

## 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



## FROM THE BOARD

The JSBTC Board met for its interim fall meeting on October 17 – 20 at the Calgary Buddhist Temple. Because the Ministers had met at the World Buddhist Women's Convention in San Francisco in September, only Socho and Rev. Grant as the Chair of the Ministerial Association joined us. In addition, Sara Izawa from Nishi Hongwanji attended as an observer; this was an opportunity for her to see a North American Board in action (we wondered if that was a good thing!). After a few days in Vancouver, Sara went on to the new Jodo Shinshu International Office in Berkley. Perhaps we will be seeing more of her.

The Board used its time together to focus on the role of the Living Dharma Centre and to discuss support for the Temples and fellowships. So many great ideas were discussed, but as a volunteer board, we must pick only a few to work on; there never seems to be enough time or people to cover everything. As well, with Socho and Rev. Grant, the Board reviewed new guidelines for Assistant Ministers (arising from changes made by the BCA) and some specific funeral procedures for Ministers who have passed (arising from suggestions from Hawaii).

The Board also enjoyed Calgary's annual fund raising dinner on Saturday night and thanks the Calgary Temple for its hospitality.



Back (left to right): Rev. Ikuta (MA Chair), Greg Chor (Treasurer), Harvey Kaita, Debra Campbell Hayashi (Vice President), Dave Otori (Advisor), Trudy Gahlinger (Secretary)

Front (left to right): Sara Izawa (Observer), Laura Sugimoto, Larry Wakisaka (President), Amy Wakisaka (LDC Chair)

**Comments? Suggestions? We would love to hear from you**

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## DHARMA MESSAGE

### Autumn Reflections

After our summer break, autumn has now come, with its wonderful myriad of colors, cool evenings, and falling leaves. The sun is now setting earlier, and by early evening it has fallen behind the mountain. The children have begun a new school year. The boy next door, who was a young child the year we arrived here, is now a young man, beginning his freshman year at University. How time flies! Over the past fifteen years, the Okanagan has changed so much. We have seen the addition of new highways, expansion, of our airport, and the creation of new neighbourhoods. Although many of the changes are positive ones, we are also left with feelings of nostalgia for the ways life used to be.

The Fall is one of the most wonderful times of year, and it continues to provide a source of wisdom for our lives. We see the leaves from the trees eventually fall to nurture the earth, in preparation for new lives yet to emerge. Buddhism teaches us much about the changing nature of life. However, we human beings tend to cling to what we have, and we are uncomfortable with change. One of the main four principles of Buddhism is that of impermanence - everything is changing. Change is the very essence of our nature, nothing remains static. All that is formed is in a constant process of change.

With this in mind, we human beings have experienced many things over our lifetime. We are all on the journey of life in this world. Buddhism encourages us to strive to live in the present with confidence and peace of mind, with the assurance that we will be born in the Pure Land. However, as a famous Zen Master pointed out "Don't expect your path to be free from obstacles - without them the fire of your enlightenment will go out. Find liberation amid the disturbances themselves." Buddhism, therefore teaches us how to live life fully in this difficult world.

As we look around, we notice the wonders of the world, particularly at this change of season. Look at the mountains, trees, flowers, animals, birds, and all forms of wildlife that surrounds us. This world has been with us for thousands of years. We see the cycle of life within our world. The term "nature" is based on a Latin term which means "to produce or give birth to." In other words, "continue to give birth." There is no end or death, instead there is the creation of new beginnings and new life.

Within the Larger Sutra, the term "nature" is used many times. Shinran Shonin interpreted the word "nature" as "*to be made to become so---something that is free from human action or calculation.*" All of our actions have an impact on others. It is interesting that our "human-centered" view tends to regard our human species as separate from nature. We try to understand and control nature from our own self-centered view. Indeed, one might say that our knowledge tends to look on nature from a somewhat human-centered perspective.

We humans, in pursuing our own goals continue to exploit nature, with little concern for long-term consequences. Now we are recognizing that the future life of our world as we know it, is in jeopardy. Today's news reported on how the Arctic sea ice is melting more rapidly than scientists ever imagined. The report said that we are headed for catastrophe. Yet our attitudes towards nature are slow to change.

The Buddhist view of nature is called, "*shizen*" in Japanese, which means "as it is" or "self-evident." Every existence is considered worthy of existence, without exception. We human beings are a part of nature. Buddhism regards all forms of nature including human beings as equivalent. There is no such thing as superior or inferior. The terms, to "conquer" or "control" nature, are not existent in Eastern traditions.

One of Shinran Shonin's favorite words was "*jinen*" which is equivalent to our "*shizen*." Shinran used this term as follows; "If one is in accord with the reality of "*jinen*", one will surely awaken to the benevolence of the Buddha and one's teachers and respond with gratitude." Nature is our source of wisdom, and the ultimate reality of Buddhism. It teaches us to exist in harmony with all beings, rather than try to exert dominance or control over them according to our human-centeredness.

Autumn is a time for us to pause and reflect, and realize that all beings are interdependent. Let us take some time to observe the beauty of nature, and appreciate a deeper sense of oneness in our world. Namo Amida Butsu

In Gassho,  
Rev.Yasuhiro Miyakawa

### Reverend Yasuhiro Miyakawa

Reverend Yasuhiro Miyakawa was born and raised in Japan. In 1979 he was assigned to serve in the Overseas Missionary, and came to Canada to the Toronto Buddhist Church. He was then assigned to the Calgary Buddhist Temple in 1980. In 1982 he moved to Southern Alberta Buddhist Federation. In 1985, he was assigned to the Manitoba Buddhist Church and remained there until 1999. Since October, 2004, Rev. Miyakawa has been the resident minister for the Interior Shin Buddhist Temples of Kamloops, Kelowna and Vernon. He resides in Kelowna with his family.

