



THE GEPPPO



A publication of the Buddhist Church of Ogden

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January / February 2023 Issue

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HOLIDAY MAGIC

J.K. Hirano

Aa, Guzei no goen tasho, nimo moai gataku,

Shintatsu no Joshin okko nimo egatashi!

Tamatama Gyoshin o e ga,

Toku shukuen o yorokobe.

Ah, hard to encounter, even in many lifetimes is the cause of birth, Amida's universal vow! Hard to realize, even in myriads of kalpas, is pure shinjin that is true and real! If you should come to realize this practice and shinjin, rejoice at the conditions from the distant past that have brought it about.

Collected works of Shinran: pg. 4

In science and religious circles, there is a term called "magical thinking" or "magical ideation" and it is connected to a belief in God. Magical thinking is to believe something that has no basis in empirical truth. I hate to reveal my own political bias, but does that mean if you believe that the election was stolen from former president Trump, you believe in magic? I do not believe the election was stolen and I don't believe in God. At least God in a traditional Judea/Christian form. However, I do believe in magic. I have found Magic in Christmas, Disneyland, family and many extraordinary coincidences without explanation and Love!

This passage I began with is from Shinran Shonin's masterwork *Kyogyoshinsho*. It is one of the places where he expresses the joy he feels for having encountered the Nembutsu. I guess, since he is referencing our spatial world, the "real world," when he refers to time and place. Yet when I think of how long one "kalpa" is or how many "myriad" refers to, I believe Shinran believed in magic. Why else would he follow a dream where the Bodhisattva Kannon tells him how to find his teacher and even his wife!? I believe in the magical sound of these words I began with. I am not a native Japanese speaker so hearing and saying these words from the *Kyogyoshinsho* in Japanese makes little sense. Just saying this phrase in Japanese makes me feel like I am reciting magic words, like "wingardium leviosa" or as Hermione Grainger explains to Ron Weasley, it is "wingardium leviosaa!" Either way, it all sounds magical to me! Try it, "Ahh Gusei no goen tassho, nimo moai gataku...." Presto change...Namo Amida Butsu.

Rev. Hirano's article continued on next page

I have always felt that from Thanksgiving in November to our Nishi Hongwanji's Hoonko in January, this is our Jodo Shinshu Holiday season. During this time of year, I can feel the magic of the season in the air. I know there are always Grinches and Bah Humbugs when it comes to Christmas, especially in our Buddhist Sanghas. However, if you were to ask my college educated daughters about Christmas magic, I think they would say, "We believe!" Carmela, a very educated physician, and ordained Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji priest along with myself would say, "We also believe!"

I know Kacie and Taylor believe, because I was there when they experienced their first brush with Holiday Magic. Kacie was seven and Taylor was four on the first Christmas after their mother and I separated, they asked Santa Claus for a new bedroom set at my house. Every year, they are with me for much of Christmas Eve. As I wrote about in the story, "Santa's Golden Chain" my family has a lot of holiday traditions. Their mom and I had agreed that even though we would divorce, our girls were our number one priority, so no matter how difficult, we would try to make their transition and life as smooth as possible. After eating dinner at Koyo Japanese restaurant and the family Christmas Eve party at my sister Joni's home, I got the girls to their mom's house around 11:00 or so. I'm sure their mom got them into their Christmas pajamas to be tucked into bed for visions of sugarplums to dance in their little heads. When their mom brought them back to my house at around 11:00 a.m. Christmas morning, they were amazed to see a completely transformed bedroom, with white French style poster beds and matching quilts. White bedside tables with pink reading lamps and the walls and ceiling color changed to sky blue with wispy white clouds floating towards the ceiling. As proof of Santa's Christmas magic, they even found the little footprints the elves had accidentally left on the windowsills of their room. A very tired, but grateful Dad received his Christmas gift, just from hearing their squeals of joy and "Thank you, Santa!"

