and also for those close friends who have suffered a great loss also. We conduct funeral and memorial services, read the names of those who have passed on Shotsuki Sunday services, and hold Hatsubon Service at Obon time for those who have recently passed.



So it is, as we learned of the passing of Jane Shizuko Nagata, on January 11, 2025, who is the mother of Ekoji’s dear friend and advisor since Ekoji’s founding, Brian Nagata. Our hearts, Ekoji’s heart goes out to Brian and his brother and sister with sympathy, love and our deep Gassho.

While many of us are relatively new to Ekoji and may have missed a part of our 40-plus year relationship with Brian, we have heard his thoughtful Dharma messages over the years, and seen him in work clothes helping out at Obon and other labor- intensive Ekoji projects. And when he gives advice on something, there is never a doubt that it is from his heart and concern over the welfare of Ekoji that he takes the time to think of Ekoji’s interests.

Brian would jokingly laugh that he would make the 3-hour drive to Fowler every weekend that he could, but his mother wouldn’t remember that he did. He claimed that she would tell her friends that he never came to visit, and he didn’t know why he took the trip every chance he could. But we knew it was because of love for her, and for all that she did for him, his brother and sister.

Brian’s mother, Jane, passed away soon after she celebrated her 95th birthday. She was born in 1929 in Grangeville, CA. and was a lifelong member of the Buddhist Church of Fowler. She was also very active in the community with her husband, Tom, when he first served on the Fowler City Council and later became Mayor. It’s kind of easy to see where Brian’s activism in Buddhism and the community finds its roots.

With our deepest sympathies, support and gassho to you, Brian. and your brother and sister.



JOIN THE EKOJI VIRTUAL MOVIE DISCUSSION SESSIONS



*The Dharma speaks to us through the sounds of the world –
Forcefully, eloquently and beautifully.
It speaks of the unending change around us,
The immutable truth of interdependence,
And the peace in nature
Do we have the ears to hear and listen...?
(Rev. Kenryu T. Tsuji, The Heart of the Buddha Dharma, p. 67)*

Enjoy Ekoji's **virtual movie discussions**. They are held on the third Sunday of each month. They are led by Ann and Joren Stegner. RSVP for the Zoom link [here](#). The discussion is casual, it wanders away from the movie a lot, and it is always a chance hear the Dharma through the movie and the discussion, regardless of whether it was on topic.

The movie for February is "200 Meters". The film revolves around a family in the Palestinian City of Tulkarm, separated by the Israeli wall, and the efforts of the father who tries to visit his son on the other side of the wall. **The Zoom discussion will be at 2:00 on February 16**. The Film can be watched on Amazon Prime, HBO, Max, Apple TV, Peacock, and other streaming services for a small fee.



JOIN OUR TEMPLE

THE EKOJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE THE TEMPLE OF THE GIFT OF LIGHT

We are committed to growing a worldwide Sangha and invite you to join our diverse community. Explore the benefits of membership by visiting our membership portal at: <http://ekojibuddhisttemple.wildapricot.org>

ALL OUR WELCOME -- COME AS YOU ARE



In Gassho

Dana from January 1, 2025 to January 31, 2025

Carmen Bernett

Jane Blechman

Jessica Brooks

Eugenia Burkes

Evan Cantwell

Andrea Chapman

Alexander Corbin

Joseph Crilley

Mahkameh Doroud

Matthew Doubrava

Hao Fong

Stanley Fujii

Connie Hoffman

Marisa and Tamon Honda

Thomas Horio

in memory of Phoebe Horio

Thomas Horio

Emily Ihara

Laverne Imori

Cheryl Kameda

Yuko Keicho

Sandra Lukic-Dapoingy

Thea Maggard

Richard Malone & Rick Ware

Amatullah Maxey

Ken & Nori Nakamura

Lisa & Greg Nakamura

Nichii Namaha-Ono

Donna Omata

Mel Pine

Erik Quinn

Jerry Rankin

Edward Sams

Roger Scott

Dale Shirasago

Frank Swithers

Pearl Thompson

Pilar Urlmen

Charles Uyeda

Mikio Yamashita



Check out Ekoji's monthly podcast interviews at <https://tinyurl.com/EchoEkoji>

This Month Andrea and Joe are joined by Ekoji's own **JIMMY MAJOR**

SANGHA SCOOPS

By Ken Nakamura

Our dedicated Minister's Assistant with Tokudo **Rev. Erick Ishii** went home to Hawaii for a one-week vacation. He used to go every year around Christmas time for a couple of weeks, but this is his first since the start of the Covid Pandemic. While he has a lot more leave time than most, he rushed back to his responsibilities with Ekoji after a week in Hawaii so that he would be with us for New Years. We could and probably should, encourage him to get more rest, but fortunately for us, he wouldn't listen to us anyway.

