

# Hikari the Light



July 2022

## Amida, the Buddha of Infinite Wisdom

*Seeing the sentient beings of the nembutsu / Throughout the worlds, countless as particles, in the ten quarters / The Buddha grasps and never abandons them / And therefore is named Amida.*

– Shinran Shonin

One day, a middle-aged Caucasian woman visited our temple. She asked me what Amida Buddha is. I shared with her whatever I know about Amida Buddha. Then she concluded herself, saying “Well, Amida Buddha is, after all, a higher power like God,” and she left. I thought it was hard to explain what or who Amida Buddha is for those who are brought up in a Christian country such as Canada.

Of course, Amida Buddha is not like God who is described as a creator and always above us, judges and punishes us. Amida Buddha is certainly not a higher power. Amida Buddha is the Buddha of infinite wisdom and boundless compassion who is always with us. Of course, in this world there is nothing we can call “infinite.” Our life is limited and changing. But because Amida Buddha is infinite wisdom and compassion beyond us, this Buddha is able to embrace us. Amida is beyond us but at the same time embraces us. Above, I quoted Shinran’s wasan-poem. In this wasan, it clearly says that the Buddha who grasps and never abandons us is called Amida. Amida Buddha does not exist without sentient beings in delusion and suffering.

Kujo Takeko, a daughter of Kyonyo Monshu in the 19th century wrote: “Drawn by the power of the great thing, ah, how unsteady are my steps.” This poem became very famous in Japan in those days. Takeko meant “a power of the great thing” (*ooinaru mono no chikara* in Japanese) is the working of Amida Buddha. But some people may think that “the power of the great thing” indicates the power of God. Of course, it is not. Takeko who is a follower of Jodo Shinshu deeply reflected on

herself, her life, and appreciated “the power of the great thing,” Amida. She meant Amida Buddha has been supporting her her entire life. I am sure, Takeko recited Nembutsu, *namo amida butsu* in gratitude while she was writing this poem.

I do not know if Christians appreciate God through deep reflection of their lives. Instead, I think they pray God for thanksgiving. God is a provider of our food. At any rate, we are not able to see either God or Amida with our naked eyes. Therefore, Amida became the Buddha of voice, the voice of *namo amida butsu* for us. Amida Buddha and *namo amida butsu* are not two but one. When we recite *namo amida butsu*, Amida Buddha is always with us.

In Shoshinge, Shinran says, “My eyes being hindered by blind passions, I cannot perceive the light that grasps me / Yet the great compassion, without tiring, illumines me always.” Amida is light, the light of wisdom and compassion which is always shining upon us who have no true wisdom and no true compassion. In Christianity, it is said that God exists whether we can perceive him or not. But the fundamental difference between Amida and God is that God is always above us, over there from us while Amida is here with us. Therefore, we do not pray. We do not need to pray to Amida Buddha because Amida who is expressed in *namo amida butsu* is here with us.

I remember what Manshi Kiyozawa of the 19th century who was one of the great leaders of Shinran’s teaching said: “We are not a Buddha yet but the Buddha called Amida becomes us and liberate us to Amida’s home. Since Amida Buddha is compassion itself, Amida moves those who have no wisdom and no compassion. It is natural.”

In other words, Amida Buddha is not the object of worship but Amida will become our subject. Amida becomes us and embraces us. In this sense, Amida is not over there but always with our sadness and our happiness. Whenever Amida Buddha is an object of worship we ask or pray to Amida

for something. In Christianity, God is always the object of worship for believers. So, they pray or ask God for something. For them, God is other and the object of worship.

Amida Buddha is not over there. Amida’s statue is over there but this is called *upaya*, meaning approaching us since we are not able to see Amida’s wisdom and compassion. Amida is not the other. If we considered Amida Buddha as other, we start to pray. We start to ask. In Jodo Shinshu there is no prayer, no petitionary prayer because Amida Buddha is not “other” for us. Our predecessors often called Amida Buddha as their *oya-sama*. *Sama* is an honorific suffix and *Oya* means parent. Amida’s wisdom is like our father and Amida’s compassion is like our mother. Thus, we are protected everyday by the father of wisdom and mother of compassion

In Jodo Shinshu Amida Buddha is never a higher power.