Many celebrations and services have been held over the years. The Lord Abbott Gomonshu Kosho Ohtani, and Lady Ohtani came for the first visit by a Gomonshu in 1952. Other notable services were the 30th, 45th and 60th Anniversary Celebrations. The Vernon Buddhist Temple hosted the B.C. Jodo Shinshu Buddhist Temples Federation Annual Convention in September 2014 and again in September 2018.

The Vernon Buddhist Temple has been an active Dharma teacher with a warm-hearted sangha because of many causes and conditions, but the main reason is its dedicated members.

### [A Brief History of the Kamloops Buddhist Temple](#)

Following the end of WWII in 1946, there was an influx of Japanese Canadian families to the Kamloops area. In February of 1948, a starting committee met to discuss establishing a Buddhist church in Kamloops. This group consisted of: H. Tanabe, U. Hirowatari, S. Yamada, R. Tahara, M. Nishi and E. Nishiyama. A subsequent meeting was held in December with representatives from the Buddhist churches in Vernon and Kelowna. This began the Okanagan Federation.

In 1949, much progress was made, thanks to monetary donations. A butsudan and accessories were brought from the Kelowna Church and in April, the Fujinkai was formed. The Kamloops Church had no building until well into the 1950s. Church functions were held at various social halls. There were 80 members, membership fee was one dollar.

At the 1953 AGM, members learned of the purchase of property for establishing a church. Land was purchased for \$800, and construction began as weather permitted. The Building Committee included T. Sakaki, S. Yamada, M. Kanna, C. Ichii, Y. Nishimura, U. Hirowatari, C. Yoshida, G. Kato, H. Kodama, H. Hamaguchi, T. Nishikawa, T. Uyeda, K. Kaminishi and F. Makihara.

The church was finally completed in the summer of 1955. Members gathered on March 31, 1956 for the Dedication Service of the new church building. The congregation immediately began a number of activities such as Sunday School, a Japanese Language school etc.

We are grateful for the untiring efforts of the pioneer members and friends who founded the temple. The temple has played an integral role in spreading the Jodo Shinshu teachings in Kamloops.

### **Kamloops Buddhist Temple hosts BCJSBTF Convention & AGM**

The 64th Annual British Columbia Jodo Shinshu Buddhist Temples Federation Convention and AGM was held in Kamloops, BC, September 27 – 29, 2019. It had been a number of years since the Kamloops Buddhist Temple had hosted a convention. But with encouragement from Mari Cameron (Vernon Temple) and Kuni Ikuta (Steveston Temple) we took the challenge!

In attendance were members from Vancouver, Steveston, Fraser Valley, Kelowna, Vernon and Kamloops Temples. There were a number of people who came just for the day to hear Dr. Tanaka's lectures.

Our guest speaker was D. Kenneth Tanaka, from Japan. Dr. Tanaka is the author of well-known book: [Ocean](#). Approximately, 70 people took in Dr. Tanaka's lecture on Saturday.

Also, we had Dharma talks in Japanese given by Rev. Tatsuya Aoki Socho and Rev. Grant Ikuta Sensei. Tanaka Sensei also spoke in Japanese. The seniors truly appreciated the three Japanese sessions!

The Convention & AGM was held at the temple, like the good old days and was appreciated by all who attended. A huge "thank you" is extended to Miyakawa Sensei, the committee members and all the volunteers that helped to make the weekend a reality.



## FROM THE TEMPLES

### [Kelowna Buddhist Temple History](#)

The Kelowna Buddhist Society was established in 1932 and originally known as Okanagan Buddhist Fellowship. The current building at 1089 Borden Avenue was built in 1967. Our forefathers had the tenacity and the foresight to establish a Buddhist organization here in the Okanagan Valley to preserve our heritage. One can only imagine the hardships and sacrifices they made during the early years. Due to World War II and evacuation of all persons of Japanese ancestry from a 100 mile radius of coastal British Columbia, Kelowna became the home of the priceless Amida Buddha's shrine from Fairview Buddhist Church, Vancouver. The Temple was the focal point of a Buddhist family, a place to listen to the Dharma, for social and cultural activities, it was a family outing.

Rev. Shinjo Ikuta, the first resident minister for the Okanagan arrived in 1951. Before the arrival of a resident minister, a minister was invited from Vancouver area Temples for special occasions. Reverend Yasuhiro Miyakawa is our resident minister, he also looks after Vernon and Kamloops Temples as well as Interior of BC to the Alberta border when his services are required.

The Kelowna Buddhist Temple celebrated its 75th Anniversary on May 27, 2007 with a homecoming of former residents, guests from throughout BC and sister-temple members from the big island of Hawaii.

The Temple has been involved in many community activities. It is proud to have been part of the Restoration of Pioneer Section of the Kelowna Memorial Park Cemetery. In February, 2005, a fundraising effort was made for the Red Cross 2004 Thailand Tsunami Relief. The campaign was spearheaded by Reverend Miyakawa, who swam six hundred laps (fifteen kilometres) of the Johnson Bentley pool in Westbank, in just over six hours. This most astonishing non-stop feat was accomplished using the butterfly stroke! On August 9, 2007 a 12 hour Thousand Sutra Samadhi (meditation) chanting to remember those who had perished or suffered the Atomic bombing in Nagasaki, Japan was undertaken to raise awareness and promote universal peace. Many members, media and the general public took part in the chanting or folded an origami crane to symbolize peace. Temple members have fundraised for many causes such as 1990 - 91 \$5,000.00 to the 'Together We Care' campaign of the Kelowna General Hospital, 2011 Tohoku Earthquake and Tsunami Relief, 2015 Nepal Earthquake.

