

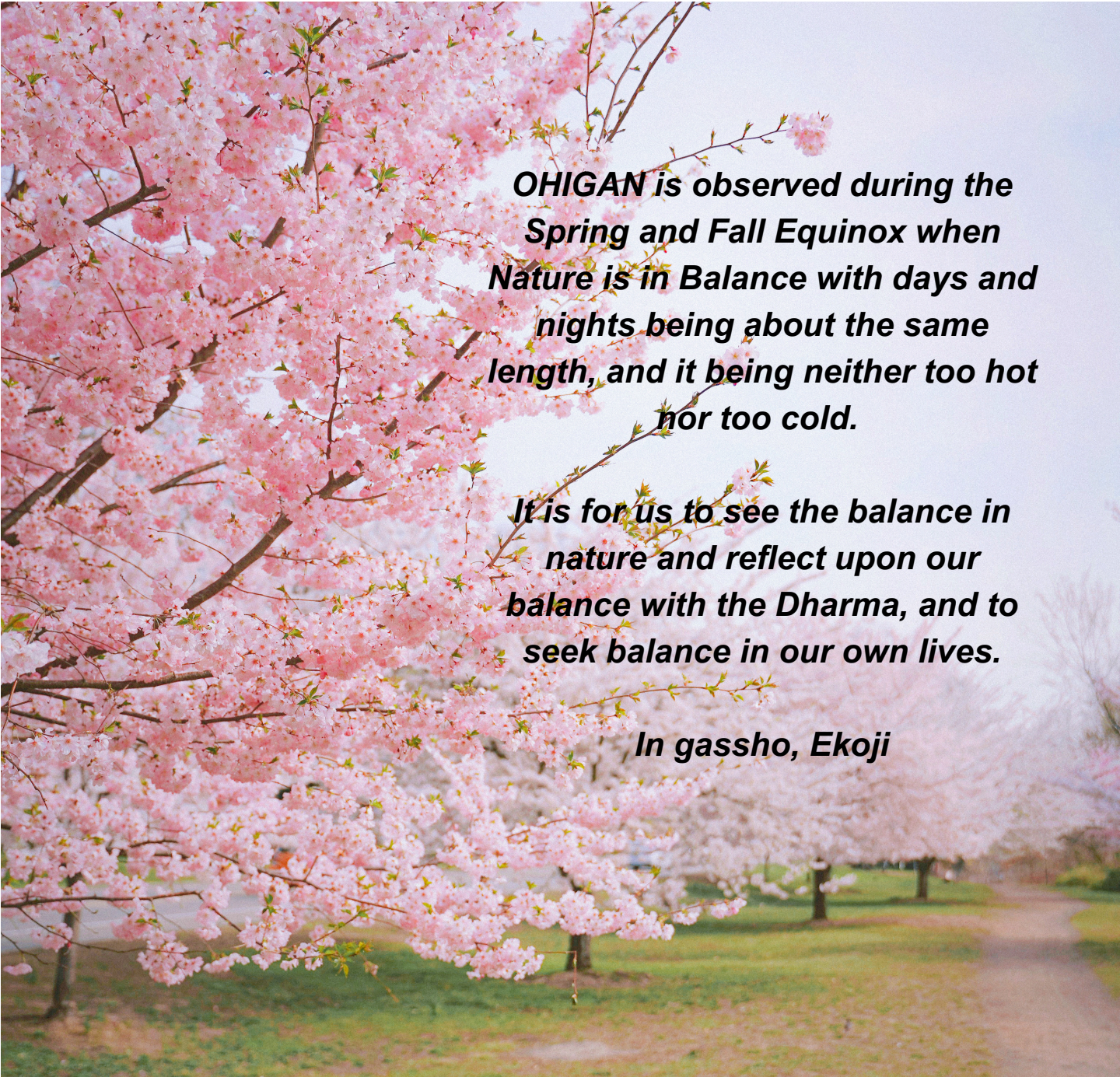
MARCH 2025

KALAVINKA

A NEWSLETTER OF EKOJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE

OHIGAN

A TIME FOR REFLECTION -- A TIME FOR INNER BALANCE



OHIGAN is observed during the Spring and Fall Equinox when Nature is in Balance with days and nights being about the same length, and it being neither too hot nor too cold.

It is for us to see the balance in nature and reflect upon our balance with the Dharma, and to seek balance in our own lives.

In gassho, Ekoji



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LIVING LIFE IN THE MIDST OF CHAOS AND INSTABILITY

By Rev. Kurt Rye

Serving as a minister within a temple sangha encompasses more than merely delivering Dharma talks and leading services. It involves being present for members, empathizing with their personal struggles, and providing support.

As a minister supporting three Sangha's, I have observed a significant increase in individuals seeking my guidance recently. They are experiencing anxiety and apprehension regarding the alterations occurring in Federal institutions and legislature.

The apprehension stems from the fear of the stability of these institutions that have existed for decades. Suddenly losing both solid leaders of these institutions and the larger support from governmental authority leaves those affected with a sense of instability and apprehension over what is to come from both a personal perspective and a policy one.

The Buddha emphasized the inherent nature of change in life, recognizing it as a fundamental aspect of the human experience. However, we often resist change due to the perception of losing control or experiencing negative emotions. While change is an inevitable occurrence, it can be challenging to accept. We expend considerable energy and emotional distress attempting to cling to the past, to what is familiar to us.

