



kanehoe@hhbt-hi.org

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## Ohigan Message: “The Art of Listening”

A confession: I'm more a speaker than a listener. Are you a good listener?

Many people are not. Generally, I think people like to talk more than listen. That's strange, given we have two ears but only one mouth. Mouths have two functions which keep them busy—speaking and eating. The job of ears is merely to hear. So why is listening so difficult?

Listening requires our attention. Even if we're talking we need to listen, to respond to other people, to answer questions, and so forth. We obviously need ears. As with over-eating, over-talking is bad for us, especially in our society. “Everything in moderation” is a good rule to follow.

If we really want to learn, however, we must listen carefully.

In Jodo Shinshu, our most important and primary “practice” is “listening.” We must listen and understand. Shinshu teaches a deep, transformative kind of listening, called in Japanese, *chōmon* (聴聞). Another word in Japanese is *monpō* (聞法), which means listening to the Dharma, the Buddha's teachings. Listening seems simple but tricky, because it's a silent skill requiring a mental process of attention. Another problem is that we tend to listen selectively, filtering what we don't like, and focusing on what's pleasing and agreeable.

Shakyamuni Buddha awakened to great truth because he learned from teachings of past Buddhas when he questioned the nature of his anxieties and attachments. His experience was transmitted through words over time to Master Shinran, who realized the importance of listening to teachings received from history, tradition, accepting the Truth of non-dualism was the path to transcending the world of samsara, the ups and downs in life. Human words are defined in dualistic terms, such as life and death; past and present; you and me.

Non-dualistic truth transcends human words. This process of hearing/listening and truly understanding I think is the meaning of shinjin, deep entrusting or faith. Only by

listening can we transcend the world of samsara, the cycle of birth and death, the world of dualism.

Master Rennyō spoke the following words more than 500 years ago, explaining to Shin Buddhists how to listen and hear with one's heart:

1. You should listen as if you're listening for the very first time. This should be our attitude when listening. Even if you heard the same words before, they are never the same. All things change, everything is impermanent: you, the speaker, the words. Learning from the Buddha's teaching is similar to smoking meat. The smoke gradually infuses the meat with flavor. Likewise, the more you hear the Buddha's teachings—even if you don't understand—the dharma gradually becomes part of you, penetrating your body and mind. Listening once, you may understand a certain meaning. How much deeper the meaning if you listening a thousand times?

2. Listen as if the message is for you alone. Listen to the Buddha's teachings because you seek understanding about your anxieties and suffering. No one can eat or breathe for you. Others cannot take medicine for your sickness. You may say, “This teaching is good for my husband, my son, or others.”

3. Listen as if it's the last time you'll hear the teachings. “Last time” means no second chance. We only live moment-to-moment. The past will never return. If you die, you'll never again listen. Now that you're able, now is the time to listen. Remember, conditions change, everything changes, nothing stays the same. Contemplate your concerns, anxieties, and passions and seek answers.

Don't wait until tomorrow or the next day, or think now is not my time. We don't know if even next moment will come or not. Every time is the first and last time! Everything you need is here and now!

Listen to the Dharma!  
Namu Amida Butsu.

## A message from the Chair

Spring is here! Vaccines are here! And I am glad that you are here! ...And looks like masks will continue to be here...at least for the next six months, we should expect.

I hope this newsletter finds you in a less stressful and a more positive situation than the sudden pandemic we were faced with last year. We were all stripped of our “everyday freedoms” such as hugging, spending time with friends, dining out at restaurants, traveling, visiting our loved ones in hospitals & care homes, playing & gathering around sports, attending Sunday services and much more. Instead, we were faced with “survival mode thinking” or a mind shift which forced us to look at things with a different perspective; sifting through our fears and maybe re-prioritizing what in our lives are important and maybe not as important.

I am sure you have a new discovery and a personal story to share on how you’ve lived your one year surviving this historic COVID -19 virus. For me personally, experiencing this virus on the Diamond Princess cruise ship in January 2020 has resulted in a major mind shift and brought me closer to our Shin Buddhist teachings; and for this I am so grateful.