I have been thinking about all the magic I have experienced in my life. From somehow having survived a number of possible life ending medical issues, finding a woman that supports me in all my hopes and dreams. I have discussed with Carmela how magical our meeting was. Two very different people who run in completely different social circles, born in separate countries, so very far apart; being raised in culturally extremely different circumstances and yet finding each other and happiness late in life. I doubt that I have any magical abilities, but I believe Carmela is a magical creature and I think it was part of her magic that rubbed off on me. Before Carmela and I met, I was a no mumbo jumbo, no superstitious nonsense type of person. However, after we were married, I once asked her, "How can you believe in that New Age mumbo jumbo junk?" She simply smiled and said, "How do you think I found you?"

This holiday season many of us will get together with friends and family. Eating, playing, laughing, and sometimes fighting and arguing. In my opinion, when I see my family, it seems magical how we managed to get through the years and stay together as family. In my family, we often reminisce and laugh about many of our experiences growing up together. Our family didn't have much money, but magically we never felt neglected or wanting. We often laugh about the Thanksgiving at my parents' home. How the table we kids ate on was an old blue door, that my dad had attached four short legs on, and it barely fit in the small living room. Christmas was at Uncle Mas and Auntie Maxine's and New Year's at Bachan (grandma) and Jichan's (grandpa). How did the twelve of us, have such a wonderful relationship that has lasted until our present lives? We cousins are still having holidays together as we stroll into old age. I had just heard that my nephew will be holding Christmas Eve at his house rather than my sister Joni's. I hope that some of these traditions will continue. Is there a difference between magic and love? We can only hope and dream with a little Holiday magic thrown in. *"Aa, Guzei no goen tasho, nimo moai gataku, Shintatsu no Joshin okko nimo egatashi! Tamatama Gyoshin o e ga, Toku shukuen o yorokobe."* *Namo Amida Butsu!* I will share a secret about holiday magic, it gets stronger when it is shared with family and friends, but it gets even stronger when shared with strangers. It is magical how strangers can become friends.

Some may think, “Hirano Sensei must be getting senile. He is just an old man, fading into his memories. Magic is not Nembutsu and Nembutsu is not Magic!” I believe that Jodo Shinshu is a religion of gratitude and appreciation. No matter how much I study, it does not really make me grateful. However, within my memories from the distant past, I rejoice. I may not always feel gratitude in this immediate empirical world. However, when I pause and reflect on my life, I cannot, despite myself, not feel the warmth of gratitude and Namu Amida Butsu burst forth.

I want to thank all our Sangha members for their support of myself and family and our temples. This year, I want to thank those that are coming out in person to join us for our services at the temple. I know there are some that cannot meet in person, and I am grateful for your support. Carmela, Kacie, Taylor, Miso, Koge, Musubi and I all thank you, wish you a Merry Christmas, Happy New Year, Happy Hoonko, with a deep bow and Namu Amida Butsu. I hope to see you healthy and well in 2023!



PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

Happy New Year!! I hope your holidays were safe and enjoyable and you were all able to spend time with family and friends. Wow, I can’t believe my term as President has ended, and I wanted to thank Reverend Hirano, the board, and our Sangha for all the support you have given me these past two years. During that time, we dealt with the question of whether it was safe to reopen our doors due to COVID-19. Thankfully, due to the diligence of our board, we were able to return to a normal service schedule and celebrate a traditional Obon with live dancing. We were also able to hold a Bizarre Bazaar and a number of other events.

I truly wish to thank everyone again for the continued support of the temple and I’m looking forward to next year with Tom Fujikawa as President of our Board. Please continue to support Tom, the Board, and the Temple as you have these last couple of years.

Wishing you and your family all the best in 2023! Thank you again and I look forward to seeing you at the Temple.

In Gassho,
James A.



WELCOME

We welcome **Susan H. and James K.** to our Sangha. They have been attending our services for several months after settling in North Ogden from New York.

We appreciate their generous donation of the book, *Tariki* by Hiroyuki Itsuki to add to our library. Thank you, Susan and James.

*thank
you*

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BWA NEWS

By Brenda K.