I acknowledge the challenges associated with change as well. However, I endeavor to approach it from a Buddhist perspective. Earlier this week, the Ekoji board deliberated on a design for a tee shirt inspired by a statue situated on the Ekoji property. For those familiar with Ekoji, there is a prominent statue of the Buddha in the parking lot. This statue depicts Shakyamuni, the historical Buddha, rather than Amida Buddha, who holds significance in the Jodo Shinshu tradition.

During the meeting, the board expressed curiosity regarding the symbolic significance of the statue. In Buddhism, art frequently employs symbolic gestures, known as mudras, to convey teachings. The statue features the right hand in the stop position with an open palm, while the left-hand rests on the Buddha's lap with the palm facing upward. This mudra, known as Semuni-in in Japanese, is interpreted as "granting the absence of fear."

(Rev. Rye, Living in Chaos and Confusion, Cont. on Pg. 2)

In a recent article, I explored the Buddhist practice of loving meditation in relation to anger. While both anger and fear are potent emotions, they possess distinct characteristics. Anger, while capable of intense feelings, tends to dissipate over time. Conversely, fear can persist and intensify, posing significant challenges.

The raised hand symbolizes the imperative to refrain from allowing anger to persist. It emphasizes the avoidance of perpetuating the cycle of fear, which can escalate and transform into profound distress. Furthermore, the open hand with the palm facing upward represents a sanctuary where individuals can acknowledge and confront their fears. The Buddha did not advocate for the denial of fear; rather, he encouraged individuals to hold onto it in their minds. By recognizing fear as an emotion that can be engaged with, rather than a force beyond control, the Buddha Dharma can alleviate its intensity and facilitate its transformation into less fearful states.

With the Buddha Dharma as a guide to help us through difficult times, we can find comfort in knowing that things are in constant change. We cannot predict the future, but with using the teachings as a guide, rather than fear, the teachings can help remind us of life as a path we follow. We need not get stuck in one moment, but rather we should reflect on living a life of gratitude.

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

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/TZMLCOGSQTOTGDIRTNNT5EYDBZXK9F2OVZJO](https://us02web.zoom.us/join/8598619036)



DHARMA FORWARD: EKOJI'S TECH-ENABLED FUTURE

By: Andrea Chapman, President

In 2023, the Ekoji Board of Directors made a significant investment in our future, voting to install a professional audio-visual system within our temple. This decision, made in the wake of the pandemic, was driven by a vision to expand our reach, enhance our services, and make the Dharma more accessible. We aimed to attract remote speakers, improve the quality of our Sunday services for all attendees, and connect with individuals unable to physically visit Ekoji – essentially, to work smarter and grow our Sangha.

This strategic initiative is already proving successful. We are welcoming new members who seek a meaningful temple experience, even if they live far from our physical location.

To offset the cost of this vital upgrade, we applied for a technology grant from the Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) Dharma Forward Campaign. I am thrilled to announce that our application was approved, and we have been awarded \$44,000. These funds will cover approximately half of the audio-visual system's expense, representing a significant vote of confidence from the BCA's national leadership in our forward-thinking approach.

As the facilitator of our after-service Dharma Discussion Group, I have witnessed firsthand the profound impact of this initiative. Participants consistently express their deep gratitude to our ministerial team and dedicated volunteers who make these services possible.

Personally, these discussions are incredibly enriching. The simple question, "What did you hear today?" elicits a diverse range of interpretations and reflections. It's truly inspiring to witness how the service and its message resonate with individuals, and to contemplate the ripple effect of these insights in our world.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the 2023 Ekoji Board of Directors, the members of the Dharma Forward Committee, and the Executive Committee of the BCA for their courage and investment in Ekoji's future. In today's world, it is more crucial than ever to strengthen our connections, engage with others, deepen our understanding of the Dharma, and embrace the future with both curiosity and compassion.

I warmly invite you to join our after-service Dharma Discussion and experience the unique joy of our hybrid Sangha.

Namo Amida Butsu



A TRIBUTE TO MRS. SAKAYE TSUJI FROM HER SANGHA AT EKOJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE

By Ken Nakamura

At Ekoji, we lost one of our own when Mrs. Sakaye Kawabata Tsuji (7/29/1924 – 2/14/2025) passed away on Valentines Day. We learned that Mrs. Tsuji passed away at 100 years of age, and while she is now a part of the Universal Dharma, Ekoji's heart cried in deep sadness as we can no longer see and talk to her physically, and because we will miss her so very much.

Mrs. Tsuji came into our lives in July 1981, at Gail and Norman Kondo's house as our very small Sangha gathered to welcome the Tsuji's, fresh from California, and begin working together to get the Ekoji Buddhist Temple off the ground.

We knew of Rev. Tsuji, who had already started the Toronto Buddhist Temple in Toronto, Canada early in his career. We also knew that he was the first North American born BCA Director of Religious Education, and then the first North American born, and longest serving BCA Bishop. We knew he was smart, articulate, a thinking "out of the box" influential minister, who we could never have afforded without BDK help as Rev. Numata, along with Rev. Tsuji, envisioned a temple in the Nation's Capital.

But what we didn't know was that accompanying him since 1946, when they got married, was his wife, Sakaye Tsuji. She was an energetic powerhouse, compassionate, diplomatic, and sensible in her own right. And she could speak quietly to Rev. Tsuji, and he would listen.