As we move towards becoming a vaccinated community...are you looking forward to things returning to normal? Or, are you looking forward to creating a new normal as we live each day in the here and now? Are you thinking about who you’d like to share a meal with, or who you’d like to hug, or where you’d like to travel to when this pandemic is done? We are almost there!

Regardless, our Kaneohe Higashi Hongwanji temple as a place to hear the teachings and as a gathering place for our Sangha has also gone through a lot of changes ever since attendance limitations were implemented by our state government. While there are many traditional events that we would like to see return such as: Mottainai Sale (rummage & plant sale), Obon services & Bon dance. Here are some new ideas that we hope to implement along the way: Home visits by Rev. Sawada, morning exercise workshops, cooking classes, Zoom sessions & on-line Jushin newsletter. All of these events and undertakings are great and positive but our success to thrive as a temple and be able to continue to serve in our Kaneohe community will depend on everyone’s effort to return and actively participate as a member of our temple. We appreciate and welcome your time and dana, which has been the essence of our temple ohana.

Please save the date for our Mottainai Sale on Saturday, June 12 from 9 am. to 1 pm.

We would like to be able to sell plants and rummage. Please call or text CharlAnn at (808) 235-8338; leave your name & contact number if you would like to volunteer for this event. We will begin sorting & pricing donations every Sunday after service (from 11 am. - 1 pm.) starting on April 18th. Donations will be accepted on Sundays from 10:30 am – 1 pm or call Rev. Sawada ahead of time to drop off your donations at the temple.

With sincere gratitude,

*CharlAnn*

### CONTRIBUTIONS

January 27, 2021 through March 24, 2021

**Memorial Services:**

family of Koichi Yoshihara

**Gojikai:**

Richard & Kelda Kakisako, Gladys Sakata

**Calendar:**

Richard & Kelda Kakisako, Stanley Kiyotoki

**Kyodan:**

anonymous, Clifford Fukuda, Faith Kaneshiro, Glen & Reiko Hatakeyama (imo Tomoko Matsumoto), Mary Matsuda, Setsu Meyer, Betty Nishida, Helen Tanaka, Gary Yamamoto, family of Mr. & Mrs. James Yoshihara

**Ohigan:**

anonymous, Glen & Reiko Hatakeyama, Mary Matsuda, CharlAnn Nakamoto, Julian & Susan Ng, Gladys Sakata, Stanley Sato

**Hanamatsuri:**

Gladys Sakata

**Temple Flowers:**

Gladys Sakata, Stanley Sato, Norma Sawada, Harriet Yamada

**Mottainai Donations:**

Mrs. J. Ogata

**Jushin Distribution:**

Julian Ng, Susan Ng, Reverend Marcos Sawada, Norma Sawada

## Monkey Mind

In the Star Advertiser, there is an advice column written by Carolyn Hax. (For you old timers, this is what Dear Abby was to us.) I don't normally read this column but when the Covid quarantining first began in March of last year, Life slowed down so dramatically that I found myself reading everything and anything to keep my mind occupied. Reading the daily newspaper from page 1 to the last page was truly a luxury that I began to enjoy! As time went on however, I became more selective in what I read and "Advice by Carolyn Hax" fell by the wayside as the letters were trite and solutions are quite obvious.

One day, after hearing a lecture by Rev. Kerry Kiyohara of the Makawao Hongwanji, the flowing letter to Carolyn caught my eye.

