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HIGASHI HONGWANJI HAWAII BETSUIN BULLETIN

December 2013
12

HIGASHI HONGWANJI MISSION OF HAWAII

At Higashi Hongwanji, we remain true to our origins as an open Sangha, welcoming anyone who wishes to learn more about the Jodo Shinshu tradition of Buddhism.

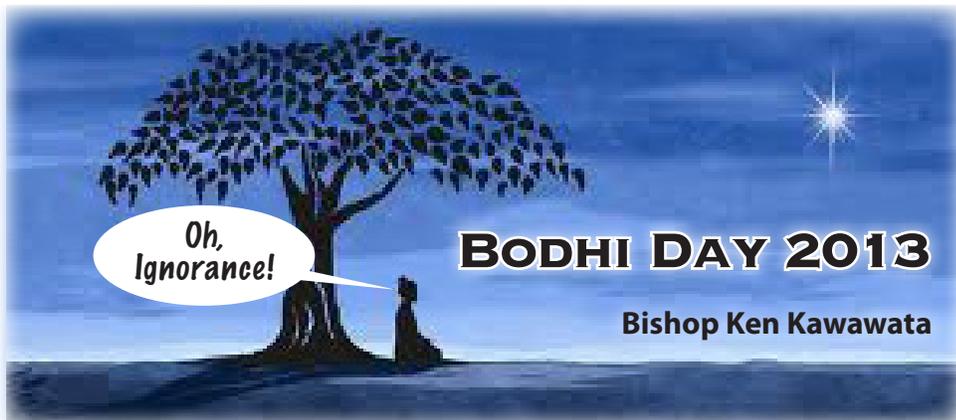
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Wa is published monthly by Higashi Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii for its members and friends. Comments, articles and other items for publication consideration are welcomed.

Editor: Ken Saiki



This month, before we even realize it, we're already at the end of the year. Where, oh where did 2013 go? I hope, though, that everybody had a good and meaningful year.

In December we hold our annual Bodhi Day service. Bodhi Day, Dec. 8, is the day of awakening of Sakyamuni Buddha. Bodhi means wisdom, way and awakening. So Bodhi Day celebrates the day of wisdom that the Buddha attained on the day, when Buddha found the way to leave the suffering of life. For Sakyamuni Buddha, this was a long journey, which began when he was young, when he saw the realities of the world and himself.

You may know the story of the four gates. When Sakyamuni stepped out from his palace, he faced realities of life, such as sickness, aging and death. The fourth time he left the palace he saw a young seeker of the true life. Then he thought he wanted to spend his life as the seeker.

At that time he established a wish called Bodhicitta, or *Bodaishin*, which is the aspiration to be an awakened person in general Buddhism. So when he saw the young seeker, he wished to have the wisdom or the way to be a liberated person from sufferings, and live fully and freely. We should establish the same wish in our heart and we can start to walk on the Buddha's path. In Jodo Shinshu that wish, which is called *yokusho-shin*, or the desire to be reborn into the Pure Land.

Sakyamuni was always thinking about sufferings and peace of mind. How could he have peace of mind? He thought he could not have peace of mind by having materialistic things or money or power.

When he was 29 years old he left his palace home. For six years he sought to transcend all of human sufferings. He visited the hermits who taught ascetic practices and to learn methods of attainment, but he could not attain the state of his mind that he wanted. In India at that time they thought the ascetic practices made them have a pure mind and pure spirit called Nirvana.

Finally he gave up the practices of asceticism. He washed his body and went under a big Bodhi tree to meditate. He thought he would have to reconsider his way to attain peace of mind.

It is said that early on Dec. 8 he saw a morning star, and at last, he became the awakened one at age 35. He shouted, "Oh, Ignorance!" He discovered that the cause of human suffering is Ignorance. He found ignorance in himself.

(continued on page 2)

HAWAII BUDDHIST COUNCIL BODHI DAY SERVICE

10 a.m., Sunday, December 8

Jodo Mission of Hawaii, 1429 Makiki Street (below H-1 freeway)

HIGASHI HONGWANJI BETSUIN BODHI DAY SERVICE

10 a.m. Sunday, December 15

Higashi Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii, 1685 Alaneo Street

BODHI DAY 2013 (cont'd from p. 1)

Then what is ignorance? Ignorance means we don't know the truth. Then what is truth for us? Truth is impermanence. For us, impermanence means aging, sickness, and death.

But in our daily lives we don't want to think like this. We always try to avoid or escape this truth. We wish to be always young and healthy. Buddha, too, wished to be young and healthy and live without change. So Buddha shouted "Ignorance!" to himself. This was the real understanding of himself and truth. Buddha found he lived in a world of impermanence that is himself. He became impermanence. He accepted his life as it is. From this point he could discover the teaching of the truth—Dharma—and a new life.