Yasuo Izumi, Minister

お盆

浄土真宗では、お盆を「歓喜会」と言っています。身にも、心にも喜ぶ「つどい」と言うことです。お寺の本堂に集まり、亡き人々を偲び、感謝の心を現わします。

アミダ様の前で、お念仏申すとき、亡き人たちと、また会える世界がおのずから感じられるのです。お念仏申しながら、この人生を生き抜かれた方々は、今、仏様となっておられる、と教えていただきます。

ある独り者の方が、重い病気になりました。友達が集まって、その人に言いました

「おい、心配するな。お前が死んでも、自分たちが立派なお墓を立ててやるからな、安心しろ」と励ましたのです。その男は「ありがとうよ。でもな、ワシは死んでまな、重い墓石の下にはおらんぞ! 仏様になって、お前たちを、お浄土の世界に、導いてやるから、安心しろ。」と言ったということです。

私たちは、空しく死んでいくではありません。仏様の世界、お浄土に生まれ、ただちに、迷いのこの世界に還って、苦しみ、悲しむ人々を、仏様の世界へと導いて下さるのです。これすべて、アミダ様の大きなお慈悲のお陰なのです。

合掌 泉康雄

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# UPDATE

## from the Board of Directors

I hope this message finds all the Sangha members well. After a very dry spring we have received large amounts of rain, which is helping our gardens grow. I am sure the farmers are very happy with the precipitation.

In person services for June continue to be attended by 25-30 people. The big event on June 19th was our temple picnic. Just under 50 people attended a very pleasant day at the Elks Compound. The KFC and rice provided by the temple was accompanied by a huge selection of side dishes and salads that was enjoyed by all. We had a fun Bingo session, which everybody seemed to enjoy. Thanks to Toban 4 for providing refreshments at our Sunday services and for planning the picnic.

**There are slight time changes in the Obon schedule.** In the June Hikari the service at Magrath cemetery is listed to take place at 10:30 AM on July 10th. It will now be held at 10:00 AM to give sensei enough time to get to Raymond. Additionally, the Taber time has been moved to 1:30 PM, rather than 1:00 PM. Please see the updated schedule in the other section of this newsletter. **Here is the Youtube link to the Obon service in case you cannot attend in person:**

<https://youtu.be/-H9NFV-IAOY>

We are trying to get an estimate of the attendance for the Bon Odori and Obon Service. If you are planning to come to either event please contact Brenda Ikuta by email or phone (403-317-0078 or [brenda.ikuta63@gmail.com](mailto:brenda.ikuta63@gmail.com)), or sign up using the *signup genius* form listed below. This is particularly important as our lunch after Obon service is catered by LA Chefs. If you have signed up at the picnic or other temple events you do not need to re-register.

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/60b0a45a9a723a2fe3-obon1>

Sunday service on July 3rd will be an in-person viewing of the service from the Berkeley Buddhist temple. Izumi sensei will be in Brooks that day and Roland may be in Calgary. The service for July 10th will be cancelled at the temple to encourage attendance at the graveside service in Magrath, Raymond or Taber. After the Obon service on July 17th temple services will be suspended until September 11th for our usual summer break. The explore Buddhism sessions will also go on its usual summer break. We will restart these meetings in September.

We hope to have a temple clean up scheduled for September along with the "Everything Japanese sale".

I would like to personally thank David Major for doing lots of work at the temple the past few months. He cleaned the windows between the Hondo and multipurpose room by himself, using the lift borrowed from Wesbridge construction. He has been making sure our solar panels are running properly and also straightened the parking blocks. Thank you David for all of your hard work.

It has been great to see people attending events at the temple again. We are grateful for the opportunity to continue to gather as a Sangha. If you have any questions or concerns about the temple, please contact Roland (403-317-0078 or [Rolikuta@shaw](mailto:Rolikuta@shaw)), or one of our board of directors.

