

Hikari the Light



March 2024

This is a modified version of the dharma talk from February 18th, 2024.

**“Shakyamuni, revealing the essential gate,
To lead people of meditative and non-meditative
practices and Provisionally teach the right and sundry
practices, Wholly urges us to perform the saying of the
Name.”**



This *wasan* written by Shinran Shonin talks about the historical Buddha leading those who practice meditation and those who do not, to perform the saying of the Nembutsu as their primary practice.

Today I want to talk a little bit about meditation. I have heard someone say recently that meditation should not be a part of the practice for Jodo Shinshu Buddhists. I have a different

understanding of meditation. The primary focus of practice for our sect of Buddhism indeed is to listen to the teachings of the Buddha and to recite the nembutsu. We must entrust in the compassionate primal Vow of Amida Buddha. Does this mean we should not practice meditation at all? The reason why some say we should not practice meditation stems from the idea that we should rely on other power or Tariki rather than relying on self-power or Jiriki. In Pure Land Buddhism we believe that attaining enlightenment based on self-power is not possible. We must rely on Amida Buddha and his compassionate vow to guarantee us birth in the Pure Land. This, however, does not mean that we cannot practice meditation. Indeed, Jodo Shinshu Buddhists should not meditate expecting to gain enlightenment. But there are many reasons to practice meditation.

Many temples of the Jodo Shinshu sect in North America have meditation groups. This is partly due to the popularity of meditation. When someone comes to our temple for the first time, often one of their first questions is if we have a meditation group. There are several different meditation groups in Lethbridge. Meditation is being conducted at the Nikka Yuko Gardens, at the Martha Retreat Center, and at some of the seniors' centers, etc. I have heard Bishop Harada of the BCA say that temples should have a meditation group so as not to disappoint those who are seeking it in a Buddhist sangha.

Why should we meditate if it is not to gain enlightenment? There are many benefits gained from meditation. Scientific studies have shown that meditation can help reduce stress anxiety and depression. There was a study published in the *Journal of American Medical Association* performed by Johns Hopkins University that showed that meditation over only four weeks resulted in a 30 to 40% reduction in symptoms of anxiety and

depression. This was above and beyond the reduction seen by placebo. Another large study showed that mindfulness meditation and in particular mindful eating resulted in weight loss primarily by reducing binge eating episodes by over 40%. Another study found that a short meditation program increased reading comprehension significantly primarily by reducing distractibility. Finally, a large study of cancer patients who are suffering from chronic pain found that a three-week program of meditation compared to counseling, or a control group resulted in a 40% reduction in pain intensity and a 57% reduction in pain medication use.

Based on scientific studies meditation can reduce blood pressure, anxiety, and depression, help increase focus and reduce negative feelings. It can help with sleep problems, tension headaches, asthma, chronic pain, irritable bowel syndrome, and help with short-term memory problems. There are even studies that show that meditation can increase compassion toward others by increasing self-awareness and mindfulness of others.

Many kinds of meditation can be practiced. The meditation group that meets here at the temple on Wednesdays is led by Vickie MacArthur. She uses a mindfulness meditation based on the teachings of Thich Nhat Han. It is an interfaith group. We have several members from the temple but also Christians and people from other religions. We usually meditate for 40 minutes and have a 30-minute discussion about a chapter from a book. We are currently using the book *Zen. And the Art of Saving the Planet*.

A recent gathering focused on a rather intense and difficult meditation practice. It is a meditation practice promoted in Zen Buddhism to face your fears and to get acquainted with them. Many of us try to avoid thinking or talking about these fears. We should not run away from these fears but recognize them, embrace them, and look deeply into their roots. This meditation is called the “five remembrances”. While breathing deeply and slowly we contemplate:

1. *I am of the nature to grow old.*
There is no way to escape growing old.
2. *I am of the nature to have ill health.*
There is no way to escape having ill health.
3. *I am of the nature to die.*
There is no way to escape death.
4. *All that is dear to me and everyone I love is of the nature to change.*
There is no way to escape being separated from them.
5. *I inherit the result of my actions, speech, and thoughts.*
My actions are my continuation.

UPDATE

from the Board of Directors

Greetings from the Board!

The AV Committee has made a number of additions and improvements to our website: thebtsa.com. Everyone is invited to check it out. If you are looking for a livestream service, click on the yellow banner at the top of the screen.