He taught the Dharma for 45 years, until he died at age of 80. He became a Bodhisattva, who shares the Dharma with others and learns together with others. He showed us the way of life.

It is said that there are 84,000 teachings in Buddhism. But the

84,000 teachings are not all different; he taught Dharma from his realization. The contents of the 84,000 teachings are the same, but conditions and people are different. So that is why, there are a lot of teachings in Buddhism.

The main goal of Buddhism, however, is the same. Becoming a Bodhisattva, becoming an awakened one, a person who awakens to true self. And to become a person who lives in daily life with the peace of mind.

So it is important to remember him as our teacher. We walk on the path of the Buddha and Shinran Shonin. Our everyday lives are on the way to be Buddha. We listen to the Buddha's teaching and reflect on our lives.

The larger sutra says that people who live in the Pure Land always respect each other and live in the harmony. Harmony and respect are important for our lives. If we want to live in the world of harmony that is peace, we need to respect each

other. For respecting others, first we have to know our own selves. Then we will know others and we can respect others whom we share our lives with. We also share the happiness, the sadness and even anger, too. I think that harmony symbolizes the world of oneness and real peace and respect by bowing down, humbly.

That is why Buddha said first, "Know yourself." After he attained his awakening, he continued looking at himself. Life is changing every moment. He shares his awakening with others. Eighty years of his life was teaching and the path. And 90 years of Shinran Shonin's life was the same path as the Buddha walked. So we continue to listen their teachings and walk on the same path.

Throughout the occasion of Bodhi Day and this busy holiday season, we listen to the Dharma and reflect on individual lives.

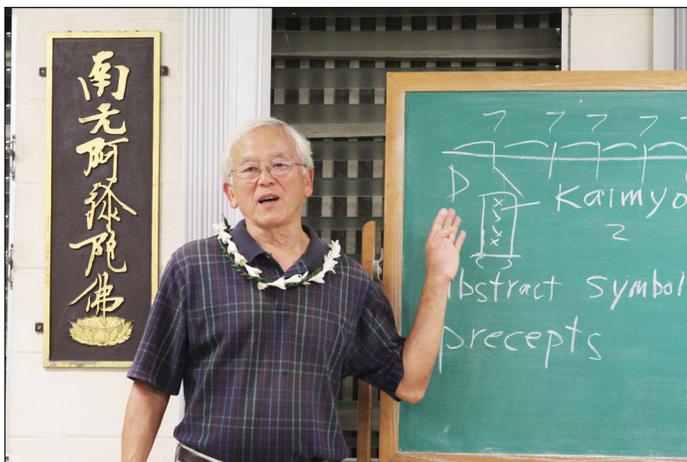
I hope that we will have a peaceful yearend and see a new year filled with happiness.

Finding Harmony in Chaos

by Faye Shigemura

A four-part lecture series in November launched Higashi Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii's new Dharma Study Center. The lectures explored how four individuals, Sakyamuni, his wife, Bimba, Shotoku Taishi and a grandmother in Hawaii all found harmony in the chaos of their ordinary lives.

As I was listening to Dr. George Tanabe's first words as his lecture began, they were coming out from his mouth in English, and were full of bright 'local' color.



Dr. Tanabe's easy-to-understand story-telling methods had listeners wanting to hear more. James Dote photo

How odd, a lecture without a translator. His ideas, his thoughts were flowing out to the audience as though he was a good friend, focused on using language that we could relate to, full of a sincere desire to educate and inform.

How odd, I can understand what the lecturer is saying, and want to listen to more. I sat at the back of the room, and could see that every person was intensely listening to this man. Everyone in the room seemed to have ears 10 inches long, all cupped to face the front of the room, making sure not one word was missed.

So did the very first lecture of this four-lecture series begin. You could tell that Dr. Tanabe lectured many times before. After all, he is Professor Emeritus in the Department of Religion at the University of Hawaii.

Organized and loaded with the information we would need for the next three lectures, he made sure he systematically laid down the groundwork so we would be better prepared to understand—and more importantly—benefit from his lectures.

A thick air of renewed energy could be felt throughout the room when the first lecture came to an end. We could only look forward to the second lecture, two whole days away.

For those who were not able to attend this lecture series, umm... shucks. But, good news is, the Dharma Study Center has additional lecture series like this one planned in the coming months, and you might just be lucky enough to get another opportunity to attend one of Dr. Tanabe's presentations. Keep reading your temple newsletter for announcements.

Little Differences: Japan and Hawai'i

Christmas Day, Dec. 25, isn't a day off from work in Japan, but that doesn't stop this nation of mostly non-Christians from celebrating anyway. In fact, they've adopted the holiday and morphed it into something uniquely their own.