Nov. 1981 at Ekoji Dedication
Dinner

Because of Rev. Tsuji's style he would often bring people to his house



July 1982 Ekoji Obon

at dinner time, usually without warning her, so that he could continue a discussion, and she would whip up a great dinner. If the temple was going to have a luncheon after service, she would oversee things without stepping on anyone's toes. She was never above the work, no matter what. She was always there pitching in.

And because Rev. Tsuji often traveled to meetings, or as a guest speaker, she stayed home, opened the temple doors on time, prepared the Onajjin, as there was no such thing as minister's assistants at that time, and get

everything ready for service. And then there were snacks and tea or coffee after service as we sat around a table in the back.

But she was more, as Sangha members Gail and Norman Kondo said in an earlier interview.



July 83, On Mrs. Tsuji's Birthday with some of her Dharma School kids at the Tsuji's home.



Rev & Mrs. Tsuji supporting Nen Daiko in his infancy -
- But could they carry a Beat?

She is a one-of-a-kind treasure, who became the Sangha's beloved second mom, grandma, sister, friend... She did everything with the children: crafting, swimming, playing with the Tsuji cat 'Boots', watching movies and videos, and going to McDonald's and Chuck-E-Cheese.

If we needed an emergency babysitter, she was there; if we needed someone to help with a school crafting assignment, she was there; if we needed a sounding board, she was there; and if we needed sage advice, she was there.

She was the rock we relied on. She joined us in the major events of our Sangha families' lives – birthdays, graduations, children's concerts, sickness and death – as a valued family member. Safe to say, Mrs. Tsuji's impact on the Sangha extended well beyond temple walls."

But it wasn't only the kids she "watched over". When some of our younger, single members had a free Friday evening, Mrs. Tsuji would welcome them over to the Tsuji's house, and they would sit around, talking, playing cards, and sometimes take an evening trip to Atlantic City and the casinos. Atlantic City was the closest at that time, and it is "rumored" that she loved the casinos.

Amida Buddha is often described as being of Infinite Wisdom and Infinite Compassion. When we think of the Tsuji's, Rev. Kenryu Tsuji is the embodiment of the Infinite Wisdom part, and of course, Mrs. Sakaye Tsuji as the Infinite Compassion side of Amida. Ekoji had a great start when the Tsujis came to Washington.

We are so deeply grateful you came into our lives and we will miss you dearly, Mrs. Tsuji.



Rev. Brian Nagata Accompanies Mrs. Tsuji to Ekoji

Namo Amida Butsu



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 MARCH, WE WILL BE REMEMBERING WITH GRATITUDE:

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
3/12/2016

April 2025

Robert Thomas Miyshiro
4/7/2003
Geraldine Hamai Cantwell
8/13/1944 – 4/6/2007
Ralph Ishii
4/16/2007
Masaru Ushiro
4/26/2008
Rev. Shojo Honda
6/25/1929 – 4/13/2015
Junichi Kamikawa
11/11/1922 – 4/2/2003
"Tattoo" Tom Mitchell
3/7/1969 – 4/22/2024

EKOJI WORKSHOP COMING SOON
JOIN US

EKOJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE

Spring Wellness

Workshops

Join Us for an Inspiring Experience of Self-Discovery and Transformation. Together, Let's Cultivate a Healthier, Happier You!

EVENTS



REIKI



YOGA

Saturday, May 10, 1:30 pm

Saturday, April 12, 9am

6500 Lakehaven Lane, Fairfax Station, VA

Register Now

<https://ekojibuddhisttemple.wildapricot.org/events>



OHIGAN

A TIME FOR REFLECTION -- A TIME FOR INNER BALANCE

Editors Notes: *Ohigan, strictly a Japanese Buddhist observance takes place twice a year – around the time of the vernal and autumnal equinoxes when days and nights are of equal length and, generally, it is neither too hot, nor too cold. The observance is a time to reflect and meditate upon the harmony in nature and to seek such a balance in our own inner lives. For a deeper explanation of Ohigan, the Kalavinka is reprinting a September 2018 article, “The Other Shore,” by retired New York Buddhist Church Resident Minister, Rev. Earl Ikeda. The article appeared in the New York Buddhist Church newsletter, Kokoro. KHN*

THE OTHER SHORE

By Reverend Earl Ikeda

This month, we will be observing Ohigan. Ohigan gives us the opportunity to contemplate the reality of our existence and the vow of Amida Buddha liberates us. The literal meaning of Ohigan is “the Other Shore.” This term evokes the dualism of our lives being on this and the other shore, but also expresses the oneness of the totality of our existence.

The observance of Ohigan is a Japanese Buddhist tradition said to have been inspired by Prince Shotoku, considered the first great patron of Buddhism in Japan, who was a semi legendary figure over 1,500 years ago. It is also based on the teaching and writings of the great Chinese figure, Shan Tao or Zendo Daishi in Japanese... . Shan Tao, a Chinese monk and scholar, greatly revered Amitabha Buddha and the Universal Vow of this Buddha to save all sentient beings.... He listed many practices to receive merit but emphasized the recitation of the Amida Buddha’s Name as the greatest practice that would lead to freedom from this world of eternal suffering or samsara.