Judo Shinshu Buddhist Temples of Canada (JSBTC) Annual General Meeting will be held at our Temple on April 25, 26, and 27, 2024. JSBTC ministers and JSBTC Board of Directors will be in attendance. Temple delegates will attend virtually. The inaugural “Dharmathon” is planned for Saturday, April 27, 2024 at 3 pm (more details to follow).

BTSA’s casino, May 14 and 15, 2024, has a full team of volunteers now. Thank you to everyone who volunteered to work the casino.

A donation from BTSA (\$3000) and BTSA members (\$1780) was sent for the Maui Wildfire Disaster Relief. Thank you to everyone who donated to this cause.

The BTSA annual general meeting (AGM) is scheduled for April 21, 2024. There will be vacancies on the Board of Directors. Interested members are asked to contact Kynan Ono, President, or any Board Member.

The March Shotsuki Memorial Service will be held on March 3, 2024. For livestream, the YouTube link is below:

<https://youtube.com/live/mENRaLMzoig?feature=share>

BUDDHIST TEMPLE OF SOUTHERN ALBERTA
470-40 St S, Lethbridge, AB T1J 3Z5
403.327.1260 btsaboard@gmail.com

BTSA Minister
Rev. Dr. Roland Ikuta

Minister Hours
Wednesdays 9 AM – 5 PM
Thursdays 12 PM – 5 PM
Fridays 9 AM – 5 PM
Saturdays 9 AM – 2 PM
Sundays 9 AM – 2 PM

revroland@shaw.ca
Cell 403.360.8400
Home 403.317.0078

www.thebtsa.com

CHAIR/AV SCHEDULE March & April 2024

Services begin at 10:30 a.m. unless otherwise indicated

Mar 03

SHOTSUKI
Maya Ichikawa
TBD

Mar 10

John Dubbelboer
Andrew Ichikawa, AV

Mar 17

Wayne Tsukishima
Brenda Ikuta, AV

Mar 24

Val Boras
Kynan Ono, AV

Mar 31

Harry Sugimoto
Kynan Ono, AV

Apr 07

HANAMATSURI, SHOTSUKI
@ 2 p.m.
Maya Ichikawa
Brenda Ikuta, AV

Apr 14

Kynan Ono
TBD

Apr 21

Sheila Oishi
David Major, AV

Apr 28

Andrew Ichikawa
Bob Muskovich, AV

Notice of the BTSA 2024 Annual General Meeting

Due to a delay in sending out a 30-day notice the BTSA AGM will be held on April 21st and not on the first Sunday in March as usual. An email was distributed on February 22 to the membership. Please consider the email and this article official notice of the meeting

The AGM will be held after the Sunday service, approximately noon to 1 pm. There are three vacancies on the board of directors. If anybody is interested please contact Kynan Ono or one of the board members for more information.

2024 Membership Reminder

Membership fee for 2024 remains \$100. Please remit your renewal to the temple by making out any cheques to the BTSA or payment online at thebtsa.ca Membership forms can be completed online or printed. Thank you.

I found this meditation to be particularly difficult, and the hardest of the five remembrances for me was the notion that I must be separated from all those who are close to me. This would be a very sad meditation without the last remembrance. It is a reminder that we continue to exist based on our actions and thoughts that affect those who are part of our lives. It reminds us of the interdependence of all beings. That although my father got old, got sick, and died he continued to live in me and my family and all who knew him. His legacy is that he is still an important part of so many people.

While meditation is not a required part of Jodo Shinshu practice I think it can be quite complementary to what we do. The primary focus in our school is to focus on relying on the compassion of the Buddha and to recite the nembutsu ingratitudes. Meditation can be considered as secondary or accessory practice for us. If we incorporate meditation into our lives, we do so not expecting to gain enlightenment but to benefit in other ways from this practice.

Dr. Roland Ikuta, Minister

2024 Bishop's Report by Rev. Tatsuya Aoki

I would like to express my most sincere appreciation to all the Jodo Shinshu Temples of Canada (JSBTC), ministers, national board of directors, and all temples and members for keeping our organization active and accessible. All the ministers and national board of directors across Canada are working tirelessly for the sake of our temples, for all the members, and for the community at large.