The Women's Association was formed 1936 and continues to be backbone of the Temple, although few in number they are a vital part of all fundraisings and events held. The ladies of the temple have volunteered at the Red Cross Blood Donors Clinics.

With the arrival of Rev. Shinjo Ikuta, Sunday School (currently known as Dharma School) was formed in 1951 and continues at 10:00 on every second and fourth Sunday morning from last Sunday in October to end of May. For the last decade the students have chaired all services, including Hanamatsuri. Initially they were timid but soon overcame nerves and shyness and became confident mentors to the younger students in chairing or leading a reading. Hanamatsuri is celebrated with the students visiting patients of Kelowna General Hospital and few of the senior residences in the area with daffodil flowers a tradition that was first started in 1952. The students have spearheaded a number of food drives for the Food Bank of Kelowna.

Currently, the Temple is also home to Yamabiko Taiko group. This is a group of local residents practicing the art of Japanese drumming.

The Temple has hosted many Pacific Northwest, national and provincial conventions and general meetings.

Today, the third and fourth generation descendants of our founding members are the governing body and leaders of our Temple. Our temple is open to all who are interested or curious about our faith and seeking spiritual peace.

### [Vernon Buddhist Temple History](#)

Fourteen Buddhists formed the Nori-no-kai and invited Yutetsu Kawamura Sensei from Alberta, for its first service in January 1948. The group was renamed the Vernon Buddhist Church in 1949. In December 1951 the Okanagan Kyoku welcomed their first resident minister, Shinjo Ikuta Sensei, so services could be held monthly at the Vernon Nokai Hall (Japanese Farmers' Hall). The Japanese community has generously given the Vernon Buddhist Temple a place to hold services and events from its inception.

It is due to the ministers who traveled from Vancouver, Kelowna, and Kamloops, that the Vernon Buddhist Temple has been able to have monthly services. The ministers who served were Shinjo Ikuta Sensei, Kyojo Ikuta Sensei, Koyo Okuda Sensei, Orai Fujikawa Sensei, Norimaru Taniyama Sensei, Koresada Sensei, Daijun Yakumo Sensei, Shigenobu Watanabe Sensei, Michael Hayashi Sensei and our current Yasuhiro Miyakawa Sensei. The B.C. Interior Jodo Shinshu Federation (originally called the Okanagan Kyoku) makes it possible for Vernon to share a minister with the Kelowna and Kamloops Temples.

In July 1961 the old altar from the Steveston Buddhist Church was installed in the upstairs meeting room of the newly completed Vernon Japanese Community Hall.

A new altar was built and donated by Mr. Susumu Yamamoto of Winnipeg in March 1980 and many members volunteered and donated materials to house this altar. Scrolls of Amida Buddha, Shinran Shonin and Rennyo Shonin were received from Nishi Hongwanji. In 1994, this altar was moved into the conference room of the newly renovated Vernon Japanese Community Hall. A kansho was donated by the Buddhist Temple of Southern Alberta and installed to celebrate our temple's 70th Anniversary in 2018.

Rev. Miyakawa, Rev. Tanaka, Socho Aoki, and Rev. Ikuta having a moment of fun at the BC JSBTF Convention in Kamloops.



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**THROUGH A BUDDHIST EYE: AN EXPLORATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS**



- **KEYNOTE SPEAKER DUNCAN RYUKAN WILLIAMS**  
Williams is a Soto Zen priest and Director of the Shinso Ito Center for Japanese Religions and Culture at the University of Southern California. He is the author of "American Sutra: A Story of Faith and Freedom in the Second World War"
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## ***THE WOMEN'S FEDERATION***

### **WHAT IS THE WOMEN'S FEDERATION?**

In the early days while most Temples have had a fujinkai, the seed for a national Buddhist women's group was planted until 1976 when the Toronto Dana started "Buddhist Women Across Canada", and Terrie Komori of Toronto worked to unite women across all the Temples in Canada. However, it wasn't until March, 1982 that a Women's group was officially formed and recognized as the Women's Federation. The Women's Federation was supported at that time by Lady Yoshiko Ohtani's generous donation and endorsed at the 7<sup>th</sup> World Buddhist Women's Convention in Hawaii to encourage its growth into a strong organization.

In true Buddhist manner, our group has not stayed permanently within the mandate of the group formed 37 years ago, but our aim is the same: to promote harmony within the Sangha of Jodo Shinshu Buddhism. Our mandate today is to participate in activities that broaden awareness of the Dharma, support education in Jodo Shinshu Buddhism and promote camaraderie amongst women. We have evolved just recently from a Board of Directors to a Leadership Committee under the umbrella of the JSBTC, reflecting changes in Canadian charitable tax legislation and restructuring within the JSBTC. We now have new Terms of Reference, which were approved and adopted at our last annual meeting in Vancouver this spring. The WF will continue to hold annual meetings at different locations with the Temple associates to review and direct and make decisions concerning the direction of the WF, in conjunction with the JSBTC AGM.

Our activities today continue to promote social welfare with our Dana Day donations to support national charitable causes such as Inspire an educational award for Indigenous students and Blankets for Canada. We also support and assist our ministers in their educational pursuit of ministerial duties and attainment of levels of Buddhist development. The Women's Federation also supports our Dharma youth with monetary subsidies for their pursuit for educational understanding of Jodo Shinshu Buddhism.



