

Hikari the Light



December 2020

May your 2021 be happy and joyous!

How joyous I am, my heart and mind being rooted in the Buddha - Ground of the universal Vow... — Shinran (1173-1263)

I trust you and your family are all well and doing fine. I heard this winter in Alberta will be much colder than usual. Please take care of yourselves.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic started this year we have been living the life of uncertainty and constant worry, even ominous fear. When we come to think of it, however, we are living in the life of impermanence and an ever-changing world from the very beginning when we were born; therefore, death, dying, parting from our loved ones and good friends are inevitable. Everything is changing, nothing remains unchanged. This is the Universal Law and it is not a pessimistic view but a realistic one.

In a sense, the COVID-19 pandemic gives each of us an opportunity to remember this solemn reality of ever-changing life. At the same time, it raises questions about where and what we should stand on, what we should rely on to achieve peace and serenity in our heart and mind amid such a situation. There is an old saying: *Be sure you put your feet in the right place, then stand firm.*

In our everyday life we rely on wealth, social position, health, family ties and so on. But are they not also changing and disappearing moment by moment? Can these be the right places to depend? Are we able to stand on them firmly? These questions come to our mind. The answer is negative. And yet we are deeply relying on them, standing on them as if they provide a safe place, a refuge. When these are threatened by unexpected conditions such as a pandemic, we grow fearful.

It is our ignorance to firmly rely on such factors as a final refuge. The stronger we cling to them, the more we feel uncertain and fearful. Our fear is of our

own making. We know it and understand it well and still we cling. Our ignorance and arrogance are so deep. Therefore, our fear is fathomless.

This is the reason why the Vow of Amida Buddha of infinite wisdom and boundless compassion has taken many, many years-- five kalpas, uncountable years--for thoughts and practices to liberate such ignorant people from fear to great peace. We must be aware that nothing in this world gives us such great peace.

Even science which has developed remarkably is not able to take away our fear. In this sense, we are not able to find everlasting peace on this earth. Shakyamuni Buddha in India said that Amida's compassionate Vow which is beyond this world and at the same time embraces us always gives us unchanging peace.

Indeed, whatever we can rely on and stand on are like trees that have no roots. Sooner or later they will crumble by the unexpected winds. They easily disappear when conditions change. Thus, amid changing life and world, Shinran was made to realize to stand himself on the Buddha Ground of Universal Vow that is filled with compassion embracing all equally with no discrimination.

Listening to Amida's Vow which embraces all sentient beings as they are, we are nurtured and brought standing firmly on our spiritual ground, Buddha-ground, which will never change and disappear under any condition. On the Buddha-ground, we, for the first time, are able to enjoy this life with peace, strength and hope no matter how our world changes.

In Gassho,
Yasuo Izumi, Minister
Buddhist Temple of Southern Alberta

大きな安らぎとカ

寒くなりました。皆さまにはお元気で暮らしてでしょうか。コロナウイルスの犠牲者がますます増えています。一方、ワクチンが造られたということで、前方に「あかり」(灯り)が見えてきました。

ある日病院から、患者の一人が会いたいと言っている、との連絡がありました。以前ですと、週に一度くらい病院を自由に訪れていました。今ではコロナウイルスのため開教使も、患者あるいは患者の家族からの要請がなければ(しかもお医者さんの許可を得て)病院を訪れることが出来ません。大変不自由になりました。

とにかくその患者さんに会いました。連れ合いの方を数年前に亡くしている高齢の男性で、お寺参りもよくしておられます。一見して、大変弱っていることがわかりました。私を見ると、「明日モルヒネを使うとお医者さんに言われてネー。話が出来る前と思って呼びだしてゴメン。来てくれてありがとう。先生、心配しないでいいよ。僕はアミダ様のお浄土に生まれさせてもらうから。いろいろ世話になりました」と淡々と話をされました。私が話そうと思っていたことを先に言わしてしまいました。

親鸞聖人のお手紙の一つに「この身は、いまは、としきわままりてそうらへば、さだめて さきだちて往生しそうらわんずれば、浄土にて かならずかならずまぢまいらせそうろうべし。」とあります。お金と、名誉と、地位を求めるこの世界には心配と不安は絶えません。この世を超え、しかも私たちをそのまま受け入れて下さり「帰ってこいよ」と呼びかけて下さるアミダ様の願いと、すでに用意されているお浄土を、私たちの人生の「より処」とするとき、「今、ここに」大きな力と安らぎが与えられ、この命終わるときにはお浄土に共々、帰らせていただくのです。聖人のお手紙は、その確かさを言ってお下さっているでしょう。 合掌 泉康雄

BTSA Notes from the Board of Directors

A. The number of COVID cases in the province of Alberta continue to rise at an alarming rate. The Provincial Government released revised COVID restriction guidelines on Nov. 13th and was expected to release further restrictions during the week of Nov. 23rd. While the public health restrictions still allow for smaller gatherings at places of worship, the Board of Directors of the BTSA have suspended in-person activities due to the high risk to our members. This will continue until the end of December. Relaunch strategy will be reassessed at the December Board meeting to determine plans for January. During this suspension the **Odori group** (Mondays) and **Explore Buddhism group** (Saturdays at 10:30 AM) continue to meet via zoom. If you would like to join the Odori group please contact Pat Sassa and if you would like to join the Explore Buddhism group contact Bob Muscovich.