When we attend temple services, we have short meditation, chanting, and a Dharma talk. While we are meditating, we are exercising "self-reflection." Knowing ourselves is a constant and lifelong process, for we are also constantly changing. Most often we feel that we are pretty much the same as we were yesterday. However, in Buddhism, we are taught that this is not so. I've often asked people to consider looking at our lives in five-year increments. We are different at 5 than we are at 10, 15 or 20. And if we are fortunate, we will be very different at 60 or 80. It is not just physically that we grow and change, but also our knowledge and experience, and our awareness of what is of value. They will also change and grow. As I reflect on the JSBTC, there are some changes I would like to share. This year's JSBTC AGM will be held on Saturday, April 27. Only Senseis and national board of directors will meet in Lethbridge, and the rest of delegate will join the meeting on Zoom.

Ministers and JSBTC

Ministerial Well-Being

Some ministers are serving two or more temples in Canada. Post-Covid concerns continue to add to the workload of all of our ministers; preparing Dharma Talks, attending numerous in-person and zoom meetings, and conducting funerals and memorial services. I have been working with the national board on addressing the matter of the physical and mental health of our ministers before it becomes a very real concern. Please continue to be understanding and mindful to your Senseis.

(1) Rev. Yasuo Izumi in Lethbridge retired as of October 31, 2023. I would like to express my sincerest appreciation to Rev. Izumi for 51 years of his dedicated service in Canada.

(2) Rev. Dr. Roland Ikuta in Lethbridge has become the resident Kaikyoshi minister for Buddhist Temples of Southern Alberta as of November 1, 2023.

(3) Rev. Yoshimichi Ouchi in Toronto has resigned from JSBTC and eastern district as of January 31, 2024. He will return to Japan on February 25, 2024.

(4) Rev. Kensho Hashimoto in Japan will come to Toronto on April 1, 2024 and will become a resident minister for the eastern district. Rev. Hashimoto is graduating from Ryukoku University's Master's program in March 2023.

*Senior Kaikyoshi ministers in Canada will be asked help train Rev. Hashimoto until he is familiarized with ministerial duties in Canada. Your understanding and support are very much appreciated.

(5) Rev. Joanne Yuasa received Kyoshi certification in May 2023. She also successfully completed Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) officers' training in December 2023 and is working as a CAF Buddhist chaplain in CFB Kingston as of January 2024. She is the first Buddhist chaplain in the CAF.

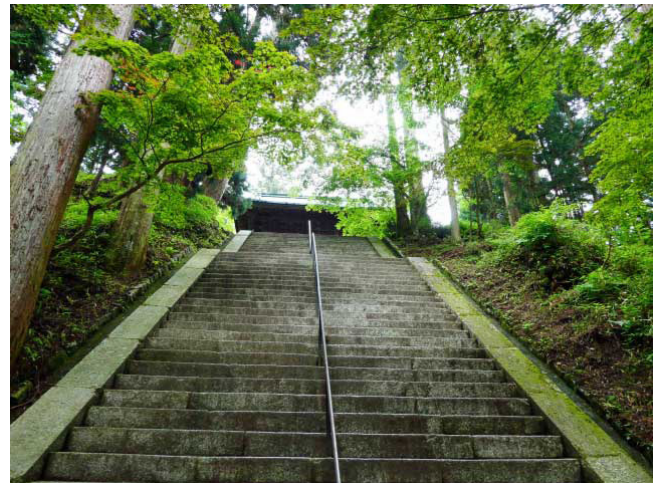
(6) Ministers' Retirement Supplementary fund is currently benefitting Rev. Fujikawa, Rev. Izumi, Rev. Ulrich, Rev. Martin and the family of Rev. Michael Hayashi. On behalf of all the ministers, your ongoing support to the fund is greatly appreciated.

Hongwanji Young Buddhist Cultural Study Exchange (YBICSE) [a.k.a Japan Youth Tour]

2024: July 4-9 YBICSE (Canada group will depart on June 23 and return on July 10)

Chaperone: Rev. Naoki Hirano (BC Interior temples)

*Application and proposed travel itinerary will be available in March



Mount Hiei
<https://www.japan-experience.com/all-about-japan/kyoto/outdoor-activities/mount-hiei-kyoto>

JOIN Temple Clean Up Sunday, March 24

This is the first of three major temple cleaning events in the year. Work will be done before and after service. The temple will be open from 8:00 a.m. for those who want an early start. Pizza lunch to follow.