## OBON 2022 SCHEDULE

### Bon Odori Practice

Mondays 6:30-7:30 pm  
until July 11

### July 3 (Sunday) Service

11 am @ Brooks Cemetery

### July 10 (Sunday) Service

10:00 am (new time) @ Magrath Cemetery  
11:30 am @ Temple Hill Cemetery  
1:30 pm (new time) @ Taber Cemetery

### July 16 (Saturday) Bon Odori

6:30 pm @ Buddhist Temple of Southern Alberta

### July 17 (Sunday) Service

10:30 am @ Mountain View Cemetery  
12 noon @ BTSA  
1 pm Lunch (BTSA)

## BTSA SUNDAY SERVICE SCHEDULE

### July 3

In-person viewing of the service from the Berkeley Buddhist Temple

### July 10

Cancelled at the temple to encourage attendance at the graveside service in Magrath, Raymond or Taber

### After Obon and August

Sunday services at temple suspended until Sept. 11





# Temple Picnic



Roland Ikuta welcomed members June 19 to the temple picnic at the Elks Recreation Area at Indian Battle Park as he asked the assembled members to join him in a short service before beginning the day's activities.

Under alternately cloudy and sunny skies, Roland did double duty by chairing the service and ministering in Izumi sensei's absence because of a cold.

Roland's dharma talk touched on Buddhism and its connection to the outdoors, focussing on the historical Buddha's enlightenment in the forest under the bodhi tree as he touched the earth to commemorate his enlightenment.

Roland mentioned the Buddhist principle of imperance, noting the tree under which the Buddha was enlightened and the other plants eventually were replaced by new growth, just as the foliage we're surrounded by in the picnic in the park will disappear in a few months.

He recalled seeing beautiful irises blooming in his relative's yard earlier in the month, only to see their drooping, rotting heads a few days later during a revisit.

He also touched on the Buddhist concept of interconnectedness discoverable in nature as plants require carbon dioxide humans give off to grow as humans, in turn, depend on vegetation for food and nutrients.

Finally he talked about how everything in nature has Buddha nature or the potential for enlightenment. In a concrete example he talked about an onion which can be consumed by us. It can become part of our body and we have the potential to be enlightened. The onion through its interconnection with us can have this potential for awakening.

(Please see the Temple Board Update for kudos to all who helped make the picnic memorable.)





# JUNE Shotsuki Service

The day--June 5--began with a mother deer and a newborn fawn trotting down 40th street outside the temple prior to the service.



Welcome to the June monthly memorial service. It is a beautiful Sunday morning. I see some members from Brooks here today. Welcome.

Some years ago, a middle-aged man who lost his mother came to the temple office and asked me, "I am preparing for my mother's funeral service. What kind words should I use for the front page of the funeral program?" So, I recommended him the words of Shinran Shonin. On funeral day, I saw Shinran's words under the picture of Sagarifuji, a Jodo Shinshu symbol, on the front page of the funeral program. It says: "My life has now reached the fullness of its years. It is certain that I will go to Birth in the Pure Land before you, so without fail I will await you there."

These words were addressed by Shinran to his followers when Shinran was dying. Shinran was born in the Kamakura era and lived 90 long years. Since the Kamakura era began in 1192, it means almost 900 years ago. Around this time, it is said that the average span of human life was 24 years. Only 24 years! It is because there were famines and poor harvests around this time. A historical record says that many new-born babies died as soon as they were born. Crying mothers threw their dead babies in the river. Thinking of the terrible situation and time, Shinran's 90 long years of life is really amazing.

At any rate, when he was approaching his death, he left these words to his followers. (repeat again) Shinran says here, "My life has now reached the fullness of its years." This is his expression of joy being embraced by Amida's great compassion. During his life, he found the firm spiritual foundation to live by. Shinran was 29 years old when he first took refuge in Amida's wisdom and compassion. His life, whether difficult times and sad times, was always together with Amida Buddha of infinite wisdom and boundless compassion.