Be a reflection of what you'd like to receive. If you want love, give love. If you want truth, be truthful. If you want respect, give respect. What you give out will return to you. - Kristen Butler

Happy New Year to all! January is a time to reflect on the past and set your resolutions for the new year. In reflecting on the past two months, the Buddhist Women's Association was active with our manju making on November 12 and 18 to be sold at the Salt Lake Buddhist Temple Boutique fund raiser on November 19-20. A huge thank you to all the ladies that gathered at our temple to make the manju and packaged it for the sale. THANK YOU SO MUCH!!!

November 13th was the BWA annual general meeting. At that time the officers for 2023 were elected. Congratulations to the following officers for the new year:

President - Tami H.

1st Vice President - Annette K.

2nd Vice President - Ruth S.

3rd Vice President - Lorraine S.

Recording Secretary - Kris Y.

Corresponding Secretary - Christy F.

Treasurer - Ellen K.

Auditors - Julia F. and Linda E.-R.

November 20 was the Eshinniko/Kakushinni and BWA Memorial Service in conjunction with the temple's Eitaikyo Service. Thank you to Tami H.'s toban group and others who prepared the luncheon that was served following the service. Our appreciation to all who helped.

Donations were collected of needed items for the families affected by domestic violence housed at the YCC. The BWA accepted various household items and monetary donations which were then delivered to the families. This endeavor was spearheaded by Julia F. who gathered everything and ensured the delivery to the facility. Thank you to all who contributed to this worthy cause.

December 4 was the temple's Bodhi Day Service with a delicious luncheon prepared by Shauna R.'s toban group. Members contributed salads and desserts. Thank you to all who helped out to make the tasty meal.

The BWA put together year end gift bags for shut-in members of the temple. If you or you know of someone who should have received one and did not, please notify one of the BWA members. We hope we have not overlooked anyone, but apologize if we did and will get one to them.

Upcoming on January 8, 2023 will be the temple's Hoonko Service. A special lunch will be prepared by Ruth S.'s toban group. They will begin preparing on January 7 at 10:00 am. If you are interested in helping out, please contact Ruth or be at the temple on January 7.

The next **BWA meeting** will be held **January 29, 2023** at approximately 10:45 a.m., directly following the regular service.

BWA MEMBERSHIP PARTY

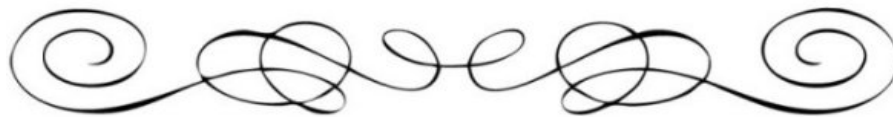


Upcoming will be the BWA membership party on **March 5, 2023**.

If you are interested in joining the BWA, please watch for further details in the next edition of the Geppo. We encourage all members and interested individuals to attend. Plan on joining us for an afternoon of food and fun!

In a recent article from The Institute of Buddhist Studies (IBS), it was announced that Dr. Paula Arai will be the first Eshinni and Kakushinni Professor of Women and Buddhist Studies. She will join the IBS faculty in this capacity with the establishment of this position in November 2020 to specialize in the academic study of women and Buddhism, particularly Jodo Shinshu.

Eshinni and Kakushinni are important figures in our sect. As the wife of Shinran Shonin, Eshinni was instrumental in supporting her husband's Nembutsu teaching and sharing it with all. As the youngest daughter of Shinran, Kakushinni was pivotal in keeping the memory of her father alive and perpetuating the faith of the Nembutsu teachings in his followers. She guarded and cared for Shinran's shrine with great dedication. Resulting from her efforts, Shinran's descendants evolved to form the lineage of the Otani family who established the Hongwanji.



BWA DONATIONS

OMITTED FOR ONLINE VERSION

BWA MEMORIAL DONATIONS

OMITTED FOR ONLINE VERSION

YCC MONETARY DONATIONS

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Big thank you to all those who donated household items for the YCC donation drive.