Please join us in maintaining this beautiful space which we are so fortunate to have available to us!



Brenda



SOUP KITCHEN 2024

The Temple will be hosting four Soup Kitchens this year:

Tuesday, April 23, 10:00-1:30 Update: **FILLED**

Friday, May 24, 10:00-1:30

Friday, July 5, 10:00-1:30

Sunday, August 18, 9:00-12:00

If you are interested in volunteering please contact Emily Stitt, emistitt@hotmail.com, 403-380-6683.

REGULAR EVENTS

Minyo Dance Mondays @ 6:30 - 8pm

Contact Brenda Ikuta for most recent schedule

brenda.ikuta63@gmail.com 403.317.0078

Meditation Wednesdays @ 9:30am

in-person and online

To register contact Vickie Macarther spityoga@shaw.ca

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Condolences The BTSA expresses heartfelt sympathy to those who have lost loved ones:

Takeshi (Tak) Okamura (87) on February 26, 2024

Introduction to Buddhism

The Buddhist Temple of Southern Alberta will be conducting an introduction to Buddhism course. This class will occur for six consecutive weeks starting March 16 and ending April 20th. Three sessions will be on general Buddhism and 3 sessions will cover Jodo Shinshu Buddhism (Pure Land school). The time will be from 10:30 AM to noon on Saturday mornings. You can attend the sessions in person or via zoom.

Please contact Rev. Roland Ikuta (rolikuta@shaw.ca or 403-360-8400) to register for the session and/or to get the zoom link. This class is offered for free but donations are always gratefully accepted.

THANK YOU **TOBAN 2** FOR YOUR SERVICE IN FEBRUARY!
NEXT UP FOR MARCH: **TOBAN 1**

Scenes from Shotsuki/Nirvana Day/Pet Appreciation Service



IKIGOMI Fundraiser Event

The NCS Ikigomi Youth Group hosted a Dinner + Movie fundraiser on February 17th. The cat-themed evening featured delicious and filling “catsu” curry followed by a showing of the film *The Cat Returns* by Studio Ghibli. The event was well received, with RSVPs filling the 80 seat limit.



[imdb.com/title/tt0347618/](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0347618/)



photos: Andrew Ichikawa, Maya Ichikawa, Dallas Johnston, codypai

2024 Membership Form

ALSO AVAILABLE ONLINE AT THEB.TSA.COM

Full Membership (\$100 for each member) Student Membership*

Last Name: _____ First Names(s): _____

Last Name: _____ First Names(s): _____

Home Address: _____

City, Province, Postal Code: _____

Home#: _____ Cell#: _____

Email: _____

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 B.T.S.A. 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!



pxfuel.com Royalty Free

2024 Membership
to Feb. 21 – 60

Ho-onko
February 2024
Setsuko Ohno
Mitsuko Oga

Shotsuki Donations
February 2024

Anonymous
B.T.S.A. member
Ken & April Fleury
Dorene (Keiko) Gordon
Gene and Hilda Horii
Terry Horii
Heidi Oishi
Darcee Richardson
Joe & Mary Shigehiro
Harry Sugimoto
Sachiko Taguchi
Alan & Margaret Tanaka
Eichi & Betty Tanaka
Jim & Irene Tanaka
George Tokuda
Jim, Marion & Shannon Tomiyama
Joe & Sumiko Tomiyama
Lori Yokoyama

Other Donations
February 2024

Arlene Oishi & Jeff Coffman
Heidi Oishi
Harry Sekiya

Funeral Donations
February 2024

Anonymous
Yoko Gillies
Lois Hattori
Heidi Oishi
Sachiko Taguchi
Joyce Yokoyama
Lori Yokoyama

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.

Day of Mindfulness: Spacious Mind, Inclusive Heart

Saturday, March 9, 9:30am – 3:30pm

At the Buddhist Temple of Southern Alberta

With the Dawning Light Sangha

Facilitated by Vickie MacArthur & Val Kunimoto

Our spiritual life, our energy of mindfulness, concentration, and insight, is what can bring about the energy of peace, calm, inclusiveness, and compassion."

---Thich Nhat Hanh, Zen and the Art of Saving the Planet

What does it mean to have a spacious mind and an inclusive heart?