For Shinran, there is no "death." He knew he was going to be born in the Pure Land. Where is the Pure Land? Well, the naijin, inner place, here represents the Pure Land but It is certainly not a geographical place. Shinran says, the Pure Land is the land of immeasurable Light. Light in Buddhism means wisdom which always manifests itself in compassion. Wisdom and compassion are like two wings of a bird. This is Amida. Amida is a short form

of Amidaba and Amidayus, meaning immeasurable or infinite wisdom and compassion which are beyond us, beyond this life of delusion and suffering and yet always embracing us. In his life Shinran found this as the firm foundation of life.

We are living in the busy and noisy life every day in which we seek money, title, fame, popularity and so on. In Japan, I hear quite few people in the entertainment business commit suicide. Are they not like people who are lonely grass with no roots, moving here and there without foundation? Is this not the aspect of our modern life? In such a busy life there is no time to find true and immovable foundation of life.

Therefore, Amida Buddha stands up and calling us, "I will be your spiritual foundation. Please rely on me." This compassionate calling is namo amida butsu. So, namo amida butsu is not a spell against something or a magical formula. It is the immovable spiritual foundation of our life.

When we're happy and when we are sad we recite namo amida butsu. Amida Buddha is always there. One of the pious Jodo Shinshu followers wrote: "I recite namo amida butsu and I hear it myself, but it is a voice of Amida Buddha calling, 'I will guide you to the realm full of the light of wisdom and compassion'." Our life is indeed a journey, a grateful journey returning to Amida's home, the Pure Land.

Rev. Yasuo Izumi



MC Sheila Oishi by the homyo stand on the naijin



Listening to sensei's dharma talk, printed here

***How joyous I am, my heart and mind  
being rooted in the Buddha- ground of  
Amida's universal vow! — Shinran***

JSBTC

Women's Federation  
Fund Raising Project



The Women's Federation is organizing a Fund Raising Project this year to help offset the costs of supporting travel for 4 representatives to attend the 2023 World Women's Conference in Kyoto.

The fund raising project will be to print and sell greeting cards (4.25" x 5.5") that can be used for any occasion and will be blank inside.

We are looking for photos or art work that can be used on the front of the card. If you have any work that would be suitable for the cards please submit them to

[WFCardProject@gmail.com](mailto:WFCardProject@gmail.com)

**DEADLINE to submit is July 31, 2022**

We will choose 3 designs from all of the submissions that are sent in

Should you have any questions please contact

[WFCardProject@gmail.com](mailto:WFCardProject@gmail.com)

## REGULAR EVENTS

**NCS Adult Taiko** Tuesdays @ 7pm

Contact David Tanaka 403.330.1548, [tanako.david@gmail.com](mailto:tanako.david@gmail.com)

**Minyo Dance** Bon Odori practice on Mondays, 6:30 pm

Contact Pat Sassa 403.329.3105 or [sas7@telus.net](mailto:sas7@telus.net)

**Exploring Buddhism** Saturdays, 10:30am

Contact [bobmuskovich@gmail.com](mailto:bobmuskovich@gmail.com) or Rev. Izumi

## TOBAN UPDATE

### Soup Kitchen

Emily Stitt is coordinating Soup Kitchen groups and looking for volunteers for the following dates:

Sunday, August 14 Brunch

Tuesday, Sept. 13 Lunch

Please email [emistitt@hotmail.com](mailto:emistitt@hotmail.com)

**Toban 3** is up for July. Appreciation to **Toban**

**4** for teas in June, and a successful BTSA picnic.

## BTSA at Soup Kitchen

BTSA provided assistance at the Lethbridge Soup Kitchen June 14, with 10 members providing culinary expertise in preparing chili for those stopping in for lunch.

The session began at 9 a.m. and was pretty much completed by 2 p.m., after washing dishes utensils, pots and pans and cleaning the premises. Other work parties are scheduled for for August and September.