B. Future Funerals – In-person Temple activities have been suspended; therefore, families will gather at their home or at the funeral home. If there is a need for funeral arrangements involving the temple please contact Roland Ikuta.

C. Thursday Evening Sangha Gathering via Zoom– Roland and Brenda Ikuta have restarted the Sangha Gathering via Zoom every other Thursday (the second and fourth Thursdays of the month) to allow members to touch base and socialize. The meeting will start at 7 p.m. If you would like a zoom invitation please contact Roland at rolikota@shaw.ca In December we will only have a session on Dec. 10.

D. The new web page for BTSA has been released. Thank you to Arjan Gil for creating it and stream lining the information on our page. It is much easier to navigate and has a much cleaner aesthetic. Please visit the web page at the thebtsa.com and give us your feedback.

E. The BTSA continues to produce regular podcasts about everyday life and Buddhism. If you have not checked it out please search for [A Buddhist Life podcast](#) from wherever you download podcasts. These are 30 to 60 minute discussions related to many different topics and how Buddhism affects our way of thinking. The most recent is an interview with Andrew Ichikawa about music therapy and Buddhism. **If you are having trouble finding our podcast please contact Brenda or Roland Ikuta who can help you find them. You can also access the podcasts directly from our new webpage.**

F. The Shotsuki service for December will be broadcast on our YouTube channel on Dec. 6 at 10:30 a.m. If you are having difficulties accessing our services or would like to make comments please contact Roland.

G. In financial news the temple will have lower income this year mostly due to the loss of revenue from the cancellation of our Chow Mein Suppers. Our expenses for the temple are also lower but we will definitely run a deficit budget this year. In good news the solar panels have generated a credit of \$704.66 for the month of September which can be put forward for future utilities costs. We are expecting to generate credits for at least 7-8 months of the year.

H. If you have any concerns or issues related to the temple please contact any of the board of directors.

Kalyana-mitra (Good Friend... to lead to the Dharma of the Nembutsu)

I heard a following story. Well, over 200 years ago in Japan, there was a physician named Jukan and another physician, Genshu. They lived in neighbouring villages.

One day Genshu went to see Jukan and stayed at his place. As Genshu was a devout Jodo Shinshu follower, he wanted to pay respect to Amida Buddha in Jukan's family shrine but there was no room for the Buddha. Asked why, Jukan said scornfully, "Hell and the Pure Land are spoken by ignorant priests. How would learned people concern themselves with such matters?" Genshu was speechless. He retired to the bedroom and reflected, "There are indeed people of little association with Buddha. As for me, how fortunate!" After quietly reciting the Nembutsu in gratitude, he went to sleep.

Three years later, Genshu went to see a patient in Jukan's village. He wanted to greet Jukan at the doorstep. Jukan joyfully came out to greet him and courteously led him in, straight to a family shrine. As Jukan opened the folding door, a magnificent scroll of Amida Buddha was enshrined inside. Genshu was surprised and asked Jukan, "How in the world did this come about?"

Jukan shed tears and said, "My beloved daughter died last year at the age of six. Before she died, she asked me where she would go after death. Overwhelmed by sadness but in order to give peace to her mind, I told her that when she died she would go to a beautiful world called the Pure Land of Amida Buddha. She further asked me what she should do to be born there. Without knowing exactly what to say, I involuntarily assured her, 'Amida Buddha is the compassionate one. Put your palms together and say Namo Amida Buddha (to rely on Amida Buddha) in gratitude, then you can go there.'

'Happy and thankful!' said she, and then single-heartedly repeated the Nembutsu until she died. This incident brought me to visit the temple to listen to the Dharma and reflect on my life. While listening to the Dharma of the Nembutsu more and more, I realized my misunderstanding of the Nembutsu teaching. Having come to enjoy the same taste of shinjin - an Entrusting Heart- with you, I have requested the temple Amida Buddha's picture for me. Please forgive my rudeness some years ago."

After that, Genshu and Jukan were firmly tied in the lifelong friendship of Dharma of the Nembutsu.

The sadness and unfortunate experiences often provide for us the great opportunity to awaken to the Amida's Universal Compassion by which we truly become one.

Yasuo Izumi



For 3- 5 years old children

Do you run fast? If you run with me now I know you will win. I am much, much older than you. Actually, I'm too old to run. But at your age I used to run fast, not VERY but quite fast.

I remember when I was at your age, we had a running competition, 200 meters! Can you believe it? It was long way for us to run. It was nice day. We could see blue sky. We could see one teacher very far away standing at the finishing line. Another teacher was standing with us at the starting point. Thirty of us stood at the starting line. The teacher said: "Are you ready all? Get set. One, two, three. Run!" We ran, ran and ran with all our might. After 100 meters one of my friends who is much taller than I was running ahead of us all. I was running behind him. I tried to pass him. Then, all of a sudden I tripped and fell. "Ouch!" My cry was loud. The teacher at the goal line ran to help me. My tall friend stopped, looked at me. You know what? He also ran to me. The teacher and the tall friend came to me and asked, "Are you alright?" at the same time. "Yes," I said and got up and started to run limping. My tall friend helped me, ran with me and finally arrived at the goal together.