**THE 16TH WORLD BUDDHIST WOMEN'S CONVENTION**  
(Jodo Shinshu Buddhist Temples of Canada Women's Federation)

San Francisco, California, August 30 to September 1, 2019

World Buddhist Women's Conventions are held every 4 years rotating between Japan, United States, Hawaii, Canada and Brazil. The last very successful WBWC was held in Calgary, Alberta, 2015. This year, the Convention was hosted by the Buddhist Churches of America Federation of Buddhist Women's Associations at the Marriott Marquis Hotel San Francisco with the theme of "Live the Nembutsu".

Ballroom Doors opened early for the welcome and Opening Service. Delegates eagerly streamed into the ballroom. We would smile and wave when spotting a fellow Canadian sporting their white tops and smart red and white maple leaf scarves. Translation devices were available to everyone in English, Japanese and Portuguese during the opening ceremony. Myra Takasaki and June Asano along with the other Secretary Generals had the honour of walking up the aisle carrying flowers and lanterns to be placed by the altar. Then the Gomonshu and all the ministers took their places on the stage in front of the altar. Although this is my third time attending a WBWC, the loud, rich sound of all the ministers chanting Sanbutsuge throughout the huge ballroom along with 1,677 other Buddhists, is still extremely powerful and unbelievably moving. It was truly a "Live the Nembutsu" moment. By the way, both the opening and closing service chantings were eloquently led by female ministers.

The highlight for most delegates was listening to both distinguished keynote speakers. Professor Keiko Toro an independent Buddhist scholar was wearing her mother's kimono. Rev. Yukiko Motoyoshi the resident minister of the Buddhist Church of Stockton, US spoke while wearing her robes. Both expounded on their distinctive life journeys sharing how they lived the Nembutsu and how the Dharma shaped their lives - so inspiring!

All the District Panelists were very interesting and excellent speakers as well. Trudy Gahlinger representing Canada, did a fabulous job speaking on gratitude. Thank you Trudy - well done! There was a plethora of workshops with interesting titles to attend on the Friday evening and Saturday afternoon. Lady Takeko Kujo: The Secret of her inner Beauty, Mindfulness and Shin, Changing with the Times, Line Dancing for Enlightenment are just a few examples of the twenty four Workshops that were available. So many workshops and so little time.

The WBWC Marketplace was filled to the brim with unique gifts and omiyage. Booths were sponsored by various temples and featured regional specialties either grown in California or homemade arts and crafts. Variety galore.

Each of the Districts was asked to provide entertainment at the Saturday evening banquet. Of course the Canadian portion of the evening banquet entertainment was outstanding (in my opinion). On Saturday afternoon the Canadians could be found in an out of the way corner, trying to sing while trying to keep in step with the music, and while staring at a little iPad screen. And did we practice? Later in the evening, wearing those fabulous red and white maple leaf scarves we filed onto the stage, arms-length apart and put on a smile.... To our surprise a lot of the Japanese delegates knew the words to our song, Kitte no nai Okurimono so sang and clapped along. Everyone had fun and yes, we did Canada proud!

The WBWC is an opportunity for Jodo Shinshu followers to celebrate together, to learn from each other and spread the circle of the Buddha Dharma. From Japan, Hawaii, USA, Canada and Brazil we came to San Francisco with different customs and different languages only to find we are connected by our faith in the Buddha Dharma and gratitude in the Sangha.

See you in four years at The 17th World Buddhist Women's Convention in Kyoto, Japan, May 2023.

## OTHER NEWS

### Jodo Shinshu International Office

Following the WBWC, the official opening ceremony of the Jodo Shinshu International Office (JSIO) was held on September 1, 2019. Located in the Buddhist Churches of America national headquarters building, the ceremony included the unveiling of the new JSIO signage on the front of the BCA Headquarters building. Those in attendance for the JSIO opening ceremony included His Eminence Monshu Kojun Ohtani, Hongwanji Governor Rev. Keiichi Abe, Hongwanji International Department Supervisor Rev. Masumi Ishida, Bishop Tatsuya Aoki of the Canada, District Bishop & Mrs. Eric Matsumoto of the Hawaii District, Bishop & Mrs. Mario Kajiwara of the South America District, Bishop & Mrs. Kodo Umezu of the North America District, as well as District Presidents, Mr. & Mrs. Pieper Toyama of Hawaii, Mr. & Mrs. Larry Wakisaka of the Canada Kyodan, Richard Stambul of the BCA, and other BCA & Hongwanji officials.

### Rev. Tatsuya Aoki Achieves Academic Scholar Status

For the past three years Rev. Aoki has been studying to achieve the ranking of Academic Scholar granted by Nishi Hongwanji. On June 6, 2019, at the mother temple, Nishi Hongwanji, Kyoto, he successfully completed the final examination to achieve this ranking. For years, he had spent extra hours over and above his temple and bishopric duties to study and further his knowledge of Buddhist and Jodo Shinshu doctrine. Initially he was awarded a professional development grant from the Living Dharma Centre of JSBTC.

Following three years of study and passing his examinations, he was conferred the title of Specialized Lecturer (*Fukyoshi*) in 2013. Having graduated from a Hongwanji-affiliated graduate school, for the next level, he was exempted from more study course requirements, which consists of two sets of examinations. He qualified directly for the “*Denshi*” examination. For this process, a candidate is required to fully memorize a text of 150 pages containing 17 chapters of doctrinal subjects known as “*Anjin Rondai*” in Japanese. On the day of the *Denshi* examination the Gomonsu (head minister of Nishi Hongwanji) chooses a subject which is announced immediately prior to the examination. The candidates are given a blank exam paper and allowed 30 minutes to write by memory the exact contents of the chosen chapter. An oral examination in the presence of three doctrinal special scholars followed the written examination and each candidate was asked to explain in depth, topics on Jodo Shinshu doctrine.