### ***After a year, 'all-in' feeling still isn't there***

*Dear Carolyn: I'm middle-age, divorced, but still hoping to share the rest of my life with someone. A year ago I started dating a great man: treats me well, funny, we have mental and physical chemistry, and I always enjoy our time together. He claims that he is sure about me, and I ... still don't know about whether this is it for me. I care deeply about him and appreciate him, but I keep waiting for the moment or day when I wake up and think, I love this man and I'm all-in for the future. It's been a year, shouldn't I be there by now?*

This letter intrigued me as it was almost identical to a question I had asked Rev. Kiyohara. The writer of the letter asked about love and my question was about his definition of the "shinjin moment" which often appears in Shinran's writings. Both the writer and I were asking to identify, in quantitative terms, an immeasurable concept. His question back to us was, "Can you define the exact moment when you knew you loved your spouse or partner?" Effectively he led us to conclude that neither love nor faith announces itself with the realization that we are given this life to experience, great fanfare and the gradeur of Hollywood. Rather, it

when one is awakened to the truth of the Dharma, learn, realize that we are truly embraced by Amida's Compassion.

How then, did this message come to us? Legend has it that over 2500 years ago, Queen Maya gave birth to a son in Lumbini Garden where flowers were in abundance and a gentle rain of sweet tea fell from the skies. We observe this event in our Hanamatsuri Service in early April every year.

Siddhartha Gautama lived a privileged and lavish life, sheltered from all suffering and misfortunes which is part of ordinary existence. It was not until his curiosity took him out of the palace gates that he encountered a decrepit old man, a weak man stricken with disease, a funeral in which he saw his first lifeless man, and finally a man who, despite all the suffering around him was obviously at peace with the world and himself.

Though Siddhartha Gautama sought to find the Truth of Life by following various schools of thought, monastic practices and other disciplines he realized that he would not be able reach enlightenment via these methods. He then vowed that he would sit under a Bodhi tree until he did.

Jodo Shinshu, since the Buddha's death had been passed through oral recitations and finally began its literary transmission two hundred years thereafter. There are seven grand masters from whom Shinran Shonin was able to grasp the essence of the Buddha's teachings and philosophy. This is the Dharma.

The Three Treasures which we recite before chanting the Shoshinge states that this life we is the most excellent opportunity to listen to the Dharma as there is no other life in which we are given a language, historical references, and excellent teachers. As Rev. Marcos' article reminds us, the art of listening is one which must be treasured and practiced in order to receive the Buddha's teachings.

NamuAmidaButsu

Resident Minister & President: Rev. Marcos Sawada | Editor: Mary Matsuda | Board Members: CharlAnn Nakamoto (Chairperson), Stanley Sato (Vice Chairperson), Julian Ng (Treasurer), Mary Matsuda (Secretary), Douglas Crosier (Auditor), Karen Hayashida, Karen Higashi

Published bi-monthly by Kaneohe Higashi Hongwanji | 45-520 Keaahala Road, Kaneohe, HI 96744 | (808) 247-2661



Kaneohe Higashi  
Hongwanji Mission  
45-520 Keaahala Road  
Kaneohe, Hawaii 96744  
Phone: (808) 247-2661

## Jushin

*“This is not how to think. The teachings are for you alone. They are the path to your awakening”*

Rev. Marcos Sawada

## CALENDAR of EVENTS

For all events indicating ZOOM sessions, please call temple (247-2661)  
one day prior to event for ID code

### April

**Wednesdays and Fridays** - Dharma Health morning service, 7:30 to 8:30 am

**4** Hawaii Buddhist Council Hanamatsuri 9 am, Zoom

**4** Omigaki 10:30 am

**10** Shoshinge class 10 am, Zoom

**11** Kaneohe Hanamatsuri\* 9 am, Zoom **13** Larger sutra class 6 pm, Zoom

**18** Sunday Service\* 9 am

**18** Obon Meeting 11 am

**25** Sunday Service\* 9am

### May

**Wednesdays and Fridays** - Dharma Health morning service, 7:30 to 8:30 am

**2** Sunday Service\* 9am

**9** Sunday Service\* 9am

**11** Larger Sutra class 6 pm, Zoom

**16** Tanjo-E (Shinran's birthday) Sunday Service\* 9 am

**23** Sunday Service\* 9am

**30** Yard Clean-up / BBQ potluck 9 am

\*Sunday services now live on YouTube