Join us for a full Day of Mindfulness. Slow down...Create space in your body, mind & heart...Cultivate loving kindness towards yourself and all beings. Together we will practice gentle movement, sitting meditation, walking meditation, and deep relaxation to help shed the layers of over-doing and stress. As your mind clears, and you tune into the wisdom of your body, you'll deepen your understanding of yourself and your place in the world. With more understanding we can grow the capacity of our hearts to be open and more inclusive to all we encounter. The world so needs your kind and compassionate attention.

Cost: Dana/Donation (split between the temple and the teachers)

Suggested Sliding Scale

\$20, if you are on a limited budget

\$40, to sustain the teachings and the temple

\$60, if you would like to support someone else as well.

Sign up at www.spiritinmotionyoga.com

Calgary Buddhist Temple Book Club

Book review sessions to start in Calgary and BTSa members are invited to join

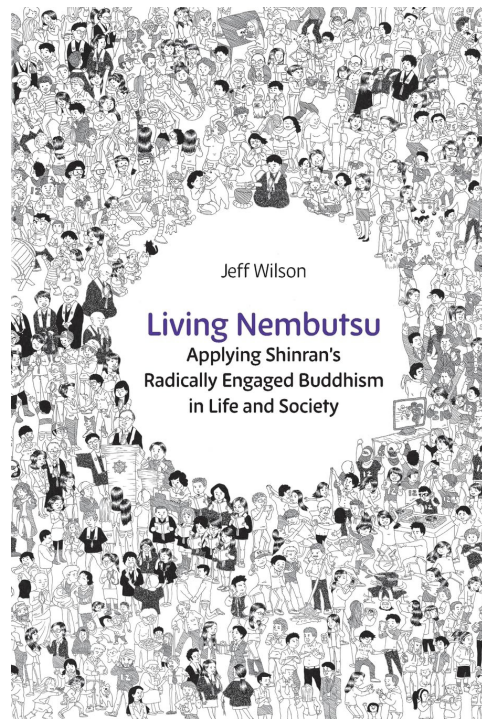
On Thursday, February 29th from 7:00 to 8:00 pm we will be starting the book club by gathering to discuss Dr. Jeff Wilson's recent book: "Living Nembutsu, Applying Shinran's Radically Engaged Buddhism in life and Society".

The 157-page book is regarded as a sourcebook for Jodo Shinshu Buddhists looking to apply Pure Land perspectives to the problems we face in the world today from an exploration on the life and teachings of Shinran Shonin.

The book club will meet every two weeks on Thursday starting on February 29th and ending on May 23rd. The book club will be held at the Calgary Buddhist Temple and will accommodate both in-person and online participation. Zoom registration will be required to get access to the online participation. Please check the Calgary Buddhist Temple website for the link to the Zoom registration.

Following our completion of reading and discussing the book we have invited the author, Dr. Jeff Wilson, to visit the Calgary Buddhist Temple on Saturday, May 25th in order to have a final discussion regarding the book's central focus. This final discussion will also be held in-person and online.

For more information contact Robert Gubenco Sensei from the Calgary Buddhist Temple: bgubenco@shaw.ca or visit the Calgary Buddhist Temple site: calgary-buddhist.ab.ca





MARCH: TOBAN 1

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1	2
10:30 am Shotsuki Memorial Service 3				9:30am Meditation 6		8	9
10:30 am Regular Service 10				9:30am Meditation 13		15	16
10:30 am Eshinni & Kakushinni Service 17			9:30am Day of Mindfulness 19	9:30am Meditation 20		22	10:30am Introduction to Buddhism 23
Spring Equinox (Ohigan) Service 10:30 am Regular Service 24 31				9:30am Meditation 27		29	10:30am Introduction to Buddhism 30

APRIL: TOBAN 3

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	9:30am Meditation 3	4	5	10:30am Introduction to Buddhism 6
2 pm Shotsuki Memorial Hanamatsuri Service 7		8	9	9:30am Meditation 10	11	12	10:30am Introduction to Buddhism 13
10:30 am Regular Service 14		15	16	9:30am Meditation 17	18	19	10:30am Introduction to Buddhism 20
10:30 am Regular Service BTSA AGM 21		10am Soup Kitchen 22	23	9:30am Meditation 24	JSBTC AGM (Lethbridge) 25	JSBTC AGM (Lethbridge) 26	JSBTC AGM (Lethbridge) 27
10:30 am Regular Service 28		29	30				