Rev. Aoki recounted that after the long morning of examinations, later that day the participants anxiously awaited the announcement of the examination results. He had passed! Rev. Aoki is now officially conferred the distinction of “*Hokyo*”, the second highest status achievable by the academician himself/herself. Many of them take the teaching posts at the Jodo Shinshu Buddhist seminaries.

In the Buddhist Churches of America, only four ministers of the current forty three resident ministers currently hold a similar distinction. In Hawaii, there is only one of a total of twenty seven ministers with this qualification. In Canada, the last minister with this qualification was Rev. Kyojo Ikuta, who passed away in 2014.

Congratulations to Rev. Aoki for achieving, with hard work and dedication, this very worthy distinction!



Special “*Wagesa*” (Minister’s Robe around the neck) with name inside and distinguished Crest symbolizing Hongwanji’s scholarly status.



*Senseis Jeff Haines (Lethbridge), Tanis Moore (Winnipeg), and Roland Ikuta (Lethbridge) at Hongwanji in Kyoto upon completing Tokudo, July, 2019*

### Reflections of Tokudo—Tanis Moore

I recently received a photograph from the Hongwanji International Center of Kyoto; it's a group picture of Tokudo participants, the assistants, some of the lecturers, with the Gomonsu plus other dignitaries in the front row. (The International Center was my first and last contact on this journey, and I am very thankful to them for all their kindnesses.)

It brings back so many memories; the fondest is of all the Tokudo friendships, the kindness and care from all those who supported us through the process, and the incredible experience itself. Included with the photo was a covering letter, plus my Kadai card, with 4 stamped spaces representing oral tests we were required to pass in order to receive ordination. Being cut off from all outside influence (phone, computer, television, newspapers) and immersed in a world of wearing (and often changing robes) from 5:30 am till bathing time, around 9:30 pm became the new reality. Cleaning first thing in the morning, then attending services, morning afternoon and evening, plus wonderful interesting lectures, and mealtimes became the norm. We were part of a group that helped and cared for each other.

Most amazing of all, to me, was the ordination itself, which we practised several times prior to the actual event. The beauty and depth of emotion; feeling a connection to people in the past who had gone through the same ceremony, all of this will be forever kept in my heart. The importance of ShoShin-ge; how it explains the foundation of Jodo Shinshu Buddhism origins and thought as explained by Shinran is now embedded in my mind!

I am so grateful for all the support I have received from the JSBTC, from the Manitoba Buddhist Temple, and many ministers across Canada who were so helpful when they came to our temple for Sunday services, and especially to Rev. Aoki who helped in so many ways throughout the whole process. They say it takes a village to raise a child, and I see myself as the child raised by our Canadian village of Jodo Shinshu Buddhists.

In Gassho,  
Tanis

### **Tokudo: A Journey of Faith (Shinjin) By Jeff Haines (BTSA)**

My journey to the Tokudo ordination in Kyoto, Japan in July of 2019 started 5 years earlier in the depths of personal struggle and with the encouragement of my wife to seek spirituality. I had worked at a school for at-risk students for 6 years. These students brought issues to school surrounding parental neglect, substance abuse, violence and personal trauma. I hadn't realized how much I had been internalizing their struggles over the years and I began to struggle myself in dealing with their realities. Headed into what would be my last year at that school, my wife encouraged me to go see a psychologist to get some strategies to deal with the stress. After sharing the types of things I dealt with at the school and my personal issues the psychologist she said there had been a great amount of success with people meditating. I bought an introductory book on meditation by Jon Kabat-Zinn and committed to 1 year of daily guided meditations. The benefits were almost immediate and they became more profound over the course of the year. I began to see events much more clearly for what they were and I found I began to recognize my emotions in stressful situations and control my responses better.

With this as a backdrop, my wife, who is a Roman Catholic, encouraged me to take it to the next level so to speak. I began reading about general Buddhism and learned that the next phase would be joining a Sangha. I live in a small community of about 15,000 people and as diverse as Brooks is it didn't offer a Buddhist temple. I researched online and found a few in Calgary, 2 hours away and 1 in Lethbridge one and a half hours away. The joke has become that the Lethbridge temple won out because it was a half hour closer.

My first encounters with Jodo Shinshu Buddhism were difficult. I didn't understand

the new terms and I was struggling to see where the general Buddhism I had been reading about fit. Terms like Amida Buddha, Other Power, Shinjin and Namu Amida Butsu overwhelmed me. I think I might have stopped attending but really my wife wouldn't let me. She told me to just keep going. She would always remind me of how wonderfully kind and accepting the members of the temple in Lethbridge were. How encouraging and genuinely happy they were when I returned for a Sunday service. Izumi Sensei patiently answering my questions and would smile large and throw his hands out when I walked through the doors of the temple making me feel welcome. Mac and Reyko Nishiyama were so wonderful to me that on my first visit to temple they invited me back to their home for lunch. At this point in my journey I felt I needed what Christians call, Faith. I had to have faith that I was doing something right even if I didn't understand it. For the first year or so I attended as often as I could and continued to read about Buddhism and Jodo Shinshu. I had then heard about the online correspondence course through the Institute of Buddhist Studies and thought it might be a better way to fully understand how Jodo Shinshu connected with the original Buddha. It was a conversation with Dr. Matsumoto of IBS that changed the course of my studies and my life. In that conversation he said to just enroll at IBS in what was then called the Kyoshi Certificate, now the Shin Buddhist Certificate. I trusted everyone who was guiding and helping me because they were all kind and genuine. I didn't realize at that time that I had started on a process that could lead to ministerial ordination.