He used a parable referred to as “The River of Fire and Water” to help us understand and awaken to the Vow. In this tale, a traveler suddenly discovers that he is being chased by vicious beasts and demons. The traveler runs as fast as he can but soon encounters a river. There is no other escape but to cross the river before him! There is only a very narrow shallow path to cross the river from one shore to the other side, and on one side of the path are very rough waves and on the other, great leaping flames. The traveler is confused and conflicted: to remain on this shore means certain



This picture hangs on the wall of the 400+ year old Akahoshi family temple, Shohoji, in Kumamoto, Japan

(Ikeda on Ohigan, Cont. on Pg. 9)

(Ikeda on Ohigan, Cont. from Pg. 8)

death by the pursuing beasts and demons, but to go forward may mean a terrible end consumed by the waves or flames. He is deeply fearful in contemplating his possible fate.

It is at that moment that he hears a gentle voice encouraging him to go forward and telling him that there is nothing to fear. Still doubtful, he raises his head to look ahead at the other shore. He sees the Buddha Amida with open arms beckoning him to come forward. To remain here on this shore means certain suffering and death; to go forward may mean suffering and death but provides hope. The traveler makes the decision to seize the opportunity and takes his first step not realizing what fate lies ahead. Entrusting in the beckoning of Amida Buddha, he takes the first step then the second. With each following step the narrow path miraculously widens! It becomes wide enough for the traveler safely to reach the Other Shore!

This parable is an example of the meaning of Amida Buddha's Vow to save and free all of us from an endless cycle of birth and death. The beasts and demons in this story represent our fears, illusions, and delusions. The rough waves and river of fire represents our hatred, insatiable thirst for want, and ignorance. The path represents hope and the way to be free from all suffering, which is overcome by entrusting or calling the Buddha's Name, Namo Amida Butsu. The traveler learns that it is fear and doubt that keep us from seeing clearly, especially our rebirth in Amida's Land of Bliss....

In order to reach the other Shore, one does not have to wait for one's end of life. We can all reach the Other Shore now by hearing and entrusting in the Buddha's Vows and allowing Buddha energy to fill our hearts and minds with wisdom, compassion, and thoughts to help us transcend the ordinary.

Namo Amida Butsu.

SPECIAL SANGHA MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT

SUNDAY, MARCH 16, 2025 AT 12 PM ET

PURPOSE: To consider, Nominate, and Vote on FRANK SWITHERS To The Board of Directors of the Ekoji Buddhist Temple.

REASON: Current Board of Directors Member Nick Karen has stepped down from his position on the Board and moved to New York City. If elected, Frank Swithers would complete Nick Karen's term on the Board of Directors.



ANNUAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS PLANNING MEETING OF EKOJI BUDDHIST SANGHA

January 18, 2025

By Michael Huff. Secretary

ANNUAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS RETREAT – NARRATIVE REPORT

The Annual Board of Directors Retreat for Ekoji Buddhist Sangha convened to reflect on the past year's activities, assess progress on strategic initiatives, and plan for the coming year. The meeting began with an opening Gassho, followed by confirmation of quorum and approval of the consent agenda, which included the year-end treasurer's reports and minutes from the November meeting. The approval of annual meeting minutes was postponed to February for final review.

The Minister's Report was brief due to the absence of the supervising minister. Upcoming events were discussed, including a guest lecture and a seminar in February, as well as a **yoga workshop** featuring a cooking demonstration. The Board also reviewed the selection of **officers** for the new term, reaffirming the President, Treasurer, and Secretary while leaving the Vice President role unfilled.

A key financial discussion centered on the renewal of the **landscaping contract**. The Board assessed the costs and services provided by Independence Landscape, ultimately approving the contract while removing the **aeration and overseeding service** to reduce expenses.

The Board revisited its **Strategic Plan**, emphasizing the **long-term vision for Ekoji**, including fostering community ownership, enhancing accessibility, and increasing engagement. Several past initiatives were evaluated:

- The **"I Am Ekoji" campaign**, aimed at deepening members' sense of ownership, had mixed results. While activities such as stewardship work parties were implemented, their impact was less than expected.
- Efforts to make **family-friendly spaces** included **coloring stations and children's seating**. However, challenges such as the relocation of rocking chairs and bookshelves slowed progress.
- The initiative to **increase awareness of Jodo Shinshu** had no designated lead and remained largely unfulfilled.
- Efforts to **increase temple discoverability**, such as the launch of a **Cardd website account**, made progress but require further coordination.

One major discussion centered on the **Tsuji Center rededication**, which had been postponed due to scheduling conflicts. The Board proposed combining this event with a **volunteer appreciation luncheon and a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new library**. Additional discussions focused on Dharma School visibility, with a proposal to install a **bulletin board in the foyer** to promote children's activities.

(Annual Board of Directors Retreat – Narrative Report, Cont, on Pg. 11)

(January 2025 Sangha Board of Directors Mtg., Cont from Pg. 10).

To **engage the broader community**, the Board reviewed past outreach efforts, including **university outreach, the Burke Festival, and partnerships with local organizations**. Future initiatives include a **volunteer event at a local kitchen** and a **clothing or holiday drive**. The Board agreed to shift the **"I Am Ekoji" campaign** toward **external outreach rather than internal stewardship efforts**.

The Board also addressed the need for **social events** to strengthen community ties. A proposal was made for **quarterly gatherings**, with two focusing on **community service** and two on **recreational activities**. Suggested events included a **pickleball league, a bowling night, and a Buddhist open mic night**. The Board acknowledged the importance of **low-effort, high-impact events** to avoid burnout among organizers.