Ken and Nori Nakamura were on the road again, also to Hawaii. They returned from Japan to face the January snow storm and our polar fronts that kept us really cold. Three weeks later, they were off for some R&R to warm and sunny Hawaii, just as the D.C metro area started a 40+ degree warm spell. They split their time between the Big Island of Hawaii, which was great, and the busy island of Oahu/Waikiki. On the day they were to fly to Honolulu, Oahu got hit by a huge wind and rain storm that closed Honolulu Airport and left Ken and Nori at the Kona Airport for 14 hours, 6 hours of which was sitting in the plane on the tarmac. Honolulu finally opened up for arrivals and departures so they finally got to Honolulu at midnight. Now they are back in Virginia awaiting a possible snow storm and really cold weather to welcome them home.

We know **many of our Sangha members, their families and friends are federal employees** facing difficult life decisions. Which ever way they decide for their future, we certainly hope all will work for the best for them. Please look to the Three Treasures -- the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha for support.

We heard that **Brian Nagata** was ill and so this weekend's seminar was postponed. We certainly wish him a quick recovery.

The **National Tour of the Ireicho** will start on February 18, in Washington, D.C. The Ireichō is a large format book, envisioned as a monument representing the first comprehensive listing of 125,284 persons of Japanese ancestry who were incarcerated in some 75 federally run detention centers during World War II. Led by University of Southern California Professor Duncan Ryuken Williams, the Ireichō Project aims to provide a healing experience by inviting the public to place a small mark using a Japanese "hanko" stamp under the name of someone in the book who has or not yet been acknowledged. For the first time on the East Coast, the public is invited to stamp the Ireichō and become part of this remembrance project. The Smithsonian National Museum of American History will feature a special display and stamping opportunity of [The Ireichō – Book of Names](#) on three days, February 19, 20 and 21; 1 to 4 pm by reservation only. Bring your family and friends.

[Send an Email to Reserve a Time to Stamp the Ireicho Here](#)

CALENDAR OF EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES FOR FEBRUARY 2025

WEEKLY

SUNDAY

- CHILDREN'S DHARMA SCHOOL, 9:30AM – 10:30AM, EVERY SUNDAY EXCEPT FEBRUARY 16, (HOLIDAY WEEKEND)
- HYBRID SERVICE, 11:00AM WITH AN AFTER-SERVICE HYBRID DISCUSSION IN THE HONDO.

WEDNESDAY

- DHARMA BREEZE ONLINE SERVICE, 7:00PM IN THE EKOJI ZOOM ROOM.

THURSDAY

- IN-PERSON MEDITATION GROUP, 7:30PM IN THE HONDO.

MONTHLY

FIRST SUNDAY

- TEMPLE CLEANUP, 9:30AM – 10:30AM, ALL ARE INVITED TO PARTICIPATE
- SHOTSUKI SERVICE – DURING THE CHANTING OF A SUTRA, SANGHA MEMBERS WHO HAVE LOST A LOVED ONE DURING THAT PARTICULAR MONTH IN ANY PRIOR YEAR ARE INVITED TO GO BEFORE THE NAIJIN TO OFFER GASSHO AND BURN INCENSE IN LOVING MEMORY AND GRATITUDE FOR THE PERSON WHO HAS PASSED.

SPECIAL EVENTS AND HOLIDAYS (DETAILS AT WWW.EKOJI.ORG)

- **POSTPONED** -- BUDDHIST EDUCATION SEMINAR, "RUN, DON'T WALK , TO THE SHIN PATH," WITH GUEST SPEAKERS REV. KODO UMEZU AND REV. BRIAN NAGATA, SATURDAY FEBRUARY 8 AT 1:00 PM IN THE HONDO.
- YOUNG BUDDHISTS ASSOCIATION MEETING, SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 9, IN THE SANGHA HALL IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE HYBRID SUNDAY SERVICE.
- BUDDHIST MOVIE GROUP DISCUSSION, "200 METERS," SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 16, AT 2:00PM IN THE EKOJI ZOOM ROOM.

MINISTER'S OFFICE HOURS

- WEDNESDAY, 1:00PM TO 2:00PM
- SCHEDULE A ZOOM OR PHONE MEETING WITH REV. KURT RYE BY CALLING 703-239-0500 OR EMAILING RYE.EKOJI@GMAIL.COM

A Kalavinka is a mythical bird with the head of a human and a long flowing colorful tail. It lives in the Pure Land, and it has a beautiful Voice that sings praises to the Buddha, the sutras, and the words of the Buddha.



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REVEREND KURT RYE

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