My studies began all online and I took one course every semester for the next 2 and a half years. They were amazing! It was the perfect balance between academic reading and truths applicable to living daily. The Four Noble Truths surrounding the idea of suffering spoke directly to me and made sense. The Eightfold Path just seemed like something everybody could benefit from. The larger concepts of impermanence, dependent origination and interconnectedness immediately helped me place into perspective events in my life and the world. As Mac used to continually remind me there are causes and conditions that lead to everything. And my studies eventually led me to the Tokudo ordination in July of 2019.

In the coming months the preparation process was quite arduous. I was so happy to have along for this portion of the journey another Tokudo candidate in Roland Ikuta. Roland became such an important figure in my preparation that I know I could not have done it without him. He answered questions and we both supported each other when we had doubts about what we were doing. I attended four workshop sessions in preparation for the Tokudo process in Kyoto. Two of them were in Calgary, Alberta and two of them were in Berkeley, California. At these workshops they gave information that would be necessary for the journey and they tried to create the conditions that would simulate our experience while in Japan.

The idea of going to Japan was quite daunting. I learned to rely on that Christian concept of faith again. I let things unfold and tried not to attach myself to any particular outcome. What could be the worst that could happen? I didn't realize, in any way, how difficult it would be. We pretty much hit the ground running and started some smaller workshops to further prepare us for ordination. These were led by the International branch of the Hongwanji. The tone from the beginning was serious, intense and very formal. As a teacher in North America this tone was very different from what happens in a classroom or school. I was very much used to using humour, being flexible and providing firm but kind support. My experience through the ordination was difficult as I had to separate myself from what I might do back in my profession and/or Canada. The format during training included rising early to clean and prepare for the day. Attending 3 services a day and 6 hours of lectures. The lectures varied from liturgy and rituals to doctrinal aspects of Jodo Shinshu Buddhism. The process was exhausting and the tone was difficult, at times, to endure. If not for many of the other 20 foreign candidates support I would have struggled even more. I felt tremendously honoured and grateful to be part of such a timeless tradition, but I had conflicted feelings over what I had accomplished and how it would be applicable in Canada. Upon arriving home, I would go through periods of despair over the choice I had made to pure excitement at the future of this beautiful tradition. In the end, I reminded myself of how much I have grown as a person since becoming a Buddhist and how many people and opportunities have presented themselves to me on this journey, inevitably enhancing my life. I was asked to assist Roland in officiating Flo Senda's funeral service this past Friday and I realized that all I experienced in Japan was helping me to honour Flo and her family with the proper ritual and significance I wished for my community of fellow Shin Buddhists. I was honored and grateful to be given the opportunity to serve and it was in that moment that I realized the true value of my training in Japan.

I have great optimism for Shin Buddhism in Canada. The doctrinal aspects are always interesting for me and I believe I see the balance now between them and the rituals I learned in Japan. I also realize now that what I thought was Faith; allowing and giving over to greater power than myself might be more the Jodo Shinshu concept of Shinjin. Through self-effort, and my connection with others, I was better understanding the three aspects of Shinjin. Firstly, entrusting or deep mind, that through self-effort I will continually reflect on my life and its relation to all other sentient beings and try to respond with the Buddha's teaching in mind. Knowing that because of my selfish nature it may not always be right. Secondly, sincere or true mind, that I will continue to try and live the truth of Amida Buddha and guide others to that same truth. That I will need to continually bring my ego into question. Finally, desire for birth or mind of aspiration, that I truly do aspire for birth in the Pure Land of enlightenment and by default I also have that desire for all others as well. That with this desire, I will try to live a life, despite my blind passions, that is one with Amida Buddha. For the opportunity to try to do this I am grateful and respond with Namu Amida Butsu.

It is with the deepest of gratitude that I reflect upon my Tokudo journey. I have appreciated the efforts of so many individuals and organizations that have contributed to my preparation and completion of the ordination process. The Jodo Shinshu Buddhist temples of Canada, the Living Dharma Centre and the Buddhist Temple of Southern Alberta have been very supportive. The Buddhist Churches of America and the Institute of Buddhist Studies were integral in helping prepare me. And, finally, the Nishi Hongwongi and the Hongwanji International Centre. Their preparation, organization and individual work while we were in Japan was nothing short of amazing. Without all these causes and conditions none of what the 20 foreign candidates were able to accomplish would have been possible. I am humbled and grateful.

Namu Amida Butsu

## What was Tokudo really like?

It was one of the most impactful learning experiences of my life. It was highly intense, mentally draining and in the end helped convince me I am on the right path.

I arrived in Japan July 2<sup>nd</sup> at 15:30 and got to Kyoto at 19:00. Jeff Haines and I found our hotel, had a nice supper and went to bed by 20:30 PM. We got up next morning at 5:00 AM, went for a walk and happened upon Nishi Hongwanji just as morning service was about to start. We made the 6 AM service chanting Sanbutsuge and Shoshinge. It was amazing to see our mother temple especially since the Amida Hall and the Goeido Hall (Founders Hall) were combined due to renovations of the Amida Hall. The large alters of each hall were combined.

The next day we gathered at the Hongwanji International Centre. Our class of twenty foreign Tokudo Aspirants is by far the largest group to attend the Centre (previously the largest was fourteen). Seventeen of us had met at Berkeley in our pre-training workshops, and two people from Mainland China and one from Hong Kong joined us in Japan. During the next 3 days we went through 10-hour days of chanting, reciting Ryogemon, rituals on how to offer incense, how to fold our robes and tie our Gojo Gesa and making sure that we packed properly for Tokudo. At night we went shopping for our supplies and had nice meals with groups of 6-10 people. These were the last days of using our cell phones and computers until the end of Tokudo on July 17<sup>th</sup>.