Additional discussions included the **potential use of a donated gaming console** for youth engagement and **training lay leaders** to support temple activities. **A storytelling-based fundraising initiative** was also introduced, where members would share personal experiences relating to the Dharma.

The meeting concluded with a summary of action items and agreement on the **next steps** for 2025. The Board reaffirmed its commitment to **fostering temple ownership, strengthening outreach, and building a sustainable community** through structured and achievable initiatives.

Meeting adjourned with closing Gassho.



FEBRUARY 17TH EKOJI BOARD MEETING REPORT

By Michael Huff, Secretary

The February 17th board of directors meeting covered several important topics related to temple operations, financial decisions, and upcoming events.

The meeting began with the **minister's report**. Reverend Kurt Rye shared updates on the Dharma Breeze program, which is seeing a rise in participation, especially from new members interested in learning about Buddhism. There was also an announcement about a visit from Steve Terusaki, the president of the Buddhist Churches of America, who will be delivering a talk. Additionally, there were plans to honor Reverend Honda on the tenth anniversary of his passing, recognizing his contributions to the temple and the broader Buddhist community.

(February 17th Ekoji Board Meeting Report, Cont. on Pg. 12)

The board also discussed **memorial services for Mrs. SakayeTsuji**, the widow of Rev. Tsuji, who recently passed away. Andrea Chapman mentioned that Brian Nagata would officiate the funeral and that discussions were ongoing about holding a service at Ekoji. The board agreed to coordinate with family members and other temples to ensure a meaningful remembrance.

Financial matters were another major focus. The board voted to remove leaf removal services from the temple's landscaping contract in order to save costs. This decision was made to help balance the budget after an unexpected price increase in landscaping services. Volunteers and work parties will help manage the leaves instead. Michael Huff and Jesse offered suggestions about managing the landscaping more efficiently.

Another financial topic involved a grant application for technological improvements at the temple. Maya spearheaded the application for funding through the Dharma Forward Campaign to support recent upgrades to the temple's audiovisual system. While the application had received approval at the committee level, final confirmation from the Buddhist Churches of America's executive committee was still pending. Eric provided insight from his position on the committee. This grant would help reimburse the temple for some of the costs already incurred.

Additionally, the board discussed **another grant awarded to the temple from a county agency.** Pilar applied for and secured a \$7,100 grant from the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services. This grant will be used to improve security by adding more cameras and upgrading the sign at the entrance. However, since the temple must cover the costs upfront and then request reimbursement, the board considered how to manage the necessary expenses.

Facility maintenance was another major topic. There were concerns about the temple's HVAC system, which continues to have issues despite multiple repairs. Other maintenance issues included leaks in the kitchen roof, lighting upgrades, and bathroom deep cleaning. Mah and Bob suggested hiring professionals to deep clean the bathrooms, while Jesse volunteered to test different cleaning solutions to determine if the grout in the bathroom tiles could be improved before considering more expensive repairs.

The board also reviewed leadership changes. **Nick Karen** announced plans to move to New York and step down from the board. To fill the vacancy, Andrea suggested former board member Frank Swithers, who has significant experience. However, since the bylaws require a formal election, the board scheduled a special meeting for the Sangha to vote on this appointment.

Lastly, the board prepared for an **upcoming fire inspection.** Members were advised on how to assist the fire marshal during their visit and ensure the temple was compliant with safety regulations.

The **meeting concluded** with plans to follow up on pending matters, including grant updates, facility repairs, and leadership transitions. The board continues to work toward maintaining the temple's financial stability, improving its facilities, and ensuring that the Sangha's needs are met.

MONTHLY TREASURER’S REPORT

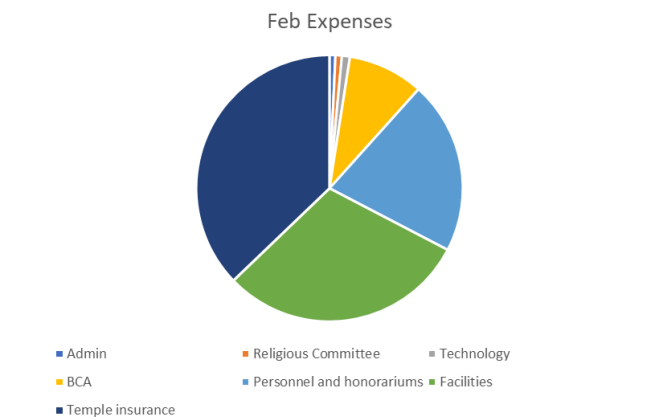
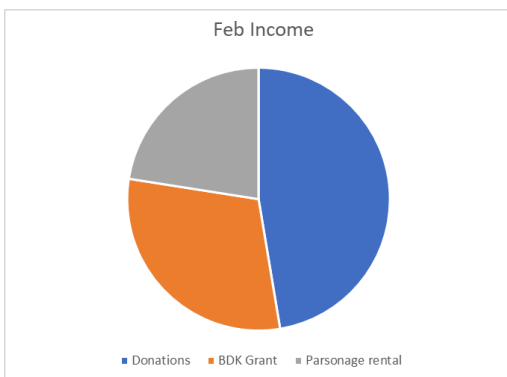
The Board presents this column to make transparent how we use sangha donations and our other income streams, and to illuminate the daily financial flows that happen behind the scenes, complementing the financial recap and outlook that we share at our annual sangha meeting each fall. We welcome your thoughts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

Feb 2025 Finance Flows: Our income bumped up a bit this month with many members renewing their annual memberships, but our expenses won the month primarily because we paid one of our largest annual expenses—our temple insurance.