Gift-giving and partying have been part of the December scene in Japan for a long time. The traditional *oseibo* year-end gifts and *bonenkai* year-end parties, however, tend to be more public expressions of appreciation instead of private sharing among family and friends. So it's no surprise to find red and green ornaments on *oseibo* and Bing Crosby karaoke impersonations at *bonenkai*.

In Hawaii, many stores will at least wait until Black Friday, the day after Thanksgiving, to officially kick off the Christmas shopping season. Not in Japan. Once department stores close on Oct. 31, the smiley Halloween jack o'lanterns go to pumpkin heaven, and on the morning of Nov. 1, elaborate Christmas displays and "Happy X'mas" signs and banners take over the cityscape.

Shopping malls and major boulevards in many cities around the country feature breathtaking Christmas "illumination" displays with thousands of lights to brighten the season. You'd never believe there was an energy shortage in Japan. Honolulu City Lights pales by comparison.

And just as quickly as the Christmas



Elaborate illumination displays in Tokyo: top, Caretta Shiodome commercial complex; bottom, Roppongi Hills shopping area.

season begins on Nov. 1, it abruptly comes to a halt on Dec. 25. On Dec. 26 when the shopping centers and stores open, all traces of Christmas are gone and it's *sho-chiku-bai* (pine-bamboo-plum) and other New Year decorations everywhere.

Do you know what many Japanese families pre-order two weeks ahead of time and stand in line to pick up for dinner on Christmas Eve? KFC! For ¥3,980 (about \$40) a KFC party barrel includes eight pieces of fried chicken, salad, a Christmas decoration, plus a small, plain Christmas cake.

But if you really want to impress the kids, you may want to come home with a Christmas cake covered with

whipped cream and topped with strawberries, though a really nicely decorated one may set you back more than the cost of a whole KFC barrel.

Instead of dinner with the Colonel, young adults often prefer a more romantic evening with a special someone at a fancy restaurant. If with a group of friends, the celebration will seem more like a birthday party, except with a Christmas cake instead of a birthday cake.

Some things about Christmas in Japan are very familiar. You'll hear Christmas carols all day long (though you probably won't find too many nativity scenes). Children will write to *Santa-san* with their Christmas wish lists, assuming the jolly old man can read Japanese. They eagerly wake up early on Dec. 25 to open their presents. (Apparently Santa does read Japanese!) Papa won't be home to help assemble the bike, however, since he's off to work as usual, though school is out for *fuyu-yasumi*, or winter break, from Dec. 25 until Jan. 7 in most parts of Japan.

While being with family and friends and gift-giving are central to the Christmas season's activities, it is hoped that the spirit of "Peace on Earth, Goodwill to Men" message isn't lost in all the merriment. It's something that Christians, Buddhists and people of all faiths, beliefs and religions the world over can all celebrate.

– Ken Saiki

"There is no way home; Home is the way."

This Christmas, if you buy and bring home a Christmas tree to decorate, remember that your "True Home" is not found outside yourself, but it is right in your own heart. We do not need to bring home anything for us to feel fulfilled. We have everything we need right in our heart. We do not need to practice for many years or to travel far to arrive at our true home. If we know how to generate the energy of mindfulness and concentration, then with each breath, with each step, we arrive at our true home. Our true home is not a place far removed from us in space and time. It is not something that we can buy. Our true home is present right in the here and now; if only we know how to return and to be truly present in it.

— Thich Nhat Hanh, Vietnamese Buddhist monk and peace activist

News on the Betsuin Wireless



Mark your calendars for Dec. 28 for temple & Ehime Maru cleaning

It's time for the yearend *oosouji*, when people traditionally clean their homes from top to bottom to start the new year off right. For the same reason, Betsuin members get together for the cleaning of their temple to be ready for the new year.

We're getting together for our on yearend cleaning on Saturday, Dec. 28, starting 10 am. Once we're done we'll regroup at the Ehime Maru Memorial at Kakaako Waterfront Park (at the foot of Cooke St.) to wash it down before having a picnic-style lunch at the beautiful park.

We welcome all, including family members. Many hands make light work. No experience necessary!

Holiday schedule

During the December year-end holiday period, some of our regular monthly activities will be suspended.

Ukulele/band practice and movie night will not be held on Dec. 24 and no recitation circle on Dec. 28. Our regular activities schedule resumes in January.

Express your gratitude at yearend & new year services

You're welcome to join us at 5:30 pm on New Year's Eve, Tuesday, Dec. 31, for our *Joya-e* yearend service. Immediately following the service, join the fun in the centuries-old custom of ringing the temple bell 108 times, which is said to rid us of the 108 earthly desires that cause us suffering. Then enjoy a bowl of traditional *toshikoshi*

soba. The long, thin buckwheat noodles are said to signify longevity and good fortune, and chewing them implies severing any hardships connected with the past year.