July 6<sup>th</sup> started with our trip from our hotel to the Nishiyama Training facility and Nishiyama Betsuin where many of our services were to be held. We were split into our Hun or houses of 10 people each. There were 43 people going through Tokudo (20 foreigners and 23 people from Japan). I was assigned as the leader of Group 4. Each Hun took turns conducting services, cleaning, doing laundry, taking baths (male and females were separate), practicing for the services, or studying for our Kadai (tests). All tasks were done as a group; individuals were responsible for the outcomes of the group.

A typical day would start at 5:20 AM but as a group we decided to wake up at 5 AM to beat the crowd to the washrooms; then we could have a 10-minute window to have a coffee prior to morning service. During the day we would have two or three 10-minute breaks at the vending machine to drink electrolyte solutions or ice coffee; we had limited access to water except at meal times and during the brief breaks. In fact, several people became dehydrated due to the lack of fluids. After the wake up routine, we did our assigned cleaning from 5:45 – 6:05 and had morning check in with the group to make sure everybody was ok and to review the upcoming day. Morning service ran from 6:30 until around 8 AM and then we would go for breakfast. Morning service was run by one of the four groups. We listened to the critique of the service from the senseis and then went for breakfast. All meals were eaten in silence. The meals would take around 20 minutes, and many of us had to learn to eat quickly. Prior to the service we would change from our Fuho robes to the formal Kokue robes but back into our Fuho for the meals. Each time the robes would have to be folded and put away; our assigned drawers could be inspected at any time to ensure our robes were neatly and properly folded. After breakfast we would attend morning lectures from 9 AM to noon. We would then have our lunch from 12:00 to 1:30. On Days 3 through 9 there would be Kadai sessions available for us to try to pass one of the four assigned exams. From 1:30 PM until 16:00 there would be more lectures. From 16:30 there would be an evening service, which required another change of robes and setting up the Hondo. Again one of the groups would be assigned to run the service. The evening service would run until 18:00 or later depending on how smoothly it ran. Supper would usually be from 18:30 until 18:50 with evening Kadai (testing) from 19:15 until bedtime service, which would run from 19:30 until 20:30. This would be followed by Chanting practice sessions if your group were going to run a service the next day. We could also have self-study sessions to practice for our Kadai tests. During these times we would also learn new things such as how to tie our Hakama, how to fold them, how to set up the Najin for special services, etc. This would also be bath time for the group. These sessions would last until 22:30 at which time we would get ready for bed with lights out occurring at 23:00. We usually fell into our beds and fell asleep very; there were several nights when we would not even remember people coming around to shut off the lights for the rest of the building at 23:00. The evening of Day 9 and Day 10 were spent getting our heads shaved for the formal ordination service and practicing for the ordination service. The ordination occurred during the afternoon of the 10<sup>th</sup> day followed by morning service at Nishi Hongwanji at 6 AM (we had to be up by 4 AM to get ready and to be transported) and then a visit to the Otani Mausoleum on Day 11. We spent the rest of the morning cleaning and packing up to leave Nishiyama Centre.

During the lecture sessions we had several excellent lectures. These included sessions on rituals and chanting given by Shoko Naramoto Sensei and Yuzo Momozono Sensei. We had an excellent day of lectures from Ken Tanaka Sensei on the roles of nembutsu followers and ministers. We had a session on Jodo Shinshu history from Esho Sasaki Sensei and a session on nembutsu and shinjin from Toshikazu Arai Sensei. On the 6<sup>th</sup> day there was a very interactive session on the significance of tokudo from Akinobu Kuwahara Sensei. We had a session on general religions from Hoyu Ishida Sensei and a session on applying the teachings from Mitsu Dake Sensei. In all we had 8 full days of lectures, which were extremely interesting and helpful for our future practice.

Some of the best aspects of the Tokudo sessions for me were the lectures, which provided practical information and affirmed to me that I was on the right path of study. The services and critiques helped build our confidence to run services in the future. The most positive aspect was getting to know the fellow Tokudo Aspirants from across the world. We made many life long friendships. We learned of each person's strengths and weaknesses and helped each other get through this experience despite the high stress level. On day 6 when we were discussing the Significance of Tokudo, we had a small group discussion to talk about how the process may have changed our reflection on how we would be as Jodo Shinshu ministers. We all talked about how this is just the beginning of the process and how grateful we were to all who helped us along this path. We all reflected on how little we knew coming in and how much more we have to learn. As I sat in this session and looked around the room, I felt that the people in that room are critical individuals who will shape the future of Jodo Shinshu Buddhism in the world outside of Japan. The twenty people going through Tokudo with me represent the future of our sect of Buddhism in North America, Great Britain and China. Knowing the quality of the individuals and their dedication I could not help but feel a great sense of joy and peace at what a great future we have. I would trust any one of them with my spiritual guidance, and I know I will be bound to them for the rest of my life.

The process of going through Tokudo was something that I could not have done without the help of so many people. Thank you to Aoki Socho for spending so much time with us and making sure we had all of the robes and supplies we would need. Rev. Izumi encouraged us on this journey and gave us moral support. Robert Gubenco Sensei spent days helping us with our chanting and other rituals. His guidance and assistance was invaluable. The Sangha at BTSA offered great support for Jeff and me. Rev. Ouchi from Toronto also spent a day helping us with our chanting and rituals. Amy Wakisaka and the LDC provided financial support and encouragement for us going through this process.

We are grateful for JSBTC and the Canadian Kyodan for their support. Personally I need to thank my Mother and Dad for planting the seed for me to travel this path. My siblings Grant, Lester and Mari have also been a great source of support. My sister-in-law Sylvia and her husband Terry have been there for me on a daily basis to help pick up the slack as I was immersed in my studies. Finally my children, Nathan and Charlotte have been behind me as I have followed this path and most of all thanks to my wife Brenda who not only supported me but understood the importance of this journey for my personal growth.