When you happen to see your friend get hurt or in trouble please stop and ask "Are you all right?"

Yasuo Izumi

Activities for Home

Read Izumi Sensei's story and then act it out. This might involve people in your family playing the different roles, using toys (stuffies, lego, dolls, figurines, etc.) or drawing out the story.

Talk about what you would do in this situation (in all different roles). Why?

For 6 to 10 years old

One very cold night, a homeless person knocked on a door of an old temple. The temple was not only old but also appeared to be poor. The elderly priest was living there alone. The homeless man was barely standing. When the priest heard the faint sound of knocking on the door he opened it. There, he saw an old man like himself who literally was in rags and shivering from the severe cold. The priest quickly invited him in and took him by the side of a small fireplace in his humble room. The man was really shivering. The priest needed something more to keep the man warm but couldn't find anything. He looked at Buddha's image, a wooden standing statue. He immediately decided to take it down and threw it into the fireplace. The wooden statue started to burn and strong flames rose. Because of this the homeless was able to gain strength. In this way the priest saved his life. What do you think? The priest can buy another Buddha's image but not the life of a person. Is it not Buddha's teaching to save and help even one person in suffering?

Yasuo Izumi

Activities for Home

Trace your hand on a sheet of paper. In different parts of the "helping hand" write or draw ways you can help, or have helped others. You can be more specific too and think about how you've helped others during the COVID pandemic, such as wearing a mask, washing hands, limiting visits, etc.

Write a letter or make a card for someone you love, in your household or living somewhere else. Let them know why you are thankful to have them in your life.

Gather up any extra winter clothes and blankets that no longer fit or are not used anymore and consider donating to a local organization. Why is this important?

Jodo Shinshu Buddhist Temples of Canada Lecture Series

"Waking up to Peace of Mind in the Age of Conflict and Distorted Views" by Rev. Henry Adams

SCAN ME

zoom

(Next) Dr. Jeff Wilson
Sat, Feb 27, 2021

Saturday, December 19th, 2020

(9 am) British Columbia (10 am) Alberta (11am) Manitoba (12Noon) Ontario

COVID-19 INFORMATION

HELP IS HERE FOR YOU

The COVID-19 outbreak has changed our daily routines and adjusting hasn't been easy. Not for anyone. If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed and struggling to cope, help is available—24/7.

Visit alberta.ca/mentalhealth to find resources.

Alberta 

2020 Membership Form

Full Membership
(\$100 for each member)

Student Membership*

Last Name: _____ First Names(s): _____

Last Name: _____ First Names(s): _____

Home Address: _____

City, Province, Postal Code: _____

Telephone No.: _____ Cell: _____

Email: _____

Check to receive The Hikari newsletter by email only.

Please send this form and your remittance to:
Buddhist Temple of Southern Alberta Treasurer
470 40th Street South
Lethbridge, AB, T1J 3Z5

*Note

Student membership is limited to persons 18 years or older who are currently registered in a recognized educational institution. It is free of charge with a valid student ID card. Student Members are not entitled to vote at general meetings or to hold office in the BTSA and this category does not include membership in the Jodo Shinshu Buddhist Temples of Canada, the national organization.

LET'S EXPAND THE CIRCLE OF THE DHARMA!



Membership to November 18 - 194

Shotsuki Hoyo November 2020

John & Rita Aoki
Shirley Higa
Tomi Hisaoka
Dave & Val Kunimoto
May Nishikawa
Sway & Toshiko Nishimura
Ken Ohno & Nancy Eng
Setsuko Ohno
Tak & Jan Okamura
Roy & Pat Sassa
Ayumi Sawada
Yoshiko Sawada
Tom & Mitsuko Shigehiro
Harry Sugimoto
Robert & Judy Takaguchi
Shizuo & Dorothy Tomita

Total - \$655

Other Donations November 2020

Eietsu Chiba
Bonnie Fujimoto
Shinako (Sheila) Higa
Tsuyoshi & Mariko Hironaka
John & Marie Hutchinson
Rumiko Ibuki
Akira Ichikawa
Gail Ikebuchi
Esther Kanegawa
Estate of Richard & Suyeko Kanegawa
Yasue Maruyama
Henry & Kathleen Mukai
Tom & May Mukai
Don S. & Chiyo Narukami
Jane Nimi
Shane & Etsuyo Nishi
Sway & Toshiko Nishimura
Noriko Oga
Setsuko Okuma
Roy & Pat Sassa
Lyal & Estate of Kiyomi Dawn Sakamoto
Noris & Sachi Taguchi
Brian Tajiri
Tsuyako Tajiri
Nancy Takeda
Ken & Maxine Tamura
Bill Teshima
Wanda Tomiyama
Masaru & Kaori Yano

Total - \$6,585

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