Then start off a bright 2014 by greeting your temple ministers and friends at our *Shuso-e* New Year's Day service at 10 am on Wednesday, with hot *ozoni* mochi soup served to attendees after the service.

Remember that *Joya-e* and *Shuso-e* services are held so we can reflect upon ourselves and express gratitude, and we should not expect to receive blessings for the new year because we attend the service. Also note that we do not offer New Year *omamori* good luck charms and *omikuji* fortunes as they are not part of Jodo Shinshu tradition.

ON IMPERMANENCE

By Faye Shigemura

I'm a baby boomer, born the first year of the Baby Boomer generation, 1946.

I was shy growing up, or I should say I didn't say much. I wasn't sure if I should voice my opinion, and worse, was afraid to make mistakes. What if what I want to say was stupid in the eyes of my peers who attended school beyond high school? Okay, better to not say anything.

I imagine my mother was somewhat the same when she was growing up. When I met my mother, she was already married, a dutiful housewife, who just did house stuff, our daddy's stuff, Babasan's stuff, all the dog stuff we kids promised to do before we got the dog and school stuff for her three pretty girls.

As my mother grew older, during the third trimester of her life, the things that came out of her mouth

caught me by surprise. I thought I heard words that sounded opinionated with intermittent sighs of impatience. Was Mommy complaining?

My mommy started to sound like a housewife who finally discovered her voice after 50 years of marriage! I couldn't believe my ears! Poor Mommy, how did she live all these years holding her tongue, while dutifully carrying out her roles of wife, mother, and daughter-in-law?

Actually, I found it pretty hilarious. It must be an age thing, I thought. After you've lived long enough, you finally figure out that duty, *schmooty*, who cares what other people think? My opinions are just as important as anybody else's, and I want to be heard. Yo...go, Mama!

Only problem was by that time, Daddy didn't care, Babasan couldn't

hear, us girls were out with our friends most of the time, and the only one left at home to listen to her was the dog.

Moral of this story? Everything is impermanent.

GO GREEN

To switch to an electronic version of our Wa newsletter, simply send an email, with subject line "Email Wa," including your name and address, to betsuin@hhbt-hi.org.

Then, starting next month, your Wa will arrive in your email inbox instead of being delivered to your mailbox by your mail carrier.

You'll be helping us save some paper and receive a bonus while at it. Your bonus? The emailed version of Wa comes in color!



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TEMPLE ACTIVITIES CALENDAR

DECEMBER 2013

12/1	Sun	10 am	Shotsuki memorial service & Sunday school
12/1	Sun	12 pm	Basic Buddhism study class led by Rinban Kawawata in Japanese
12/8	Sun	10 am	HBC Bodhi Day service Jodo Mission of Hawaii
12/10	Tue	3 pm	Ukulele class/band practice
12/12	Thu	7 pm	ABCs of Buddhism study class led by Rinban Kawawata in English
12/14	Sat	10 am	What on Earth Is Namuamidabutsu? led by Rev. Frank Childs
12/15	Sun	10 am	Bodhi Day service & Sunday school
12/15	Sun	12 pm	Betsuin board meeting
12/17	Tue	7 pm	O-ko: dharma discussion at Kaneohe
12/22	Sun	10 am	Sunday service
12/24	Tue		No ukulele class or movie night
12/28	Sat	10 am	Annual temple cleaning , followed by Ehime Maru Memorial cleaning
12/29	Sun		No Sunday service
12/31	Tue	5 pm	Year-end service (Joya-e) <i>Toshikoshi soba</i> served after service

JANUARY 2014

1/1	Wed	10 am	New Year service (Shusho-e) <i>Ozoni</i> served after service
1/5	Sun	10 am	Shotsuki memorial service & Sunday school
1/5	Sun	12 pm	Basic Buddhism study class 現代語で仏教を聞こう led by Rinban Kawawata in Japanese
1/9	Thu	7 pm	ABCs of Buddhism study class led by Rinban Kawawata in English
1/11	Sat	10 am	What on Earth Is Namuamidabutsu? led by Rev. Frank Childs
1/12	Sun	10 am	Sunday service
1/14	Tue	3 pm	Ukulele class/band practice
1/19	Sun	10 am	Sunday service & Sunday school
1/19	Sun	12 pm	Betsuin board meeting
1/21	Tue	7 pm	O-ko: dharma discussion at Kaneohe
1/26	Sun	10 am	Sunday service
1/28	Tue	1 pm	Recitation circle
1/28	Tue	3 pm	Ukulele class/band practice
1/28	Tue	6:30 pm	Movie night: TBA Fukuhara Conference Room

Everyone is welcome to join in on our sutra chanting at 7 am daily (except Sundays) in the Betsuin Main Hall.