In Gassho,

Roland Ikuta

*The three Tokudo Aspirants were supported throughout their journey by Socho Aoki, the JSBTC, and the Living Dharma Centre, as well as their home temples of Manitoba and BTSA, and the ministers of the Canadian Kyodan.*

*We welcome them to the new roles!*

## 2019 JSBTC YOUTH TOUR TO JAPAN

Rev. Grant Ikuta, Tour Leader

On July 9th, 2019 a group of six students (Sora Aoki, Summer Hinada from Vancouver; Erin Ikuta from Steveston; Josi Koerber from the Vernon Buddhist Temple; Kai Ichikawa from Lethbridge and Joaquin Kataoka from Toronto) and myself rendezvoused at the Vancouver International Airport where we would begin our journey together to the land of the rising sun, Japan. It was the first time going to Japan for four of the youths and we all had a memorable trip that was mainly focused on the Kansai region of Japan.

Preparation for the trip began early in the year as I compared the various airfares to Japan. To my surprise I found it quite a bit cheaper to fly to the Kansai International Airport compared to flying into Narita or Haneda in Tokyo. Because of this, I decided we would focus our trip on the Kansai area instead of going to Tokyo. This turned into good fortune because while I was thinking of where I could take the youths, one of our members told me that her son had recently started a bed and breakfast in Wakayama and I should contact him. His name is Shoji Ogata and he became our host, guide and chauffeur for the first few days of our trip. Shoji was born in Japan but raised in Richmond BC. He returned to Japan four years ago and purchased a 200 year-old house in a very rural area of Tanabe city in Wakayama. Shoji renovated the house and is running it as a guest house. Pictures of the Inn can be seen on Shoji's website [www.kishojp.com](http://www.kishojp.com). The Inn is located about an hour away from Mt. Koya, the head temple of the Shingon school of Buddhism and also very near the Kumano Kodo which is an old travelling route for pilgrims visiting various Shinto Shrines in the Kumano area. Over the course of three days, Shoji drove us around and showed us the various sites of Wakayama including the Wakayama castle, the Hongu-Taisha Shinto Shrine, the Nachi falls, Koya-san temple, and Shirahama to name just a few of the places we visited. Staying at Kisho (the name of Shoji's Inn) was a wonderful way to start our Japan trip as the kids were introduced to the rural part of Japan as well as seeing some historical sites.

On July 13th, after a morning visit to Koyasan, we said our farewell to Shoji and headed for Kyoto with a brief stop in Osaka to do some shopping at the Dotonburi Shopping area. For the next three days, our Canadian group was still on our own and we took in the many sites of Kyoto including the Kiyomizu temple, the Sanju Sangendo, Kinkakuji, Ryoanji Temple, Arashiyama, the Monkey Mountain at Arashiyama and shopping in downtown Kyoto as well as at the Aeon Mall.

The official Hongwanji program began on July 17th and had the youths learn about Jodo Shinshu Buddhism through lectures given by Rev. Gene Sekiya of the Hongwanji International Department. The Youths were given tours of the Hongwanji compounds. On the second day of the Hongwanji Program, the morning started with service followed by the Sarana Affirmation Ceremony. All six of our youths took part in the ceremony and received their Buddhist name from Zen-mon sama. It was moving to see them take part in a once in a lifetime experience. They all seemed proud of their Dharma names. The second day also included a day of sightseeing historical sights associated with Shinran Shonin. We visited Hino Tanjo-in where Shinran was born; to Mt. Hiei, where he spent twenty years from age nine to twenty-nine practicing as a Tendai Monk and finally to Ohtani Hombyo where Shinran was cremated and where his ashes were inurned.

The Hongwanji Program continued with a trip to Hiroshima where we visited the Hiroshima Peace Park and learned directly from a survivor of the atomic bomb, about the atrocities of

WWII and the suffering she went through. I think all of the youths were moved by what they experienced at the Peace Park.

Following our trip to Hiroshima, the next day the youths were met by their host families at the Hongwanji and were taken to their homes for a three day homestay experience. I believe for all of the youths one of the highlights of the entire trip was the kindness they received from their homestay families as they all came back from the three day stay saying they wish they could stay longer. There were many teary eyes as we said our farewells to the host families.

The official Hongwanji Program concluded on the morning of July 24th. The Youth Study Program came to an end with the closing ceremony and reflections by representatives who spoke on behalf of the youths expressing their appreciation and thoughts on the whole program. Following the Official Hongwanji portion of the trip, the majority of the Canadian group flew back home on the same day. Only Kai Ichikawa from Lethbridge and Joaquin Kataoka from Toronto stayed for an extra week to visit relatives.

In conclusion, overall it was a very meaningful trip with six excellent participants from the temples across Canada. The uniqueness of this Youth Tour to Japan is that individuals from differing backgrounds come together on a journey, not only to enjoy a fun trip, but also to learn and grow as individuals, gaining a sense of confidence with Jodo Shinshu, a religion which, for many, had been a distant teaching from a foreign country. It is a journey in which the youths come home being able to say I am proud to be a Jodo Shinshu Buddhist. For this alone, I am grateful to the Hongwanji and all involved for organizing this study program and I strongly hope that efforts be made to make sure this program continues on for years to come.

NOTE: all of the six participants wrote excellent articles about their trip; we wish we had room to include them all. The articles were circulated to all the Temple Presidents – check them out!



*Photos from the Youth Tour, Japan, July, 2019*



*HAPPY NEW YEAR!*