We received wonderful news this month, however—our BCA Dharma Forward grant request in support of our A/V system has been approved for \$44,000! With the help of our President Andrea Chapman and Minister’s Assistant Erick Ishii, we were able to convey to the BCA Dharma Forward technology committee how we are using our A/V system as a resource for Ekoji, the Eastern District, and the greater worldwide sangha, and how this technology will continue to benefit us and the BCA into the future. We are grateful to BCA and to everyone who is helping us to leverage our A/V capability.

- **Income (\$12,393):** Sangha membership renewals again made up our largest chunk of income this month, closely followed by our monthly grant from BDK America and parsonage rental income.

Expenses (\$14,474): Our annual temple insurance payment made up more than 1/3 of our overall expenses. Facilities made up the next biggest chunk, with our electricity bill alone accounting for almost \$2000. Personnel and honorariums and our monthly dues to BCA each made up most of the rest of our expenses this month, with minimal amounts spent on technology, bank and online processing fees, and flowers for the onaijin.





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 OF THE YEAR DS PARTY		



DHARMA MESSAGE BY DR. GEORGE TANABE ON “WHO ARE WE? WHERE IS HOME” A Report by Ken Nakamura

On January 26, Dr. George Tanabe, former Chair of the University of Hawaii’s Department of Religions, provided us with a Dharma Talk at Ekoji Sunday Service, asking the members of the Sangha “Who are we?” or “Who am I” and “Where is Home”.

He said there are many ways we can identify who we are: By

- race,
- nationality,
- ethnic background,
- culture,
- gender,
- place,
- etc.

Dr. Tanabe described his identity by place -- where he called home is Waialua, on the north shore of Oahu, Hawaii. He described “home” as that place where you feel most comfortable, where you can be yourself. In today’s society, it’s hard for a person to identify with one place and call it home. We may grow up in place, go to schools in another, get married and raise a family in a different place, because of work or other life changes we may move around and retire still in another place.

Dr. Tanabe’s self-image was tied to the idea that Waialua was home. He says it was always clear to him, and he was adamant about it. He even conditioned his wedding proposal on living in Waialua after they got married 52 years ago. Three generations of Tanabes lived in Waialua, and he still lives there. He knew the land – the roads, the shortcuts, the terrain , where the best fishing was, the vistas, and more. And he knew the people of Waialua. Though he had his PhD. from Columbia in East Asian Studies, to him, place was more important than profession. If he could not get a job at the University of Hawaii teaching, he could get a job in another field – plumbing, carpentry, or something else so he and his wife could live in Waialua and be at home there.

However, later in life, Dr. Tanabe had, what he calls, “an identity crisis.” He came to think that he really doesn’t belong in Waialua. He could walk around town, have general conversations with his neighbors, but he doesn’t have close, intimate friends there. He does have such friends, but they aren’t in Waialua. Rather, they are at the university, or friends from the various schools he attended, or elsewhere, but not in Waialua anymore. Dr. Tanabe thinks this is a result of his

(Tanabe, Who Are We? Where is Home -- Cont on Pg 16)

(Tanabe -- Who Are We?, Where is Home, Cont. from Pg 15)

academic training to look at things objectively as an outsider, which is something you can't do as an insider because there's too much baggage. He was coming to a point where he realized that he may live in Waialua but he was no longer of Waialua.

But then the real question for him comes when he quietly asked – Do I have a home?

Dr. Tanabe, who was a Chair of the Religious Department at the University of Hawaii, said that at that time, certain Buddhist ideas began to make sense to him, personally. Not because they were Buddhist ideas, but rather because they were framed by his life experiences, and they just made sense to him.

From that standpoint, there is the idea of NO SELF. He explained that it doesn't mean we don't have a self, but it means we don't have a fixed self, and that it is constantly changing. This is accompanied by the Buddhist idea of EMPTINESS. Dr. Tanabe said that it doesn't mean that we don't have anything inside, but that it is constantly changing because of changing causes and conditions that completely surround us and makes us change or react. So, there is no fixed Self.

So, who am I, where is my home? Now I am in Northern Virginia at Ekoji, and we are talking together and this is who I am and my home. When I go to the Bay Area where my son and his family live, that is who I am and where my home is. If I go to a conference in some city, I am George Tanabe at that conference in that city.

Dr. Tanabe's conclusion is that "I don't have a fixed identity, but as I go from place to place and through changing causes and conditions, my identity changes depending on where I am." He says that "I don't need the false security of being able to say, 'I am this', or 'I am that.' It is liberating to not have a fixed identity,"

He relates a story of once meeting a Japanese couple in Japan. He asked them his usual question of "where is your home? Where do you feel the most comfortable?" The husband groped around for an answer. His wife was more positive by answering that "Home is where my husband is also."

Dr. Tanabe says that core ideas of Buddhism include "no self," "constant change," "emptiness" and "dependent origination", where nothing exists by itself but rather is dependent on causes and conditions coming together and dissipating. He says these are elements "of understanding who we are."