Back, from left: Joyce Adachi, Doreen Gordon, Betty Tanaka, Dave Major, Don Friesen, Deb Friesen, Emily Stitt and Sachi Scharf  
Front, from left: Akira Ichikawa and Eichi Tanaka (Photo by Soup Kitchen staff member)



Cutting ingredients for salad and chili

photo: Dave Major



# 2022 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 at June 21: **125**

**Hanamatsuri Donations**

April 2022  
 Tomiko Sugimoto

**Shotsuki Hoyo Donations**

June 2022  
 Anonymous Cash Donations  
 Mitsuyo Fujimoto  
 Dorene (Keiko) Gordon  
 Shinako (Sheila) Higa  
 Neil Hinatsu  
 Rumiko Ibuki  
 Kiyomi Kamitakahara  
 Yutaka and Chiyomi Matsuno  
 Douglas and Susie Mikado  
 Ken Ohno and Nancy Eng  
 Heidi Oishi  
 Tak and Jan Okamura  
 Joanne Planidin  
 Emily Stitt  
 Noris and Sachiko Taguchi  
 Lori Yokoyama

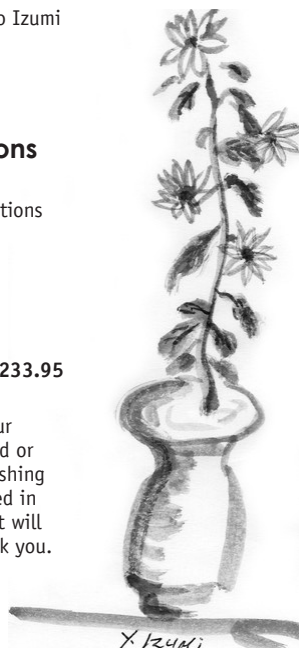
**Other Donations**

June 2022  
 Anonymous Cash Donation  
 CanadaHelps.Org  
 Gary Higa  
 Rev. Yasuo and Sachiko Izumi  
 Kimino Nishi  
 Sachi Scharf  
**Total - \$1,383.95**

**Funeral Donations**

June 2022  
 Anonymous Cash Donations  
 Akira Ichikawa  
 Reyko Nishiyama  
 Heidi Oishi  
 Yoshio Taguchi  
**Total - \$900**  
**Total Donations - \$3,233.95**

Please inform us if your name has been omitted or misspelled. Anyone wishing not to be acknowledged in print, let us know so it will not be published. Thank you.



**Total \$870.00 Total for Hanamatsuri and Shotsuki Hoyo - \$950**

## Temple Garden Appreciation

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to the maintenance and evolution of Buddha's Garden in all its various forms. Most recently there has been a lot of work done to thin and tidy the northeast apple tree bed and plant the northwest apple tree bed. The latter is developing more of a Children's Garden focus. We were very fortunate to receive generous support from Dan's Greenhouse this year and planted a number of perennials and annuals. We invite you to check out the progress when you are at the temple.



More images of mother and fawn seen at the temple.

BUDDHIST TEMPLE OF SOUTHERN ALBERTA

# BON DANCE FESTIVAL ODORI 2022

Saturday, July 16 • 6:30pm

お盆

MUSIC & DANCING

TRADITIONAL JAPANESE DRESS

TAIKO DRUMMING

FOOD VENDORS

470 40 ST. S. LETHBRIDGE • EAST PARKING LOT

IN THE EVENT OF RAIN, ACTIVITIES WILL BE MOVED INDOORS

[www.thebtsa.com](http://www.thebtsa.com)



JULY: TOBAN 3

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
*OFFICIAL BTSA ACTIVITY						10am Exploring Buddhism* 1 2
11am Obon Service @ Brooks Cemetery 3	6:30pm Bon Odori Practice 4	7pm Taiko 5	6	7	8	10am Exploring Buddhism* 9
Obon Cemetery Services 10am, Magrath 11:30am, Temple Hill 1:30pm, Taber 10	6:30pm Bon Odori Practice 11	7pm Taiko 12	13	14	15	10am Exploring Buddhism* 6:30pm Bon Odori @ BTSA* 16
10:30am Obon Service @ Mountain View Cemetery 12pm BTSA 1pm Lunch* 17	18	7pm Taiko 19	20	21	22	10am Exploring Buddhism* 23
24	25	7pm Taiko 26	27	28	29	10am Exploring Buddhism* 31

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Sunday services at temple suspended until Sept. 11						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					