NAMO AMIDA BUTSU

Dr. Tanabe's January 26th Dharma Talk can be seen on Ekoji's Vimeo listing. From Ekoji's website (Ekoji.com) go to the drop-down menu, "Watch and Read" then "Virtual Content" then "Virtual Services". Finally look at the various services, and you will find the "Sunday, 26 January 2025: Dr. George Tanabe".



EKOJI LISTENS FOR THE DHARMA EVEN IN MOVIES -- A MONTHLY VIRTUAL DISCUSSION

FEBRUARY MOVIE – “200 METERS”

By Ann Stegner and Ken Nakamura

Every third Sunday of the month at 2:00 pm, Ekoji hosts a virtual film discussion to talk about Buddhist themes in the movie chosen for that month. It is based on the assumption that Amida Buddha teaches us about the truth of the Dharma constantly using various mediums, and if we truly listen, we can hear and learn about the Dharma.

The movie group discussions are led by Ekoji members Joran Stegner and Dr. Ann Stegner, who teaches about world religions at Northern Virginia Community College. The atmosphere is casual, and at times the discussions can go off topic, but we always come away with some profound insights and further food for thought. Sometimes a participant can come to the discussion and say, “I heard nothing...” and as the discussion continues, various aspects come to light. The movies we’ve watched range from classic Japanese films like “Ikiru” and “The Harp of Burma” to “The Matrix” to animated films like “Raya and the Last Dragon.” None of us are experts on Buddhism or the Jodo Shin Buddhist perspective, but we seek to open our minds and to hear the lessons of the Dharma. So, like Ekoji, we believe in the idea of “come as you are” so that we can learn together.

In February, we talked about the movie **200 Meters**.

“Mustafa (Ali Sulliman), a Palestinian, is a freelance construction worker, a loving husband and father of three, and a man of principles. His wife Salwa (Lana Zreik) lives with their 3 kids in an apartment just inside the wall dividing Israel from the Occupied Territories, while Mustafa maintains a place with his mother 200 meters (219 yards) on the other side, within sight of each other. He could obtain a permit allowing him to live in Israel, since his wife and kids are Israeli citizens, but he’s unwilling to play by the Israeli rules he considers illegitimate, so instead he uses his work permit to get jobs and spend regular time with his family....

“One day at dawn when he’s crossing the border... Mustafa is told by an Israeli guard that his permit has expired and he can’t enter Israel.... Since it’s the weekend, he can’t renew his permit immediately Then he gets a call from his wife Salwa, saying that their son is in the hospital on the Israeli side, making the urgency to see his family, and especially his son acute....” 200 Meters is about the illegal, difficult and dangerous efforts Mustafa takes to see his hospitalized son.

(Bulk of this portion of the movie summary from Yahoo Entertainment)

(Movie Discussion - 200 Meters, Cont on Pg,18)

One of the participants of the movie group saw Mustafa as being similar to a “householder Buddhist– of **knowing that attachments can cause our suffering and anxiety, but choosing to maintain those attachments anyway**. In Mustafa’s case, although he could get an Israeli ID card, he chooses to prioritize his Palestinian identity and his protest against Israeli government policies, even though it means being separated from his family.

This led to a further discussion about the **Buddhist concept of Anatman (no permanent self)**. One participant suggested that because of impermanence and the idea of causes and conditions determining one’s changing self, experiencing his son’s accident and the dangers and difficulties he went through to see his son could change Mustafa’s view of himself and his sense of identity. However, the ending of the film seems to suggest that he simply went back to his routine as usual. **How does our attachment to a fixed version of our “self” that we create in our minds hold us back and cause us more hardship and suffering?**

Another participant brought up the relationship between two fellow passengers – Kifah, a Palestinian and a hater of Jews, and Anna, a German photographer who seeks to tell the Palestinian side of the conflict. After several challenges on their long journey to cross the border, Kifah discovers that Anna is a Jew. **What happens when ego-driven beliefs and reality, which can challenge beliefs, come together?** Despite knowing and caring about Anna as an individual person, Kifah became completely alienated from her upon learning that she is part of category of people he despises. This brings us back again to the topic of the self. **How do our attachments to preconceived ideas about who we are and who others are create divisions and discord?**

Interestingly, these are some of the same topics that Dr. George Tanabe discussed in his Dharma Talk at Ekoji on January 26th (see Ken’s report on the Dharma Talk on Page 16), which also focused on the concept of the self. Although the movie discussions are more informal and fluid, they provide us with another means to encounter the Dharma and to think about how Buddhist teachings apply to many different situations in our lives.





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 and are led by Ann and Joran Stegner. RSVP for the Zoom link [here](#). The discussion is casual, may wander away from the movie a lot, but it is always a chance hear the Dharma through the movie and the discussion, regardless of whether it was on topic. Read the article on the proceeding page regarding the February discussion on the movie, "200 Meters"

The movie for March is "The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry. The Zoom discussion will be **at 2:00 on March 16.** It can be rented cheaply and watched on Amazon Prime



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 membershhip portal at: <http://ekojobuddhisttemple.wildapricot.org>

ALL OUR WELCOME -- COME AS YOU ARE



IN GASSHO

Dana from February 01, 2025 to February 27, 2025

Mark Anderson-Rollins
 Jesse Barrick
 Jane Blechman
 Jessica Brooks
 Tom Cray
 Joseph Crilley
 Mahkameh Doroud
 Stanley Fujii
 Connie Hoffman
 Marisa and Tamon Honda
 Maya and Brant Horio
(In memory of Janet Kuroda)
 Maya and Brant Horio
(in memory of Sakaye Tsuji)

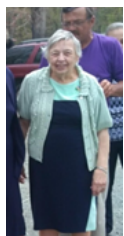
Emilly Ihara
 Laverne Imori
 Cheryl Kameda
 Norm and Gail Kondo
(in memory of Raymond Lum)
 Norm and Gail Kondo
(in memory of Sakaye Tsuji)
 Justin and Molly Kuramoto
 Sandra Lukic-Dapoingy
 Thea Maggard
 Bert and Nancy Motonaga
 Ken and Nori Nakamura
 John Nix

Donna Omata
*(in memory of Hiroko
 Kamikawa Omata)*
 Edward Sams
 Roger Scott
 Joran and Ann Stegner
 Edgar Sullivan
 Frank Swithers
 Pilar Uelmen
 Charles Uyeda
 Wisteria Lane Sales



SANGHA SCOOPS

By_ Ken Nakamura



Our heartfelt condolences to **Roger Scott** and his family upon the passing of their mother and grandmother **Charlotte Mae Scott** on January 5, 2025, in Triangle, Virginia. Mrs. Scott was described as “a God loving woman who loved family times especially Christmas.” She was also described by fellow parishioners as “a kind and caring person. We have known her the last seven years at our church. She always

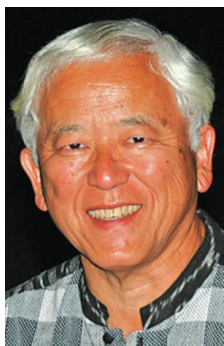
said good morning and chatted with us about how we were doing. She freely gave compliments to others and was a positive person.”

We, at Ekoji, knew Mrs. Scott as Roger’s mother who periodically accompanied Roger to service and sat with him in the right third row, near the aisle, When she could, they would join the rest of the Sangha for our pot lucks. At times, I would say “Good Morning,” and thank her for all of the work Roger does to help the temple, and she would jokingly respond that he did more work at Ekoji than he did around the house. We don’t know how much work he did around the house, but we can certainly attest to his being a hard worker and dedicated Board Member at Ekoji.

Roger, please accept our deepest condolences on the loss of an obviously wonderful woman. As you know, regardless of one’s religious beliefs, Amida’s light and compassion and the promise of our oneness with the Universal Dharma engulfs us all, like the light from the sun on a sunny day shines upon us equally.

Namo Amida Butsu

A Hearty Congratulations to Sangha member **Marisa Dillmuth** who recently received her Associate of Applied Sciences (AAS) in Health Sciences and Certification in Funeral Services from Brightpoint Community College near Richmond. In her graduating class, Marisa was a Dean’s List graduate. The degree and certification is a 2-year program of study in the classroom and field training to learn to develop relationships with families of the deceased and address grief-related needs of bereaved; understand ethical conduct and follow applicable laws; demonstrate technical skills in embalming and restorative arts; understand procedures for burial and cremation; and manage a funeral establishment.



Ekoji congratulates **Dr. George Joji Tanabe** upon his selection, with four others, to be designated as a **2025 “LIVING TREASURE OF HAWAII”** by the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii. This designation and award is in its 50th year and is established to “recognize and honor individuals for their sustained contributions toward enriching our society”. Dr. Tanabe is an Emeritus Professor and Former Department Head of the University of Hawaii at Manoa Department of Religion, where he taught general courses on religious philosophy and specialized in Japanese Buddhism. Dr. Tanabe was Ekoji’ guest Dharma Speaker on Jan. 26, on “Who Are We? and Where is Home?”

CALENDAR OF EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES FOR MARCH 2025

WEEKLY

SUNDAY

- CHILDREN'S DHARMA SCHOOL, 9:30AM – 10:30AM, EVERY SUNDAY EXCEPT MARCH 9 AND MARCH 30 WHEN NO CLASS IS SCHEDULED.
- 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 – 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)

- YOUNG BUDDHISTS ASSOCIATION MEETING, SUNDAY, MARCH 9 IN THE SANGHA HALL IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE HYBRID SUNDAY SERVICE.
- **SPECIAL MEETING OF THE SANGHA:** SUNDAY, MARCH 16TH AT 12:00 PM TO CONSIDER, NOMINATE, AND POSSIBLY ELECT FRANK SWITHERS TO THE 2025 EKOJI BOARD OF DIRECTORS TO COMPLETE THE VACATED SEAT OF NICK KAREN WHO HAS RESIGNED AND MOVED TO NEW YORK CITY.
- BUDDHIST MOVIE GROUP DISCUSSION, "THE UNLIKELY PILGRIMAGE OF HAROLD FRY," SUNDAY, MARCH 16 AT 2:00PM IN THE EKOJI ZOOM ROOM.
- UPCOMING **TWO EKOJI SPONSORED SPRING WELLNESS WORKSHOPS**
 1. Saturday, April 12, 9:00 am – **YOGA**
 2. Saturday, May 10, 1:30 pm – **REIKI**

MINISTER'S OFFICE HOURS

- WEDNESDAY, 1:00PM TO 2:00 PM
- 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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*6500 LAKEHAVEN LANE
FAIRFAX STATION, VIRGINIA 22039
(703) 239-0500 ekoji.info@gmail.com*